

Today is Mother’s Day. We should thank God for our mothers. When we were helpless, our mothers fed us and clothed us and gave us love and affection. The relationship between a mother and her child has some comparisons to the relationship between a Shepherd and his sheep. We sometimes even refer to children as precious little lambs. Just like a little child depends on his mother, a sheep depends on his Shepherd. Even as an adult I can still say, “I am Jesus’ little lamb.” I still need to be guided by my Shepherd’s voice. I still need to be protected by his hand. Apart from my Shepherd’s guidance and care I am completely helpless. And so I should always be growing closer to my Shepherd. So the theme for our sermon today is:

Grow Closer to Your Shepherd

- I. He guides you with his voice.**
- II. He protects you with his hand.**

I.

First, Grow Closer to Your Shepherd because he guides us with his voice. Jesus was in Jerusalem for a festival and his enemies surrounded him and said, “**How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly**” (John 10:24). Did you notice that they blamed Jesus for their unbelief? They accused Jesus of not being clear enough. “**If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly,**” they said. But Jesus had made it crystal clear with his words and with his miracles that he was the Messiah, the Savior of the world. **Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.”** (John 10:25-26) They said he wasn’t being clear enough. But Jesus had spoken clearly, they just weren’t listening to his voice.

Do we ever act like the enemies of Jesus here? Do we ever blame other people for our problems, when actually the problem is that we have not been listening to the voice of Jesus? Sometimes when I’m driving I will use the GPS on my phone as my navigational system. If I get to a place where I know where I’m going, I sometimes disregard what the GPS tells me to do. It tells me to turn right in 400 feet, and instead I go straight because I know a better way. Sometimes we do that with Jesus’ voice. He gives us a command in his word, but we disregard his voice because we think we know a better way. But when we disregard our Shepherd’s voice, we always end up getting lost. The Bible says, “**We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way**” (Isaiah 53:6a). But that verse goes on to say, “**And the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all**” (Isaiah 53:6b). Earlier in John chapter 10, Jesus said, “**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep**” (John 10:11). Jesus laid down his life for us on the cross. That paid for all the times that we’ve disregarded his voice. And then three days later Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus said, “**I lay down my life – only to take it up again**” (John 10:17b). And now the risen Good Shepherd guides us with his voice.

Jesus says, “**My sheep listen to my voice, I know them and they follow me**” (10:27). The voice of a mother is very comforting to a child. A mother’s voice is often very soothing to a child. When we are afraid Jesus’ voice is also very soothing to us. A mother’s voice can also guide and teach a child. Jesus’ voice also guides and teaches us. His voice teaches us what’s right and wrong. We grow closer to our Shepherd when we are guided by his voice.

Hearing the mother’s voice strengthens the relationship between mother and child. Hearing our Shepherd’s voice also strengthens the relationship between us and our Shepherd. Notice in this passage how much Jesus emphasizes the close relationship between him and his sheep. “**My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.**” (John 10:27)

And we hear Jesus’ voice in the Bible. This is why it is so important to come to church every Sunday to hear his Word read and explained. We hear Jesus’ voice when we come to Bible class and Sunday school. Our children

hear Jesus' voice when his word is taught in our grade school. You hear Jesus' voice when you read the Bible at home in your room and with your family at the kitchen table. Grow closer to your Shepherd because he guides you with his voice. Second, grow closer to your good Shepherd because he protects you with his hand.

II.

In this Gospel so far Jesus has focused on his voice. Now Jesus starts to focus on his hand. Verse 28 says, **“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”** Have you ever been to a petting zoo? Usually at a petting zoo you can put a quarter into a machine and little food pellets will come out. And you can feed the animals. They will eat the pellets right out of your hand. Jesus our Good Shepherd feeds us from his hand. But Jesus feeds us with eternal life. He says, **“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish” (John 10:28).**

With his hand Jesus feeds us and with his hand Jesus also protects us. He says, **“No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (John 10:28b-30).** Would you say that you have strong hands? When the lid on the pickle jar is on too tight, can you get it off? Jesus and his Father have very strong hands. And that’s comforting to know when we are afraid. When we are scared, we remember that Jesus and his Father have very strong hands. Psalm 23 says, **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).** Jesus and God the Father have very strong hands. Because of those strong hands, the Apostle Paul said, **“I am convinced that death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).** Jesus and his Father have very strong hands and no one can pluck you out of them.

A song that a lot of mother’s teach their children is “He’s got the whole world in his hands. ... He’s got everybody here in hands.” **“No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:28-29)** Grow closer to your Shepherd because you can find comfort in knowing that you are protected by his hand.

On this Mother’s Day we remember how we received care and love from our mothers. On this Good Shepherd Sunday we think about the care and love we receive from our Good Shepherd. Let that be a reminder to us to grow closer to our Shepherd because the Good Shepherd guides us with his voice and protects us with his hand. Amen.