

Sermon 1803

John 10.22-30

May 8, 2022

“You haven’t been listening to a single word I’ve said, have you?” a mother said to her teenage son.

He thought, “That’s a weird way to start a conversation.”

Tuning things out. We are great at it. Our brain automatically tunes most things out. We live in noisy environments, but we tune most of the noise out and focus only on the sounds that are varied or new. Same way with vision. We notice movement or what stands out from the background. We largely ignore the rest.

Trouble is, the sinful human nature is great at tuning out God. God’s Word before us today talks about it. Instead of tuning out the voice of Jesus,

Listen to Our Shepherd’s Voice

1. For guidance (22-27).
2. For security (28-30).

“Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly (22-24).’”

As so often happens, complaints from Jesus’ enemies call forth a response from Jesus—teachings! It’s sort of like a mother. She doesn’t have a list of things to teach her children that day. It sort of comes up piecemeal as the situations arise. But what a passive-aggressive bunch! Jesus’ enemies come off as so pious. “We want to really, really know whether you are the Savior, Jesus!” And they play the victim card so well. “How long will you keep us in suspense?” It was Jesus’ fault for being coy for so long?

Jesus sees right through their hypocrisy and pops their bubble.

“Jesus answered, ‘I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me (25-27).’”

At the end of our text Jesus will tell them he is God. “I and the Father are one.” On the spot they will pick up rocks to stone Jesus because, “you, a mere man, claim to be God (33).” So much for wanting to really, really know if Jesus is the Savior.

But elsewhere Jesus had told them he was the Son of God. His authority over the Temple, his conversation with Nicodemus, his revelation to them, “before Abraham was I AM.” Again they had picked up stones. Jesus has told them and told them and told them.

If you did not listen to Jesus’ words, at least pay attention to the miracles Jesus performed. They were blind to all of them, just as they were deaf to his spoken

claims. They did not believe. They were not Jesus' sheep, his followers. They were lost, misguided, left to their own wicked devices.

We can be just as "off the rails" as they. It comes from tuning Jesus out. Nature abhors a vacuum. If we are not listening to our shepherd's voice, we are listening to something else—the world or the devil. The guidance the world and the devil gives us always boils down to "listen to yourself." "Be the master of your own fate." "Be a mindless pair of feet in a milling crowd going nowhere, waiting for your turn to die"-- nobody thinks that is an inspiring message. We want to hear, "You are different. The rules don't apply to you." And yet we replied to Mom, when she nixed a questionable party, "But Mom! Everybody's going to be there!" And heaven forbid if we had to wear last year's clothes (which still fit) to school while she was imitating the Children of Israel in the wilderness by still wearing her clothes from college days.

Without guidance from our Shepherd's voice, we are going to get more and more lost. People take matters into their own hands. Vigilante justice. Leaking information that wasn't their property. Doing everything that would make yourself happy, but why does that always end up making you so sad? This is the stuff of novels and movies pulling in millions of dollars. You gotta to pull yourself up by the bootstraps and rise to the occasion when your back is up against the wall.

Now apply that to getting to heaven. It morphs into an "I'm good enough to get into heaven just the way I am." "I'll be able to sort this out and make amends." And when that doesn't work, we get angry at God that we have such a guilty conscience. And we stay angry at God. He's the last one we want to listen to.

I honestly don't know why my Mom didn't just wring my neck and put me out on the curb on trash day. And I listened to her much more than, at times, I listened to our Shepherd's voice!

But our Shepherd keeps speaking to us, doesn't he? Loudly and clearly he tells us what we need to know from the Bible. His voice is always there. It's like the GPS on your phone. You want to get somewhere so you map it out and push the "start" button. At each and every turn it tells you where to go. It won't stop until you get to your destination.

