

TITLE: "How's Your Hearing?"

TEXTS: John 10:1-11, 22-30 (NT p.103-104)

Jesus says:

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

<sup>6</sup>Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup>So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. <sup>11</sup>"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

<sup>22</sup>At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup>and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup>So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup>Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; <sup>26</sup>but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. <sup>27</sup>My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup>I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup>What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup>The Father and I are one."

Introduction - How is your hearing?

A preacher at a revival said, "Anyone with 'special needs' who wants to be prayed over, please come forward to the front by the altar." ...With that, Leroy got in line, and when it was his turn, the preacher asked, "Leroy, what do you want me to pray about for you?"

Leroy replied, "Preacher, I need you to pray for help with my hearing."

The preacher then put one finger of one hand in Leroy's ear, placed his other hand on top of Leroy's head, and then prayed and prayed and prayed. He prayed a "blue streak" for Leroy, and the whole congregation joined in with great enthusiasm.

After a few minutes, the preacher removed his hands, stood back and asked, "Leroy, how is your hearing now?"

Leroy answered, "I don't know. My hearing ain't 'til next week."

Today is Father's Day. When Jesus taught us to pray, he began with the words: "Our Father, who art in heaven." In our text for this morning, Jesus says, "The Father and I are one." If you have faith in Jesus Christ, God IS your loving and kind Father and God wants each of us to experience the love of God our Father.

There are 3 things you can do to help you to EXPERIENCE the love of God more fully and two of them have to do with HEARING. They are:

LISTENING for the Lord's voice,  
KNOWING the Lord's voice and then  
FOLLOWING Jesus.

#### 1. LISTENING for the Lord's voice

Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice."

There are a LOT of voices out there.

Voices on our car radio.

Voices on Twitter and Face Book.

Voices on our cell phones and land lines.

Voices on TV.

The voices of our family, friends and people at work.

Some people turn on the radio or TV as soon as they wake up in the morning and they listen to some electronic device until they go to bed at night. I was walking on the greenway this past week and a guy was jogging while listening to something on stereo earphones and he almost ran into me.

I grew up thinking that I would relax and do what I wanted to do only when all my work was done. The problem was, of course, that I never got all the work done.

Now I just try to listen to God and see what God wants me to do. A lot of times this involves doing something that I do not particularly WANT to do, or feel competent to do, but then I just do whatever it is as an offering to God. The results have been amazing.

Last fall, the nominating committee at the presbytery asked me to serve on the Committee on Ministry. You may not know that pastors have to serve on at least one committee of presbytery. I had been serving on the Personnel Committee, but this new committee would take a LOT more time.

I already knew the answer: ...NO! I was already putting in too many hours a week. However, as a matter of form, I prayed about it. God said I was to serve on that new committee.

So ....I asked Carol what she thought (hoping that she would say, "NO WAY!") She got a "sort of good feeling about it."

So, I said, "Yes."

It has added about 14 hours a month to my schedule, but, you know, somehow things continue to get done. But the blessing has been that I have experienced a LOT more of God's love, joy and peace. I don't know about you, but I don't think you can beat love, joy and peace.

Jesus speaks in a "still small voice." If you are quiet and LISTEN for that voice, God, like a wonderful Father, will give you more and more love, joy and peace.

## 2. KNOWING the Lord's voice

Jesus says that his sheep will KNOW his voice.

A lot of Christians become exhausted trying to respond to the many voices they hear in life. The result is a life full of worry, frustration and anxiety. Jesus wants to spare us all that. But this requires us to DISTINGUISH the voice of Jesus from all the other voices out there. And there are plenty of other spiritual voices out there:

- The voices of success and financial security;
- The voices of fleeting pleasures;
- The voice of personal security; and
- The voices of material things.

Anything we think about more than the Lord is an idol. Idols TAKE all the time, effort and adulation we want to give them. But they give NO lasting return for our investment. On the other hand, the voice of Jesus brings us love, joy and peace in this life and life forever more in heaven.

### 3. FOLLOW Jesus

Jesus says, "I know my sheep and they follow me." Many people wander off the path of faith to follow other people.

**Bernie Madoff** was, at one time, the non-executive chairman of the NASDAQ stock market. In March 2009, Madoff pleaded guilty to 11 federal felonies and admitted to turning his wealth management business into a massive Ponzi scheme that defrauded thousands of investors of billions of dollars. Madoff said he began the Ponzi scheme in the early 1990s. The amount missing from client accounts, including fabricated gains, was almost \$65 billion. On June 29, 2009, Bernie Madoff was sentenced to prison and is scheduled to be released 11/14/2139, 148 years from this coming November.

I just read about a widowed lady in England who was in her 80s. She responded to an email from a retired Colonel of her Majesty's Army who lived in Kenya. At first, she was suspicious, but he sent pictures and sent such lovely letters that she became committed. Soon she sent him money for various things including a trip from Kenya to London so they could finally meet. He never did show up. Come to find out, "The Colonel" was a native Kenyan with a wife and many children.

I think the count is up to 4 New York congressmen who have been brought up on sexual misconduct charges; Weiner is just the latest in the bunch.

Who are YOU going to follow? Jesus says, "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through Me." If we follow Jesus, we WILL come to the Father and we WILL experience the love, joy and peace of the Father now and forever.

Conclusion – "Howie get That?"

Let me close with a story from *Guideposts* January 2011. It's by Charlene Holeda:

My 14-year-old granddaughter loves horses. She's been riding for four years, but when her mother told me they were getting her a bigger horse I worried. Horses are temperamental creatures. What if this new mount was hard to handle?

My daughter tried to reassure me when I stopped by one day. "Mom, we've made a list of the qualities we want in a horse and the price we can pay," she said. "Megan, her dad, and I are praying over that list. God will hear us."

That night I said my own prayer just in case. I prayed, “*Lord, I need to be sure they find the right horse for Megan. So I’m asking for an unmistakable sign: a white spot in the shape of a heart.*” I figured that wouldn’t be too hard for God to handle. Lots of horses have white splotches.

A couple days later my daughter and I were eating lunch at a fast-food place when wouldn’t you know—a man walked in wearing spurs. We decided to ask him if he knew of anyone selling a horse in the area.

“As a matter of fact, I just came from a farm where a woman has a registered quarter horse for sale,” the man told us. He’s brown with some white marking on his belly. Here, I’ll give you directions to the place.

Howie the horse was everything we’d prayed for. He was bigger than the horse Megan had now, and he appeared to be calm and responsive. Plus the price was right. Better than right, in fact.

“Howie’s got a flaw for the breed,” the owner explained. “That’s why he’s so cheap.” We checked out the horse from nose to tail. He seemed perfectly fine to me. “What’s the flaw you mentioned?” I asked.

The owner pointed to a white splotch on the horse’s belly. I looked more closely and caught my breath. It was shaped like a perfect heart!

“Quarter horses only come in solid colors,” he said. “This one threw us all for a loop when we saw the white spot. That’s how he got his name.”

“Howie?” I asked.

The owner grinned. “It’s short for ‘Howie get that?’”

How? I knew.

Whether she knew it or not, when she prayed the Lord GAVE her the image of the horse with the heart-shaped spot. Therefore, she KNEW the horse when she found it.

When you LISTEN to the Lord’s voice, get to KNOW the Lord’s voice and begin to FOLLOW Jesus, things like this will happen all the time. And you will find more love, joy and peace than you ever imagined. And you will HAVE that love, joy and peace forever and ever. ...Amen.