

Church of All Nations

John 10;22-30

May 11, 2025

It has been quite a multi national morning. Which is fitting for a congregation known as the Church of All Nations. For our visitors I can say that the congregation came to be known as Church All Nations in the sixties when there was a lot of involvement with the residents in the high rise towers at the back of the church (still is) - classes for migrants learning English and what was particularly interesting simultaneous translation of the morning worship service into 4 languages. Spanish, Arabic, Greek, Turkish, Portuguese? name background

And that was done so that all worshippers could, in the verse from today's reading, Hear the voice of the shepherd.

All with one thing in mind- hear the voice of our shepherd.

I have a mental block when we get too much sheep and shepherd talk in church. When sheep readings come around this fourth Sunday in Easter I cringe. Always from John 10. I think I heard too many sermons growing up that went into excruciatingly detailed analysis of the pastoral practices within Palestine in the first century. Too much of that and it would have the strange effect of making us adopt all the worst qualities of sheep – a herd mentality, docile, passive, mindless - all that Jesus was not!

So I will not mention pastoral practices in 1st century Palestine very different to Australian sheep farming practices, and I doubt many Australian sheep farmers have taught their sheep to recognise their voices.; but will reflect on the verse, My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. Not a bad definition/description of the Church - the fellowship of those who hear the voice of Jesus and follow.

Jason, Ubuntu choir, new Pope - believers united in faith

I think you could say any Christian has but one task - to listen and to hear the voice of the Lord. To hear in the meaning of the gospel of John means more than just physically hear (presumably those opponents of

Jesus could on the literal physical level hear his voice. But they did not recognise it in the sense of give weight, authority, credibility to it. it but recognise it.

And that is an ongoing challenge. How do you recognise Jesus voice? How do you know it is Jesus and not some false shepherd? It is not perfectly obvious otherwise there would not be the divisions and factions and in the church. Jesus does not always say the thing we either expect or would like him to say. There are hard sayings from Jesus. Quite a few of them.

Why we gather in worship, bible study, prayer

There are numerous ways we can not hear the voice of someone.

Everything from deliberate attempts to mislead us - fake news

I have a bit of a thing about people who ring up and start talking without saying who it is- assuming you will recognise them and their voice.

Spooky when our phones listen to us. How you can talking about some product and next thing you get an unsolicited ad for that product?

And what is very common - when we are listening to someone and they say something that triggers off a thought in our head and we don't listen to anything else they say from that point onwards because we are just waiting for them to finish so we can say our piece

Interesting to ponder what voices you listen to, what or whose voice you give most weight to.

Slide of sheep/shepherd

The voice we are listening for calls our name. That is one of the things, and one of the first things this voice of the Shepherd says. Our name. And we are very good at hearing our name and we love to hear our name.

Curved dam wall where can hear a whisper from the other side of the dam.

Mary heard the voice in the cemetery that Easter morning. Just her name. Not her personal security number or account number or her pin number. Jesus did not say oh 6419 you came to tend to me. Her own name.

All people are called by Jesus; all invited to be part of the flock. All are included

“We value inclusivity”. To be honest inclusivity is a word that is in danger of being reduced to a slogan, a word that is a bit trendy at the moment. Don’t get me wrong, it’s a great word and a concept I am completely committed to but one of those words that is code – we line up on what is known as the progressive wing of the church.

To be true to the costly inclusivity of Jesus we have to work a bit harder.

There is what I call a “soft” inclusivity – that is bland tolerance where you include everyone because you accept anything and anyone because you don’t know what you stand for and you are scared of giving offence, and who am I to sit in judgement upon you.

Then there is the costly inclusivity of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd that is founded not upon a lack of any strong convictions, not upon personal preference, but upon the conviction that God in Jesus Christ really has taken the costly and decisive move and this includes all humanity.

And because we humans are creatures that apparently cannot live without divisions and factions caused by ego, ideology and greed, any saviour, any Good Shepherd, has to be able to include both all our wondrous diversity and to overcome all our addiction to warfare and violence.

This is the Christian claim, in this particular life of Jesus of Nazareth, the universal (humanity) is gathered together.

What this means is that as a disciple of Jesus Christ I am not at liberty, I literally do not have the option of not embracing another person as a sister/brother. Even the one with whom I strongly disagree.