**Hear God’s Voice**

John 10:1-11

Arguably the whole Christian life boils down to a single commitment: ***to hear God’s voice and obey***.

What does it mean to call Jesus your “Lord” if you do not obey Him?

Two words that don’t go together are “No, Lord.” If you are going to say, “Lord,” then you can’t precede it with “No.”

Peter did one time - with the sheet full of animals. We read the story in Acts 10:

“And there came a voice to him: ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.’” Acts 10:13-14

Now, in his defense, ***Peter was trying to obey the rules*** he had learned as a good Jewish boy. The animals he saw before him included pigs and vultures, lizards and eels - animals that were clearly forbidden to Jews as unclean.

But this lesson wasn’t about animals and food laws. ***It was about GENTILES and the church***. For generations, just as the Jewish people had avoided certain kinds of food, so they had carefully avoided contact with non-Jews; those unclean, pagan barbarians. Peter heard the clear voice of the Lord there in Acts 10 and helped lead the mostly Jewish church to embrace gentiles in their gatherings.

Even so, later in his ministry, ***Peter fell back into his old habits*** and started avoiding gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14).

“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned… But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all…” Galatians 2:10,14

Paul called him out on this publicly and Peter repented, acknowledging that he had strayed from the clear direction of God. This shows that even godly Christian leaders - even apostles like Peter - can hear God’s voice clearly one day and a few weeks or months later completely disregard and disobey God’s direction. ***Which is why we NEED EACH OTHER!***

Paul was a newcomer to leadership in the early church and his boldness and directness must have been a challenge at times. ***But God used his passion and convictions*** to keep the early church on track with welcoming gentiles and on mission with reaching more people and places with the gospel.

Now, let’s go to this beautiful passage in John 10 where we will learn three principles for hearing God’s voice:

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Come** when He calls you
2. You **Go** where He leads you
3. You **Do** what He tells you

Very simple. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. We are His sheep. When our Shepherd and Master and Owner calls us - we come. When He leads us to green pastures and quiet waters, we go with Him. When He guides us through the valley of the shadow of death, we keep walking with Him. When He shows us someone who needs His love - we share His love with them.

In this short series we’ve called **Experience God** ***we are preparing for an outreach effort*** using the next sermon series, **Meet Jesus** that is loosely based on the show The Chosen. You might love The Chosen, you might not like it - you might not know anything about it. That is neither here nor there. The point is for each of us to prayerfully identify 1 or 2 people who are already in our lives that we can help to MEET JESUS this fall.

**Experience God**

* Hear God’s Voice
* Know God’s Heart
* See God’s Hand
* Show God’s Love
* Share God’s Grace

Next week we will study Luke 15 - the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost sons - to be reminded of ***God’s heart for the lost, hurting and broken*** people around us. Our challenge this week and next is to **start praying** for 1-2 people God has placed in your life who don’t yet know Jesus but who you can reach out to through this fall.

Then we will look at some ***signs that God is working*** on someone’s heart - that He is actively drawing them to Jesus. Our mission as a church is to “join God in His work” - so we need to be aware of **the signs that God is working**. They are showing interest in spiritual things. They are asking questions. They are open to conversation about Jesus and the Bible. Sometimes we keep knocking on the same door even when the person makes it clear that the door is closed and locked tight. But just a house or two further down there might be a wide open door! Where is God already working?

We will wrap up this series with **the double calling to be salt and light** - to show the love of Jesus even as we share the grace of Jesus. Outreach needs to involve both love and truth. If all we do is love and serve people they will conclude WE are great. We have to support our good deeds with the good NEWS of Jesus’ death and resurrection. But if all we do is preach about Jesus and we don’t love and serve people, our words will ring hollow. So we need both. Show and share. Proclamation and demonstration.

Now, ***let’s listen for God’s voice as He leads us to the right people and the right opportunities.***

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Come** when He calls you

“The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” John 10:3

Verse one introduced the villain - a thief and robber - trying to steal sheep. That criminal tries to sneak in over the fence. But the true shepherd comes in by the gate. And the true shepherd is already known to the sheep. They know his voice and his scent and his hand.

Isn’t it beautiful here that ***“he calls his own sheep by name”***? The Lord of heaven and earth - the Creator and Sovereign Ruler over all things - knew your name and called you to belong to Him even before the creation of the world! Ephesians 1 tells us that. The reason you know His voice is because He made you to belong to Him. He chose YOU long before you ever chose Him.

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Come** when He calls you

“He goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” John 10:4

Sheep are easily frightened. They won’t follow a stranger, but will run from him, scattering every which way. But their own shepherd they will come to - they will gather around him. They know him. And because they know him, they follow his voice.