Jesus' guidance never stops. We are never left to our own devices. Let's take getting to heaven. Jesus says he is the one who lays down his life on our behalf. He is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. And he keeps repeating that message, no matter how many wrong turns we make. "Redirecting, repent, repent, redirecting." He is still guiding us. Faith is the way to heaven. Believe and you will be saved. When we realize listening to our Shepherd's voice is the way to go, how we regret all those wrong turns, dangerous U-turns and the wasted days!

As Jesus guides us to heaven, so he will also be our guide here on earth. A person who is saved wants to live a Christian life. A person who is heaven bound,

doesn't want to sin, even once. The words of our Shepherd move us to pick the right course of action, show love, sacrifice for others, truly live responsibly, be there for others. The words of our Shepherd moved our mothers to love us like they did, even when we were not very lovable.

Listen to our Shepherd's voice for security.

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I am the Father are one (28-30)."

Safety means a lot to us. We want to feel secure in our own homes. So we get security systems. We want our children to be safe. We care about their schools, their friends, the neighborhood. Nobody wants to feel insecure, not for a second.

Can you imagine a guy selling imperfect security systems? "Sensors monitor your front door." "What about the back door and garage doors?" "Look, our sensors need a well-lit setting to work and your front door is the only place on the house where there's enough ambient light." "Our operators are on the job twenty-four hours a day, Monday through Friday for your Medical Alert bracelet." "Your insurance covers an ambulance trip to the nearest hospital within a five mile radius." A security system or insurance plan that has more holes in it than Swiss cheese is no security system at all! Thieves will figure it out. We will have a medical emergency on Saturday night. The hospital will be 5.3 miles away, costing us an "out of network" payment of three thousand dollars! No mom tells her sick child, "If things get bad, don't wake me up in the middle of the night. Just tough it out until seven and then I'll see what I can do."

Moms are moms 24/7. They are still moms when the kids are in their 40s and 50s. Mom's last prayer before she goes to heaven will probably be that her children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren keep walking with Jesus! When you're a mom you're a mom all the way to your last dying day! That's comforting for us. Somebody has our back.

Now look at our God. He has our back, but he does not suffer from any human limitations. Jesus' words of promise are sweeping. We have been given "eternal life." It will never end. It will never get old and fade away. "They shall never perish." Absolutely no way, no how will we end up with the trash on the curb come collection day. "Shall never." That's the strongest statement you can make. It will never, ever, never happen. We will never perish.

"No one can snatch them out of my hand." I am sure we all remember childhood fights where we were holding on to a favorite toy as hard as we could, but big brother or big sister pulled it out of our hands.

We are safe in Jesus' hands. No one can pull us away from him. The devil isn't strong enough. This wicked world isn't strong enough. The college scene at State,

the singles scene in the new graduate's home metropolis, nothing in the world is strong enough to pull us from Jesus' hands. We may be cheated out of an insurance claim, tricked into a bad car purchase, forced to pay a tax penalty because of bad tax preparation advice, but nobody can swindle us out of heaven. Jesus says so.

Oh, but we've been in situations like that before. Somebody promises us something—a raise from our manager—but somebody higher up overrules them—no raise says the department supervisor. Is Jesus overpromising to keep us happy?

“My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”

God the Father will not let anyone snatch us out of his hands, either. Jesus' words and God the Father's words match up perfectly. And just in case Jesus' enemies try to twist his words, insinuating that the Father is greater than Jesus (because he is greater than all—Jesus is not saying the Father is greater than him, just that the Father is greater than all who would wickedly try to pry a believer away from God)—Jesus says he and the Father are one. One God. One purpose. One power. Jesus has the power to grant security in time and eternal security to you and me, the believers, the sheep of his flock. The only way we can possibly miss out on the heaven Jesus won for us is if we walk away from Jesus of our own accord. But that won't happen.

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There's lots of things we should tune out. Background noise, constant griping of coworkers, the unending drumbeat of exaggerated news. You will notice mom is not on that list. Neither is our God. Listen to our Shepherd's voice. It's what we were made for. Don't let our sinful human nature say, “Huh?” when Jesus speaks to us through his Word.