

Daily Discipleship

Fourth Sunday of Easter (A) – John 10:1-10

Discipleship: *An Instrument of Acceptance*

Focus Question: *This week how might you be an instrument of acceptance?*

word of life

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” John 10:10 (NRSV)

Read John 10:1-10

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is celebrated in many churches as “Good Shepherd Sunday”. The tenth chapter of the Gospel of John elaborates on the image of Jesus as a good shepherd. Jesus makes the claim, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11 NRSV)

1. *What does it mean for Jesus to be a shepherd?*
2. *What is the difference between a good and bad shepherd?*

John 10 begins with a description of a thief or bandit who might approach the sheep through a back way. Jesus offers words of caution about false shepherds, ones who do not have the best interest of the sheep in mind.

The good shepherd enters through the main gate for all to see. But what is more important, the sheep know his voice. Healthy sheep are not fooled and led by an impostor. The sheep know the voice of the shepherd because they have heard his voice and received his loving care. The shepherd has responded to their needs and is worthy of their trust. Jesus describes the shepherd as one who knows each of the sheep by name. The shepherd and sheep are not strangers to each other, but are connected in a special way. This is a powerful and assuring image.

3. *How does one learn the voice of a shepherd?*
4. *How is one not fooled by others?*
5. *What does it mean to be known by name by Jesus Christ?*

Those listening to Jesus do not understand his words and the metaphor. The audience might be the disciples of Jesus described in the previous section of John 9 when Jesus encounters the blind man whom he heals. (See John 9:2) Yet, John 9 is primarily about the Pharisees who try to grasp the healing of the blind man by Jesus. By the end of the chapter, it is the Pharisees who ask themselves if they are spiritually blind. In many ways the Pharisees have opportunities to shepherd God’s people of faith, but do they?

6. *Do you think Jesus was speaking directly to the Pharisees? How so?*
7. *How might Jesus have been addressing his disciples?*

At this point, Jesus departs from the image of being a shepherd and claims to be the gate. Jesus says, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. . . I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.” (John 10:7, 9 NRSV) In Jesus’ day, this would have been a powerful imagery. The shepherd would literally lie down in the opening of the enclosure to protect the sheep.

This section ends with the explanation from Jesus as to his purpose, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10 NRSV)

8. *Can Jesus give abundant life to those who do not hear him or believe in him? How so?*
9. *What does it mean for you to have abundant life from Jesus?*

word among us

Jake loved Frank Sinatra. He loved watching his movies and listening to Sinatra's music. For as long as he could remember, Jake's personal theme song was Sinatra's "My Way" with the repeated line, "I did it my way."

Jake lived defiantly with loud music and parties. He was not concerned about the opinions of others. He often ran into trouble with relationships, but he would rationalize people didn't try to understand and accept *his way*. It was always *their* problem. Jake would complain, "Why don't people just let me do it *my way*? His mother would lecture him, "Jake, you are not two years old anymore. You don't get to set your own rules and only do it *your way*. You have got to grow up and start thinking about other people." Jake could not accept his mother's words to him.

1. *What do you expect Jake's future will be like?*
2. *What would it be like to be in a relationship with Jake?*
3. *What do you think of his mother's words?*
4. *What else might you want to say to Jake?*
5. *How might Jake become more accepting?*

Living life *our way* and only on *our terms* is a description of sin. It simply does not work. We are limited in our understandings of this world and other people. We cannot become all-knowing or all-loving. We cannot change our finite abilities. We are not God. Let us accept that reality as something we cannot change.

Instead, we are in need of God. We are in need of a savior who comes to our rescue and shows us a new path. Jesus says clearly, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10 NRSV) Why choose to live life without a wise guide? Why choose to turn away from One who desires to give us abundant life?

6. *What is hard for you to accept?*
7. *What are some things you cannot change?*
8. *What does it feel like to realize you cannot change something?*
9. *How might we turn over those things we cannot change to God?*
10. *What might that feel like?*

Jesus is a caring shepherd who tends to our needs. He is One who knows us personally. Jesus does not desire to be a stranger, but One who is known by name and who knows us on a first name basis. He is one to nurture us when we cannot change the circumstances of our lives, but guides us to a path of abundant life.

11. *What do you hope to remember from this passage?*
12. *Take a moment to read or recite Psalm 23. Pause for prayer.*

Prayer

Good Shepherd, help me accept the things I cannot change in my life. Amen

Dig Deeper

Psalm 23

last word

Pray each day the Serenity Prayer:
God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can, and
wisdom to know the difference.



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4 Easter (A) Page 2 of 2