Notice how shepherding sheep is different from herding cattle. Cowboys prod herds of cattle from behind and beside them, chasing and often scaring them forward. Shepherds lead from the front, calling the sheep to come along with them.

The Holy Spirit can certainly be like a sheep dog, nipping your heels if you stray away. But most of the time Jesus leads us slowly, gently, from out in front. ***And He is so patient*** to move ahead and then wait for us to catch up and stay with Him. But let’s start at the beginning:

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Come** when He calls you
	* Because you **Know** Him as the only **Savior**

“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.” John 10:7

***Jesus is the ONLY WAY*** into a reconciled relationship with God the Father. He alone is the gate - the door you can enter through to be forgiven and transformed - to be redeemed and adopted into the family of God.

We have 7 people who will be baptized this morning! They will share their testimonies of how they came to hear God’s voice and put their faith in Jesus as the only Savior - as THEIR personal Savior and Lord. Each one was called by name and when their shepherd called, they came. Look at the promise in verse 9.

1. You **Come** when He calls you
	* Because you **Know** Him as the only **Savior**

“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

Asking Jesus to forgive you and save you is ***the BEGINNING not the end***. It brings you into a relationship with the God of heaven - it opens up the Kingdom of God to you where you go in and out and find new life and peace and joy and love and purpose! And that’s our second point today:

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Go** where He leads you

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

We have an enemy - the thief - the devil - whose job is to steal and kill and destroy. But Jesus came to give us life, now and forever! The more you know Jesus the more you will joyfully follow His leading in your life. ***Because He IS the Good Shepherd***. He is not out to ruin your fun or steal your joy - His goal is to bless you and lead you to the life that will bring maximum glory to God and maximum fruitfulness to you.

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Go** where He leads you
	* Because you **Trust** Him as the Good **Shepherd**

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11

Jesus proved His love once and for all on the cross. “Greater love has no one than this - that he lay down his life for his friends.” If you focus on evil and suffering in the world, or the pain and loss you’ve had to go through yourself, you might struggle to believe that God is love. But if you **focus on the cross**, you see the fullness of God’s amazing love and infinite grace.

When Jesus saw our greatest enemies - sin and death - He didn’t run the other way. He didn’t abandon us to face them on our own. Jesus - our Great Champion - faced sin and death for us. And he conquered death by dying. He paid for sin by taking it all upon Himself.

***Like Aslan on the stone table***, the only Righteous One died in the place of the traitor and the stone table of justice cracked when the willing sacrifice died because the traitor could now be released. Justice was satisfied. Grace could be given.

When Jesus leads you to a friend or neighbor, a co-worker or family member - you GO because you trust your Good Shepherd. You know His voice, you trust His leading. And you DO what your Lord calls you to do.

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Do** what He tells you

“I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.” John 10:16

Those “other sheep” are GENTILES - that’s US. Jesus died for you and for me. He died and rose again to bring us into the ONE CHURCH - the ONE family of God, the One flock.

As we saw at the start, if you call Jesus LORD it means you are committed to obeying Him. “No, Lord,” are two words that do not go together. “Yes, Lord,” should always be on our lips. He shows you 1-2 people to pray for - and you pray for them. He prompts you to go talk with them and you go. He leads you to serve them in some specific way and you obey.

We often think of Jesus as our “buddy,” but the truth is He is our LORD. Our Master. Our King.

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Do** what He tells you
	* Because you **Love** Him as your **King**

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John 14:15

This is what our baptism candidates will profess as they stand in the water: that Jesus is their Savior and LORD. That He is their Master, their King and they love Him. Jesus said the sign of true love for Him is obedience. And the most important commands of Jesus are to love God and love people. It’s as clear and simple as that.

And that’s what this Experience God series is about: that we will love God so much that we follow His leading to love the people in our lives. And that begins with PRAYER.

Who is in your life that God is calling you to pray for regularly and reach out to over the next few weeks? Think about your friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers. Think about where you live, work, study and play.

***You came when Jesus called your name.*** Do you remember how He did that? It was through another PERSON. God doesn’t very often speak directly from the clouds. He prefers to work through everyday Christians like you and me.

**If Jesus is your Lord:**

1. You **Come** when He calls you
2. You **Go** where He leads you
3. You **Do** what He tells you

You come - because you KNOW HIM as the only Savior.
You go - because you trust Him as the Good Shepherd.

And you do what he tells you - because you love Him as your King.

Let’s pray as we celebrate God’s work in the hearts and lives of these precious ones who are here to pledge themselves to King Jesus this morning!