

Sermon

Easter 4C May 11, 2025

John 10:22-30

Today is known as Good Shepherd Sunday. On this Fourth Sunday of Easter we always get gospel passages relating Jesus to being the good shepherd. Whether that's Jesus as the gatekeeper who calls the sheep by name, or Jesus as the good shepherd who protects his sheep, or today with Jesus as the voice whom the sheep follow to eternal life, this Fourth Sunday of Easter is all about Jesus as the unifying force (the shepherd) of various people and communities (the sheep).

To be unified with Christ means to follow the voice of Christ. This unity should be drawn from, or similar to, the unity Jesus has with the Father. At the end of today's gospel passage, Jesus says, "The Father and I are one." This statement isn't saying that Jesus and the Father are the same entity, or the same person, but it is saying that Jesus and the Father are united in the work they do. The work of God and the work of Jesus can't be separated because they are fully united.

In examining this relationship, this should cause us to ask ourselves: "Are we as unified with Christ as Christ is with the Father?" This is not a simple yes or no question, because, honestly, if you asked this question of most Christians, the likely answer would be, "Of course."

But are we really listening to the voice of Christ? To know if we are aligned with Christ, we need to know what Christ stood for and what he taught. We also need to be honest with ourselves when we answer as to whether or not we are truly united with Christ.

In the totality of Jesus' ministry he healed the sick without declining care due to preexisting conditions. He provided food to those who were hungry without using income levels to deem whether or not they were worthy to receive that food. He treated foreigners and non-Jews with the same care he showed to the Jewish people he was sent to. He attacked religious hypocrites and systems that took advantage of the poor. He treated women with respect. And he never used his power to take advantage of others.

In looking at this, there are three areas we need to consider.

The first is personal. That is, are we each doing what we can to help people in need? For instance, are we each working to help feed the hungry? Are you personally donating funds to the food pantry, or are you picking up extra food when you go shopping to drop in the baskets by the front door? Are you welcoming and supportive of outsiders or those whom society deems as not belonging? The list here is almost endless, but it comes down to this: are you personally following the example of Christ in all you do?

The second is within this community. One of the things Jesus worked to establish was a new community of love. The prime example was the community of twelve disciples who gave up all they knew to follow this man. This small community eventually grew to become the Church. You can find other examples of this new community in Scripture, such as when Jesus says, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

We are part of that new community. Looking back at last week’s gospel, how are we feeding, tending, and feeding the flock of Christ? What are we doing to, or how can we better, feed, tend, and feed this flock?

We need to be careful with this one, though, because feeding, tending, and feeding implies that we *DO* something. There have been people who have told me, “I’m just not being fed here.” But they never attended any programs or studies that were offered, rarely showed up for gatherings, and had spotty Sunday attendance. We can’t simply sit in our pews waiting to be spoon fed food to our liking. We need to be active participants.

The third area is in our public life. If we are listening to the voice of Jesus and working to be unified with him, how does that manifest itself outside these walls? Jesus worked to include women, minorities, and those whom society deemed unworthy. God specifically said to welcome and treat aliens as native-born people. In our own baptismal covenant we promised to respect the dignity of every human being. Do we reflect and live into those promises and commands publicly?

I’ll admit that most of what I have said today has been open-ended questions. But as followers of Christ, we need to constantly ask these types of questions of ourselves. We need to remember that being followers of Christ is not simply, or primarily, about us. Jesus Christ is not simply our “*Personal Lord and Savior*.” Some of it is personal, but it is also communal and public. If we claim to listen to the words of

Christ, and if we claim to be in unity with him as he is with the Father, then we need to ask those questions and answer them honestly.

Personally, do we prioritize Christ and his mission in our lives? In this community, are we actively feeding, tending, and feeding people? Publicly are we following the voice of Christ the Good Shepherd, or are we following other voices that draw us away from God?

Because ultimately, when we listen to the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd and are in unity with him, that doesn't mean all our own desires and biases are confirmed, it means that everything about us is changed so that we become a reflection of Christ – a new person living into resurrection.

As we go forward from here, we need to ask ourselves: Who, exactly, are we following?

Amen.