

Our gospel today comes from John 10: 11-18

Today we find ourselves in the 10th chapter of the Gospel of John.
Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life."
That is what he said. Not a way, but THE way.
Which seems to fly in the face of inclusivity, which is something that our world places a very high premium on, inclusivity.
This idea that many paths lead to the same God. It is a theology that our world embraces because of people who believe in everything, or people who believe in nothing.
But my friends, hear me when I say that Jesus is the way, and his way leads through the cross. Something that he proves in the Garden of Gethsemane. Otherwise, the cup would've been passed, but it wasn't. And when it wasn't, and its prayers were met with silence, out of that silence came the greatest prayer of all.
"Not my will Lord, but thy will be done."
So, let's talk about our gospel today.
Jesus is speaking with the religious leadership of Israel, and they are not fans.
They do not like him.
He flaunts Mosaic law.
He seems to have zero respect for the elders and the traditions. And frankly, he's making them look bad and they hate him so bad they want to kill him despite the miracles, which they have written off as works of the devil.
Jesus, time and time again, gets in their face and points out the hypocrisy and how they had taken the word that had come through the prophets and twisted it, how they had taken the Ten Commandments and blown them up into 613 laws and then laid that burden on the people. And we see Jesus call them out on this when he says they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move a finger to help. And there's a real lesson here for us.
This is pointing out the ugly side of religion.
This idea that somehow, we can be righteous in and of ourselves.
We can earn our way to heaven.
Which of course is ridiculous because as the scriptures point out many times, no one is righteous.
Not one.
Yet, this attitude that I can somehow earn my stairway to Heaven continues to this day.
But let's move on.
When Jesus said, "I say to you, whoever does not enter the sheep fold through the gate but climb over elsewhere is a thief and a robber,

" they know who he's talking about, and they know that he's talking about them.
I'm talking about the religious leadership, and they hate him for it.
– ARE YOU TALKING TO ME – THE GOOD SHEPHERD
Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."
Now, this is the fourth "I am" statement that we find in the Gospel of John and could possibly be the most beloved of the seven.
"I'm the good shepherd."
Once again, notice not a good shepherd, but the good shepherd, the God shepherd.
And I love that image, the shepherd, it's fitting. Jesus is our good shepherd, and he is the way, the truth, and the life.
And no one comes to the Father except through him.
Which, as I said, might at first glance does not seem very inclusive, but then again, it's super inclusive because he calls all his children.
But clearly, not all roads lead to the same God.
"I'm the good shepherd. I'm the truth, the way, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
Now, of course, the religious leadership, they were having none of this.
They rejected Jesus. And it is a rejection that continues to this day.
"What gives him the right to say that?"
Well, let me tell you.
Let me tell you what gives Jesus the right to say this. The tomb is empty. He is risen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. That is what has given him the right to say that.
And what is he speaking?
Well, he is speaking truth.
And not just truth, but absolute truth.
And absolute truth is often uncomfortable truth. It's like a pit bull on a chain.
And, of course, we live in a world where nobody wants to hear absolute truth.
We don't want to hear it.
Relative truth?
Oh, that's okay.
We can deal with that.
Opinions? No problem.
Just as long as they don't offend anybody.

I mean, we are taught in our world today to be very careful not to offend anybody. Jesus was a lot of things, but careful wasn't one of them because he spoke absolute truth and it has an edge. It's sharp. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." That is absolute truth. And they killed him for it. But in the end the truth prevails. Why? Because the tomb is empty. He is risen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

"I am the good shepherd. A hired man who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away and the wolf catches and scatters them."
My friends, the wolf is Satan. He catches some, he scatters others. Has he caught you today? Some might ask, "Well, hey God, why didn't you just kill the wolf?"
Seems like a reasonable question. But the reason God doesn't kill the wolf is because the wolf is choice. And without choice, free will is impossible. And God loves you so much that he has given you the choice and free will to not love him back.
"I'm the good shepherd. I know mine and mine know me." And I love that.
The Greek word here for "to know" is *ginosko*. And it's much more than just knowing somebody. It's a much deeper word. It suggests an intimacy. It suggests a knowing everything about somebody. Knowing their joys, knowing their fears. Like you would know your child or your husband or your wife.
I mean, you think about that. God loves you so much, he knows you by name. He knows you intimately, everything about you. But then there's the flip side of that. "Depart from me, you evil doer. I never knew you."
So, it's kind of an either-or situation. He either knows you as a sheep or he does not know you as a goat.
So how do we know Jesus? Because, of course, we want to be on the sheep team, right?
Who is Jesus and who is he to us?
Well, let me start by simply making the point.

If I were to ask a room full of people, what animal would best describe you? Represent your personality?
I imagine I'd hear all kinds of things, like maybe a lion. "I'm a lion." Or "I am an eagle," Or "I'm a wild stallion."
Probably a lot of things, but you know what I'm probably never going to hear, ever. "I'm a sheep."
Probably wouldn't hear that.
In fact, sheeple is a derogatory term for people that just blindly follow anything. We don't want to be a sheep. Sheep are stupid. Sheep can't take care of themselves. They're helpless. They need constant attention. Because left alone, they just go to pieces.
A pig, on the other hand, I mean, if you let a pig out into the wild, it can survive. And through generations it becomes a wild boar.
But if you let a sheep into the wild, it becomes dinner, right? It dies. It will eat a poisonous plant and die, or it'll fall off a cliff and die. A sheep, if it falls on its back, it can't even get up. I mean, sheep are helpless, which is why they make a perfect metaphor for people. Because let's be honest, we're kind of stupid.
We are in need of constant attention, and we are in need of being led. But unfortunately, many of us haven't figured that out yet.

