

“He Calls His Sheep by Name” (John 10:3)

For Your Life in Christ the Week of the Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 15th, 2011

Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LCMS)

Rev. Dr. Al Espinosa

John 10:3: “To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

Introduction: The Two Things Happening In John 10:3

- A. #1: The sheep “hear” (illustrates RECOGNITION through the Word of God).
- B. #2: The shepherd “calls” (illustrates that God calls us by His Word and in such a way that He calls us INDIVIDUALLY and PERSONALLY).
- C. I was in junior high school when my parents and I took a cross-country trip in my dad’s Buick. My dad stopped to see an old Marine buddy who ran his own farm. What he showed us amazed me [tell the story], but the account in John 10 is even better because the call from the Lord is not a general one.
- D. A better illustration shows the INDIVIDUALITY of the call. Our pug at home is named “Henry” and he’s really my wife’s dog, and Traci has given him a nickname. When she calls him “Henny” and leads him, he follows.
- E. This illustrates some biblical distinctives and facts:
 1. Shepherds in the Near East typically lead their flocks rather than drive them from behind; they draw the sheep by their word.” (TLSB, 1801) **Think of the implications of trust.** “In the picture here drawn by Jesus it is the personal bond between the shepherd and his sheep that keeps them together as they follow his guidance; unlike a modern shepherd, the shepherd of Bible days did not have the assistance of a sheepdog (F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, p 224).”
 2. “The shepherd calls his own sheep by name, that is, individually rather than collectively, which contrasts

with the general call issued to the entire flock...There is evidence that Palestinian shepherds used to give nicknames to some of their sheep...In OT times, God called some of his closest servants, and Israel as a whole, ‘by name’ (e.g., Exod. 33:12, 17, Isa. 43:1).” (Kostenberger, *John*, 301)

Exodus 33:17: “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.’”

Part I: Even Sheep God Knows By Name:

- A. It is utterly humbling to consider that of all the animals that God could have chosen to represent you as a Christian, He chose sheep.
- B. This is humbling to say the least:
 1. Sheep are not known for their intelligence!
 2. Sheep are relatively helpless!
 3. Sheep EASILY get themselves into trouble!
- C. And yet, there is ONE reason why it is good to call a Christian a sheep, sheep are known for recognizing their shepherd’s call.
 1. They were put into a pen which was a rock enclosure with a single entry and exit point.
 2. At night, they were led to the pen and often shared the pen with other flocks led by other shepherds.
 3. The pen had a “gatekeeper” who kept an eye on the sheep at night and would guard them from thieves and predators. Obviously, only the shepherd could come back to gather his sheep.
 4. If a different shepherd or anyone else for that matter came up to the pen and started calling for the sheep, **the sheep wouldn’t budge.** They would only respond to their shepherd. This is how the Lord taught about what would happen next:

John 10:4-5: "When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

D. The Lord baptized you by name and knows you personally!
Isaiah 43:1b: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

Part II: As Faithful Sheep, We Follow His Voice: HIS WORD!

- A. The Lord has placed you in His pen in this world: the Holy Church where you are fed and nourished!
- B. But this does not mean that we avoid being in the world, no, He leads us out as well so that you may interact with the world and be His light and His ambassadors.
- C. But as you are in the world and not of the world, you listen to the voice of your Shepherd, you listen to the Word! This is your only safety; otherwise the voice of the world will replace the voice of the Word. For example, in regard to the end of the world the Word says:

Acts 1:7: "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."

Matthew 24:36: "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven..."

- D. And yet, false prophets abound. Case and point, Harold Camping who is the President and General Manager of Family Stations, Inc. or more popularly known simply as "Family Radio." Years ago he predicted that the last day of the world would be on September 6th, 1994, but now he is absolutely positive that the end of the world is this Saturday, May 21st, 2011. He has posted a 75-page document called "Nothing is More Important" on his website to explain the precision of his biblical prediction, and he has invested in thousands of billboards and numerous RV caravans to get the word out (along with his

radio programs). However, as Hank Hanegraaff says, "Prophecy pundits have something in common: they are 100% wrong 100% of the time." (internet: <http://www.equip.org/broadcasts/questions-and-answers-with-hank20101309>)

- E. But you don't have to be a scholar to discern Harold Camping's claims. All you need is the Word!

Conclusion: The Way of the Sheep: To Know God's Will

- A. Not a deep, dark mystery!
- B. Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God..." and then the text goes on to elaborate on that will in vv 9-21:

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' ²⁰To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

- C. 1st Thessalonians 4:3-4: **"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,"**
- D. 1st Thessalonians 5:16-18: **"Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."**
- E. But nothing is important when it comes to the will of God than to keep the GOSPEL before you! He voice of grace you follow!