

IT CAN'T BE SAID ENOUGH: JESUS IS THE GATE

If you don't hear his voice, then run away! -- When he calls your name, follow him.

John 10:1-10

TEXT: *I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other 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.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Old Testament references to the Christ as the Lord's Shepherd of his Church are many. Today's Lesson from Ezekiel: *I will examine my flock and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land.* Ez 34 Quoting from Isaiah, Peter writes: *You were like sheep going astray, but you are now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* 1 Pe 2 The Old Testament believers knew David's 23rd Psalm well: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...* Ps 23 We could find so many other references from the Old Testament speaking of the Lord's Messiah, the Christ, in the imagery of God leading, caring and protecting his people as a shepherd cares for his sheep it's difficult for us to understand way the Jews didn't get what Jesus was saying when he applied this analogy to himself. The Bible says: *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.*

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If you don't hear his voice, then run away! What does the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, sound like? Have you ever heard the voice of the Lord? I heard some people say that they have heard the voice of God. I've heard many more who have told me that the Lord told them this, or that. I've heard some who claim that God is telling them this or that. Are they lying? Are they just hoping? Is it really the voice of the Lord that they hear?

Whatever "voices" you or anyone might hear, we can, by the process of elimination, say for certain what is NEVER the voice of the Lord Jesus, the Gate of Heaven. We can say for certain that the Lord would NEVER question his written Word. *"Did God really say..."* was, and still is, the first tactic of Satan. He pulled that question on Eve, and she listened when she should have run away.

Jesus, for example, would never suggest that it's OK to avoid worship and to neglect hearing his Word or receiving the Sacrament. Where do people get the idea that they shouldn't have to worship? Not from Jesus!

Jesus would never look at your boyfriend or girlfriend or your fiancée and smile and say that it's OK to have sex before his institution of marriage is given its full honor.

Jesus would never suggest that it's OK to join a congregation that doesn't follow the truth of his Word and clearly confess it and teach it. He would say, "at least you're going to church!" while it is written: *I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.* Ro 16 And who on earth has the arrogance and the audacity to say that it's OK to do and teach otherwise!

How did Jesus answer Satan's temptations when he himself was tempted for us? Each time Satan suggested another idea contrary to the truth Jesus replied with the certain test for us to against any other voice claiming to be wise when it is not: *It is written... It is written... It is written!* Mt 4. Written where? In the Scriptures. There you will find and can hear the actual voice of God!

If the voices you hear are contrary to what is clearly written, then run! For that is a false shepherd, a thief and a murderer of souls. Jesus warns, they are thieves who *come only to steal and kill and destroy.* False

doctrine is no trifling matter!

But when Jesus, the Good Shepherd, calls your name, follow him.

Psalm 23 is the favorite of many. It is called “the Shepherd Psalm.” *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...* But how can anyone make such a claim? How can anyone be certain that this Lord who alone can save us is indeed MY shepherd? Jesus said: *The (true Shepherd) man who enters by the gate ... 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.* There is a “gate,” that is, the God-ordained method of entry. And there is the sound of the true Shepherd calling your name. How can this be? What does the Scripture say? It says that the Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, who was the Sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, has ordained and instituted a means by which you can hear the Savior calling you personally.

And what are these means? What is written about your Baptism? It is written that with the pouring out of simple water the Holy Spirit, is *poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.* Titus 3 You can believe this! It is a *trustworthy saying.* You are PERSONALLY named an HEIR of eternal life! That is the voice of Jesus calling you! How sad it is for children whose parents listen to the false prophets who deny that Baptism is a miracle of God the Holy Spirit and then teach that we should not baptize infants since they cannot yet choose Jesus. They deny the fact that Jesus chooses them. Run from these wolves in sheep’s clothing!

Don’t look for any other assurance except in that other sacred act ordained by Christ: The Lord’s Supper! What an amazing gift to his Church! What if I would call each of you by name as I gave you the bread and wine to eat and to drink? It might be a nice touch to hear me speak your name: Joe, take and eat. This is the true body of our Lord Jesus Christ! It might be a nice touch, but you don’t need it since it is Jesus himself who says to the eater: *Take and eat; this is my body, given for you, for the forgiveness of sins.* Jesus already knows your name and you know his. So, with the simple eating and drinking of bread and wine, our Lord gives you himself as you receive what it is that he says you are receiving with the bread and wine: his true body and blood, all for the forgiveness of your sins.

How sad it is for those who hear false teachers tell them that the bread and wine only symbolize Jesus’ body and blood! How can they ever be certain that the Good Shepherd is with them when they have to think about symbolism or bread and wine instead of simply hearing the words of the Good Shepherd and believing those words as they eat and drink? One requires man’s thinking and the other requires faith in the voice of Jesus. Run from these wolves in sheep’s clothing!

When through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament you hear the voice of the Lord who has called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light, follow him. For Jesus says that: *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. ... I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ... 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.* Whenever you read that beautiful 23rd Psalm keep in mind that personal assurance that are symbolized by these words: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...* How do I know this? *... your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* And what are the “rod and staff” that are the personal comfort of our Lord’s presence? They are the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Think of the Lord’s Supper whenever you read: *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* Before the face of Satan, sin and death, Jesus sets before us his body and blood for us to eat and to drink. Who can overcome such a power? And think of the water of Baptism when you read: *You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* Old Testament anointings with oil indicated someone called and chosen. Your baptism is your personal reminder that you have been made an heir of God’s eternal kingdom. No wonder David writes: *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* Ps 23 As good Lutherans we have been taught to proclaim with Martin Luther: THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE!

Jesus is the Gate to eternal life. We have heard his voice calling our names and leading us with his Word and Sacraments to heaven! May we listen to no other voice, but faithfully and joyfully follow him there! Amen.