Even if I walk through the valley of death,
I fear no evil, not as a lion, not as an
eagle, but as a sheep.

Now, speaking of sheep, they do have
some

intelligence. There are some good
qualities.

One of the things that's good about a
sheep is they can recognize their
shepherd's voice, which is a very good
thing in a world that has so many voices.

We are preached to constantly.

Again, getting back to that idea that we
can make ourselves righteous and earn
Heaven, or we can make our soul as light
as a feather and drift up into Eternal Life
to meet God.

You know, it sounds beautiful, but it has
nothing to do with Jesus at all. It has
nothing to do with
Christianity.

We do not subscribe to a merit-based
theology.

We cannot save ourselves, which is why
we are in need of a good shepherd who
is the way, the truth, and the life, who
lays himself down for his sheep.

Which, by the way, is you and me.

Because this is the only way we can be
saved from ourself.

It's through his cross.

Jesus says, "A thief comes only to steal,
slaughter and destroy. I come so that
they can have life and have it more
abundantly."

Like I said, we live in a world with many
voices.

What voice are you listening to today?
Somebody with pretty words telling you
how you can save yourself from
yourself?

Somebody that's trying to show you how
to have a better and more vibrant and
abundant life?

These are false prophets.

Jesus says, "I came so that they might
have life

and have it more abundantly."

Now it's interesting, the word life here,
the Greek

word that's used is not bios, which is
what you

would normally use. *Bios*, which means
physical life, but it's not bios, it's *zoa*,
which speaks much more to the quality
of life.

It's a life that we all want to have. It's a
life that we want to live. It's a life of
peace. It's a life with a promised
destination. And that promised
destination is eternal life.

"I'm the way, the truth and the life. No
one

comes to the Father except through me."

Oh, how we push back on that.

How many of us say, "Well no, I'm a lion.
I'm a wild stallion. I got this."

Yet as we look over our lives and give it
an honest assessment, how's that
working out for you really?

I'm reminded of one of my favorite
movies of all

time. I love it. It's been around for a long
time.

It's called "The Shawshank
Redemption."

It's a great movie and there's a lot of
themes in

there, a lot of religious themes.

It's about a prison, and there's this
scene that's

played by Morgan Freeman, and who
doesn't love that guy? He is a great
actor. And then Morgan Freeman is

playing this character, and his name is
Red. And so Red is called in front of the
parole board and they ask him, "Are you
sorry for the crime that you did?"

And he said, "There's not a day that
goes by that I don't feel regret. Not

because I'm here or because you think I should be here, but when I look back at the way I was then, a young stupid kid who committed that terrible crime, I wanna talk to him. I wanna try to talk some sense into him, you know? Tell him the way things are. But I can't because that kid's long gone, and this old man is all that's left."

Wow.

Let me ask you this question: if you were to talk to your younger self today, what would you say?

Better yet, do you think you'd listen?

We have all had occasions where we have wandered far from our good shepherd.

Hear me when I say Christ died for those occasions.

How do you know your love?

Well, the greater the sacrifice, the greater the love.

Or as Paul put so well, "When we were still

powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Very

rarely will anyone die for the righteous person.

Though for a good person, one might possibly

dare to die, but God demonstrates his own love

for us. And that while we were still sinners,

Christ died for us."

Now, let me ask you this.

How does that have anything to do with what

you've done or haven't done?

How does that have anything to do with how

righteous you are or how unrighteous you are?

He died while we were still sinners.

Why is Jesus our good shepherd?

Well, I can give you four reasons.

Number one, he died for his sheep, and he died for us while we were still sinners.

Number two, he knows us intimately by name. In fact, he knows us better than we know ourselves.

Number three, he gathers his sheep from a world full of wolves and cares for us one day at a time if we are willing to turn the care of our lives over to him.

And finally, **number four**, and this is the greatest

reason, the tomb is empty. He is risen.

Hallelujah,

hallelujah. He is our good shepherd

because he

defeated death and He makes it very

clear in John 14, "In my Father's house, there are many

dwelling places and I will come back for you so

that where I am, you also may be."

Your shepherd is calling for you today.

Do you hear his voice?

Are you listening to his voice?

Or are you listening to the voices of fear?

The voices of greed.

The voices of lust.

Let us draw closer to our good shepherd.

Let us dial into that quiet voice that is trying to lead us through this chaos we call life.

Let us take the time to spend time with Him and His word, to hear His word preached.

And most importantly, just talk to Him.

Let us enter into prayer.

Are we part of His flock, or have we been scattered?

Who are we following today?

Are you a lost sheep? Does it sometimes feel that way?

Never forget there will be more joy in
Heaven over just one repentant sin, than
99 and no need of repentance.
Although to tell you the truth, I'm still
trying to
figure out who those 99 are.

We all stand before the cross.
Your good shepherd is calling for you.
Do you hear His voice?
Are you listening to that voice?
Or do you feel lost?
Never forget one cannot be found until
they first
realize they are in fact lost. And if you're
standing there with your arms folded,
rejecting your shepherd because you're
a lion and you got it all figured out, well
my friend, you're lost, and you don't
even know it.
Or maybe you do. If so, you've been
scattered.
Stop trying to save yourself.
Our good shepherd will bring you back.
He is the way. He is the truth. He is the
life.
No one comes to the Father except
through Him.
And He has come to gather you today.
And there church said, AMEN.

-Rev. Katie Dailey, in
process