

Union Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **"My Sheep Know and Hear My Voice, and Follow Me" Part 1**

September 10th, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Romans 8:9-16; John 10:6-15, 27-28**

Jesus was unequivocal in his statements in John 10:

"4b The sheep follow him [the shepherd] because **they know his voice.**"

"14 I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and **my sheep know me.**"

"27 **My sheep listen to my voice;** I know them, and they follow me" NIV

"27 **My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.**" NRSV

Is that your experience? Are you his sheep? Do you know his voice? Do you hear his voice? And, if you are hearing and recognizing his voice, are you following his leading and instructions?

How do we get to the point where we truly know and hear his voice and are able to follow the leading of Jesus through His Holy Spirit? That is the theme of this sermon series.

1. Foundations: New Birth, Work of the Holy Spirit, Revealed Knowledge

- **Be Born Again, Making Jesus Lord**

 - Becoming "Born Again"***

Jesus taught that we must be born again to experience the Kingdom of God.

"Very truly I tell you, **no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.** 4" How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered,

"Very truly I tell you, **no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.**" John 3:3-5 NIV

This is a very important passage of scripture. What happens to us when we receive Jesus and believe in him for our salvation is that ***our inner being (our spirit) is reborn by the Spirit of God. Some call this regeneration.*** This is what it means to be born again.

To appreciate this, bear in mind that there are three parts to a human, according to the scriptures: spirit, soul, and body.

Paul names these in his prayer for the Thessalonian Christians:

"May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23 NIV

Sometimes the scriptures refer to the human spirit as the heart, and sometimes it's called the inner being. It is the inner being or spirit of a person that is reborn by the Holy Spirit.

How do we become born again?

- Receiving Jesus as our Messiah and Savior
- Believing in Christ, and yielding our lives to Him
- Repenting from our sins, confessing our sins to God, and confessing Jesus as our Lord

These simple acts have profound implications. By them we give God permission to transform our lives and lead us.

Some scriptures that highlight these points:

"To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" – John 1:12 NIV

"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." Romans 10:9-10 NIV

What happens to us when we become born again?

- Our spirit is transformed by the Holy Spirit
- We are marked with the Holy Spirit as a seal in Christ.
"When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance ..." Ephesians 1:13-14 NIV

That is to say, every Christian received the Holy Spirit as part of the act of becoming a Christian.

What this means is that the Holy Spirit who gave birth to our spirit in Christ marks us. Jesus said he will be in us. If He truly is in us, then surely, He interacts with our spirits as well.

Becoming born again is the start of a lifetime walk with the Spirit of God, who can lead us to success in every area of our lives.

- ***Making Jesus Lord***

After we become born again, then what should happen next?

We should genuinely make Jesus the Lord of our lives.

This simply means that Jesus has the final say in everything that pertains to our lives. In the words of Jesus, we are not to merely give lip service to his being Lord of our lives.

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

Luke 6:46 NIV

As Paul puts it,

“He [Jesus] died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.”

2 Corinthians 5:15 NRSV

“For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. **8If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.**” Romans 14:7-9 NIV

It is not enough to accept and believe in Christ Jesus. We must make Him Lord of our lives. This means living according to what he desires and instructs us to do.

2. **The Inner/Inward Witness**

John Wesley's father, Samuel, was an Anglican priest for decades in England. On his death bed he said to John:

"The inward witness, son, the inward witness; this is the proof, the strongest proof, of Christianity."

John consequently spent a lot of time studying the subject and left a record of 3 excellent sermons on the subject. You'll find these if you Google for "Wesley inner witness."

The Holy Spirit is not just in us to be a spectator.

One of the most important roles He is to play in our lives is to lead us. Our Romans 8 reading today includes this statement:

"... those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God"

Romans 8: 14 NIV

As Jesus said:

"the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything" John 14:26 NRSV

In the most important event in the Christians life, becoming a Christian, we only know we are Christians because of this inner witness.

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" Romans 8:16 NKJV

Some versions (NIV, for example) use "testifies" instead of "bears witness"

We know we are Christians because of the Spirit's witness in our hearts. Paul said this after saying that those who are led by the Spirit are God's children. In other words, the first "bearing witness" is that we are God's children. But that "bearing witness" should continue as He leads us in all things because His leading us is also evidence of our being children of God.

- **Holy Spirit Given Knowledge**

Revelation knowledge is that which is “revealed by God to humans.”¹

12Now **we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.**” 1 Corinthians 1:12 NKJV

3. **Living Sacrifice: Testing, Knowing, and Doing God’s Will In Every Situation**

As discussed last week, Paul gives us three practical steps:

- **Continually Offering Ourselves as Living Sacrifices to God**

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to **offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.**” Romans 12:1 NIV

- **A Refusal to Conform to the Patterns of this World & Mind Renewal**

“**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**” Romans 12:2a NIV

- **Test & Approve what God’s Will Is**

“**Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**” Romans 12:2b NIV

Lastly, it takes faith!

It takes living by faith and holding on to Jesus’ promise that we, as his sheep, know and hear his voice and follow him.

“My righteous one will live by faith.

And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” Hebrews 10:38 NIV

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” Ephesians 2:8 NIV

¹ Definition of revelation by Miriam Webster dictionary.