

Why Listen to Him?

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”
John 10:11-18

“I am the good shepherd.” Upon hearing these words the Pharisees who were listening to Jesus’ message probably ground their teeth together in frustration and shook their heads in denial of the clear reference to Psalm 23, “The LORD is my shepherd...” They couldn’t stand it that this man from Nazareth was yet again referring to himself as God! Their anger only grew as Jesus went on to say that other sheep (the Gentiles) could be part of the sheep pen (God’s family) as well. Out of indignation and fury, biting accusations spewed from the Pharisees’ mouths. “He’s demon possessed and raving mad!” “Why listen to him?” (v. 20)

While it is easy to criticize the audacity of the Pharisees’ interruption of Jesus’ beautiful depiction of His love, don’t our own sinful hearts often whisper that same question: “Why listen to Jesus?” While we may not consciously ask the question, our lives testify that we have strayed from our Good Shepherd’s voice. Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31), but instead we seek our own comfort before thinking of those around us. Jesus reminds us not to worry (Matthew 6:25), and yet we consistently fret over how to make ends meet. He tells us to seek His kingdom first, but daily study of His Word comes second to a million other items on our “to do” lists.

Thankfully, we have a Good Shepherd who does not abandon us even when we, his sheep, go astray. He never turns a deaf ear to our cries for help. Instead, he willingly gave his life in answer to our greatest need: redemption from sin. Only a few chapters later after John 10, we see Christ’s sacrifice on Cavalry’s cross for the payment of all our sins. His beautiful act of love invokes in us a burning desire to continuously listen to his voice. In answer to the Pharisees’ question, “Why listen to him?” we can respond though faith and with conviction like Peter: “To whom shall we go? [Jesus has] the words of eternal life. We believe and know that [Jesus is] the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69)

Prayer:

I am Jesus' little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
For my Shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my needs and well provides me,
Loves me every day the same,
Even calls me by my name.

For Further Reading:

John 10; Psalm 23

Written by Hannah Hackbarth

Reviewed by Professor-emeritus Joel Gerlach