

SERMON FOR MAY 5, 2019

TEXT: JOHN 10: 22-30

THEME: HEARING JESUS' VOICE AND FOLLOWING HIM

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, **23** and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. **24** So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." **25** Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. **27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one."

In the name of Jesus:

A popular children's game is follow the leader. One child is the leader, and the rest of the pack is to follow the leader. If you don't follow the leader, you lose. Just like the game, following the leader is difficult for adults as well. One of the difficulties of life is trying to follow someone when you are driving in traffic. The lead car knows where they are going; if you are following you don't know where you are going. So the trick is to keep close enough to the lead car so as not to get lost. The situation becomes problematic when you lose sight of the leader. If traffic is heavy, you are trying to stay close, but other cars get in the way. You lose sight of the leader, and once you do that, you have

the greater likelihood of getting lost. The goal in following someone to the destination that you want to arrive at, you need to keep your eyes on the leader and follow the leader, for the leader knows where they are going.

But, you think, what happens if you don't follow the leader, if you get lost because the leader doesn't know where they are going? It has happened to me, where there have been times where I have gotten lost because the leader doesn't know where they are going! How can you get anywhere where you want to go if you don't know the directions and if the leader you have chosen to follow doesn't know where they are going? That is a recipe for disaster. So it is with your life. We need to learn to listen to Jesus, to hear His voice and to follow Him, for His Words give us life and lead us to eternal life.

People today think that there are many options out there that all roads lead to heaven. All one must do then is be sincere, for after all, God understands and God is a God of love, so if you are just sincere in your faith then all will be well. That is not what Jesus says in our Gospel lesson for today! If you choose to follow the wrong leader, then that leader and those who follow will end up in Hell!

Look at what Jesus is saying today. It was during the time of Hanukkah, where the Jews were going to the Temple to celebrate the rededication of the Temple. The Temple was destroyed in the time of the Exile, and then rebuilt when the Jews returned to Jerusalem. Hanukkah celebrates the rebuilding of the Temple and its rededication to God as a place where God dwells. During this time, while Jesus was walking in the Temple, the Jews gathered around Jesus and cornered Him. They asked Him: "How long will you keep us in suspense, if you are the Christ, tell us plainly." This is similar question that John the Baptist's disciples asked Jesus: "Are you the Christ or are we to look for another?" Then, and now, Jesus answers them by telling them that they should be reading the signs. The Old Testament promised that when the Messiah, when Christ would come, that He would work miracles, that the lame would walk, the deaf and dumb be healed, the lepers cleansed, and the dead raised from the grave. That is why Jesus answers: "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep."

You are not My sheep. Theses are powerful words, damning words! God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to seek and

save the lost. Christ came so that all might have eternal life. But these Jews who question Jesus, challenge Jesus' authority and **they do not choose to follow Jesus. They love their life and they do not believe that they need a Savior, so they don't follow Jesus.** Jesus plainly tells them that He is the Good Shepherd, but these have chosen to follow shepherds of their own making and of their own choosing. They don't believe because they are not Jesus' sheep, they choose not to be Jesus' sheep, they want no part of Jesus.

It is the same today. Many do not want to follow Jesus. They openly follow their sinful desires, seeking to live a life apart from Christ. They follow gods and idols of their own making, their wants, their needs, their lifestyle has become more important than God. They have made themselves into a god, and openly mock the one true God.

God will not be mocked. He says that I the Lord your God am a jealous God and that He will not give His honor or glory to anyone or anything else! God holds the unbeliever accountable. And God holds you accountable! For Satan and your sinful flesh is alive and well and works in opposition to God and His will. Satan whispers into your ear and speaks to your heart telling you lies, twisting God's Word and His truth. "Go ahead," he says, "do your own thing, do what feels right to

you.” And so you live your life as if you matter the most, and if God doesn’t matter. Instead of forgiving those who have wronged you, you hold a grudge in your heart. Rather than putting the best construction on all things, you believe rumors and do your part to spread gossip thereby doing harm to your neighbor. God seeks to be first in all things, but you have rearranged your priorities where God gets the short straw. You love life and the things of this world, thereby worshipping the creation at the expense of worshipping the Creator. You have at times chosen in your life to follow yourself, your desires, the world, and you have not loved nor followed God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength.

God calls you to repent this day, to confess your sins and to follow Christ. Why should you follow Jesus? Listen to what Jesus says: “**27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” You are God’s little lamb. Jesus has bought you with a price, you don’t belong to yourself, you belong to Him, for He has purchased and won you from sin, Satan, and death, not with silver or gold, but with His holy precious blood, His innocent suffering and death. Jesus not only died for you but He rose from the grave! He lives today to forgive you and to give you new life!

This is what Jesus means when He says:” **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one.” In Holy Baptism God has called you by name and you belong to Him. His promise to you is that He gives you eternal life, eternal life that began at your Baptism, eternal life that you are called to live now. Your life matters, how you live your life matters, to God and to others. You are called to be God’s child in Jesus Christ and to follow Jesus in all you do. But how do you follow Him? Jesus says that He knows you. He doesn’t know of you, He knows you intimately. God the Father has created you, Jesus has paid the price to make you His own, the Holy Spirit has been given to you in your Baptism so that now you have been chosen to follow Jesus. You follow Jesus by first of all knowing who Jesus is and where He is going. Jesus says that He and the Father are One, that He has been sent by the Father to be the Way to eternal life. Believe on Christ and you will be saved! Jesus is the Way, Truth, and Life, no one comes to the Father except through Him, Jesus. Today you hear His voice as He speaks to you in His word. Today He strengthens your faith and blesses you with His good gifts. You hear

Jesus' voice and you then follow Him. You follow Him where He leads.

And where is that?

You follow Jesus in this life in all that you do. As a parent you follow Him as you raise your children in the Church, giving them faith in Christ so that they are equipped to live their life to the glory of God. When married you follow Him as you crucify your selfishness in love and honor of your spouse, treating your spouse as God's gift to you. As a friend you live your life following Jesus, showing that you love God first and foremost, and by inviting all you know to follow Jesus with you. You follow Jesus in this life, and you follow Him into eternal life, knowing that God has chosen you, you will never be plucked out of the Father's hand, and that no matter what happens to you, nothing will ever separate you from God's love for you in Jesus Christ.

Nathaniel Greene is a Christian artist who has painted a number of paintings, one of which shows Jesus holding a black lamb. The message behind this painting is simple; Jesus loves everyone, even those who have gone astray. Jesus is the Lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world. He is the One of whom it is written: "After these things I saw, and lo, a great multitude, which to number no one was able, out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing

before the throne, and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands **10** and crying with a great voice, 'The salvation [is] to Him who is sitting upon the throne -- to our God, and to the Lamb... He (is the One who) who is sitting upon the throne (living among His people and leading His people). **16** they shall not hunger any more, nor may the sun fall upon them, nor any heat, **17** because the Lamb that [is] in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and wipe away shall God every tear from their eyes.'" God has chosen you in Christ to be His people. He leads you in Christ to eternal life. Follow Him, for He will never let the righteous fall.

To the glory of God and in Jesus'

name.

Amen