

“Know the One You Worship and Cling To Him”

Message by DD Adams
4th SUNDAY OF EASTER
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The Old Testament lesson is from Acts 2: 42 - 47. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The gospel lesson is from John 10:1-10. “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep open by the gate, but climbs in by another way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a

stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God. Please pray with me. O Lord, help us hear your voice as we listen. Calm our minds and give a deep yearning in our hearts—by our words and thoughts that take shape, we allow you to bend our spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the mediation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! John 10 describes the relationship between the Good Shepherd and his sheep. *We* are pictured as sheep, and the Good Shepherd cares and protects us. He watches over us. He calls and leads his sheep by name and goes ahead of them because he knows the way. The sheep follow him and know his voice. They know he'd lay down his life for them.

But sheep wander away. They stop listening to the Shepherd's voice. They get distracted. Their mind is set on autopilot. They feel self-reliant, and it's then the risk begins. We're just like sheep. We don't hear his voice and cling to him if

we're distracted by the world. When we travel through dangerous places, we realize our need for the Shepherd to lead us.

In life, traveling through dangerous places is necessary in order to arrive at a good place. If we don't listen and follow the Shepherd, without even noticing, the thief will slither into our situation. He opposes God. He deceives and wants to hurt us and our families and to destroy what God has already done to bless us.

There are things we can do to be protected. We can stay close and follow the Shepherd. We can listen his voice and be watchful, but there's different voices that speak to us, and we can get distracted. How do we know what the Shepherd's voice sounds like? We know the Shepherd's voice because we're listening. We have a personal relationship, and we're growing in the knowledge of God.

The Acts 2 passage talks about giving and sharing. If we hoard and accumulate what God has given us we can find ourselves needy in other ways. Life happens, but this is how we learn that God is all-sufficient and that self-sufficiency isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Fact is, our life is only safe when the Shepherd is in the center of it. Outside of Christ there's no safety. We will make mistakes, but the Shepherd wants to care and guide his sheep. Giving and sharing what we have with others is a large part of that relationship that keeps us safe.

If we know the sound of our shepherd's voice, and listen to it, we'll stay protected and our needs will be met. Sheep never follow a stranger's voice. They don't trust it. At times other sheep in the fold will lead us into danger because we're listening to them rather than the Shepherd. We're listening to other voices in the world, and we may learn to trust the world's voice more than God's. So the question is, do we know the one we worship?

There's a lot of voices that speak to our hearts and minds. Our friends who don't attend church and don't follow the Shepherd closely think they know the way, but only the Shepherd does. If we don't know the Shepherd in relationship how do we know what is and isn't his voice?

How do we know that what we're hearing either around us or in our own minds is right or wrong or good or bad? Much of what Jesus said concerns our attitudes and actions about money and possessions. Jesus was a curve breaker. He touched lepers, fed the hungry, saved tax collectors, brought people back to their right minds, delivered them from addictions, and told us to love and forgive.

Our responsibility is to hear what our Shepherd says, to pray and discover what God's word teaches. We might ask the question before we make a decision, "What would Jesus do?" How much do we need to be happy? We already know things don't make us happy? What about the needs of others? Only a relationship

with the Lord can answer those questions, and even then, the answers we hear in our hearts may not be the same.

We may come up with different answers on the big questions, and that's okay, but one thing is most important. Know the one you worship and cling to him. As we're in relationship with Christ follow his lead, be sustained, supported, and protected. The thief and his cohorts, our pride and greed and ego will become less of a distraction and will not defeat us.

Let's live out and do what we already know to do. Find out what God says. Love, forgive, go to church, obey the laws of the land, fellowship with one another, follow God's lead, pray, give, and share. Encourage one another and build each other up. Live in peace, be joyful, and trust that your Shepherd leads you.

Hear your Shepherd's voice about how to live and act and what our attitude should be toward our enemies. Keep doing what you know to do. Develop a relationship with Christ, be content, love and forgive, stop arguing, devote yourself to God and break bread with each other. God answers the big questions eventually.

God's teaching isn't always about making us comfortable. Life isn't about what we want, and sharing what we have with others isn't always seen as justice-based. Let's choose to not have the spiritual problem of giving and sharing. Individual lives need to be transformed yes, but our community matters too.

Some say Acts 2 is an unrealistic description of the lives of the early Christians. That can't be our reason for not sharing. Money won't deliver us in trouble, but, difficult circumstances can lead us to cling to God. So grow and maintain your relationship with Christ. When the troubles lift, that's when we're tempted to get distracted. Cling to God in every situation. Get to know the one who can save and rescue you.

Please pray with me. God of all-sufficiency, rid us of every part of our self-sufficiency. Put it to death. Cause our weakness and dependence on you to make us strong. Show us how powerless we are when we cling to you. Amen.