

## Do You Hear His Voice?

May 7, 2006

(Easter 4 - Year B)

John 10: 11-16

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

When my little brother, David, and I were growing up, both of us had terrible problems with ear aches.

My brother and I had tubes put in our ears several times, in order to relieve painful ear infections.

Back in those "ancient days," our doctor would put tubes in our ears in his office, with only local anesthesia.

One time, when my brother was in first grade, he had tubes put in his ears at the doctor's office.

But, the next day he had a big birthday party that he had been invited to. Yet, it was really windy outside and the doctor didn't want him to go outside in that wind with tubes in his ears.

But, the doctor *would* allow David to go to the party if he put cotton into his ears to prevent the wind from affecting them.

So, my Mom sent my brother David off to the big birthday party with cotton balls stuffed into his ears to keep the wind out.

However, my Mom worried and fretted the whole time that David was at that party,

Because my Mom was afraid that the other kids would make fun of him. And, that my brother would feel self-conscious and would have a miserable time.

After a few hours, we went to pick up my brother from the birthday party,

And as we rounded the street corner,

We saw 15 first grade boys playing outside in the front yard,

And each of those boys had cotton balls stuffed into their ears!

Now, *that* is one example of good leadership!

Another example of good leadership is in the Gospel of John, as Jesus says:

“I am the good shepherd.  
I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.  
I must bring them [and lead them] also,  
And they will listen to my voice.  
So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

My brother, David, brought people in and led them, by persuading the other boys at the birthday party that having cotton balls in your ears can be cool.

Jesus brings people in and leads them, by persuading us that he is the Good Shepherd who knows each of us by name.

I do not believe that it is a coincidence that my first Sunday as your rector occurs on Good Shepherd Sunday.

For, I have been called to St. Alban's to be your priest and your pastor. I have been called to be a good shepherd among you.

However, my focus as your shepherd is not just inward.

My focus as your rector and shepherd is outward.

My focus is on the sheep that do not belong to this fold.

For I must bring them and lead them also,

So that we will be one flock.

It is no secret, in this church or in the Waco community, that this parish has seen distress within the flock in the last several years.

Yet, this parish has persevered and been faithful in prayer and worship.

And, I stand here in this pulpit to declare to you today

That a *new day* has dawned at St. Alban's.

We will take the gifts of this beautiful worship space, this inspiring music and the good and godly heritage of this parish,

And we will offer the gifts of mystery and prayer and spirituality out into a world that is starving for love and forgiveness and meaning.

We will do all this so that we will be one flock.

But, as we rejoice in a new chapter for St. Alban's today.

I want to let you all in on a little secret:

*I am not Jesus.*

And, if you don't believe me, then just ask my wife, Susan.

My job is to be your rector.

But, I am not Jesus.

My job is to be A good shepherd, to bring you and lead you to THE  
Good Shepherd:

For it is only THE Good Shepherd, Jesus, who completely loves us,  
cares for us and knows us by name.

I thank you that you have prayed for me and anticipated my arrival and  
that of my family,

Yet, I dare say, that I will disappoint you on occasion and I will not  
please everyone.

But, I do promise to be a faithful and prayerful shepherd.

I do promise to lead you by whatever means I can:

Whether by example or by preaching or by teaching or by listening or by  
persuading you to put cotton balls in your ears.

However, we as a parish will not lead people to the Good Shepherd  
using strong arm tactics.

There is enough Christianity out there that leads by guilt or force or  
power point presentations.

We will lead and bring other sheep by listening intently for God's still  
small voice.

We will lead and bring in other sheep by being a unique witness in the  
Waco community, testifying that there are still places where you  
can find Jesus in the beauty and power of holiness.

We will lead and bring in other sheep by being a place where God's  
sheep can hear the voice of God, calling each of them by name.

And, I am not the only shepherd in this room.  
It is *your job* to be a shepherd to others,  
To bring in sheep that do not belong to this fold.

The prevailing image of Waco is that it is a town where everyone goes  
to church on Sunday mornings.

But, that image is not necessarily true.

There are plenty of people, people who you work with, live with, go to  
school with,

People who are looking for a flock like St. Alban's,

Who are looking for an unique expression of Christianity where God is  
not served up in a pre-packaged box.

But where God can be savored and listened to... and followed.

I am excited and enthusiastic about where the Good Shepherd will lead  
us in these years to come.

I will caution you, however, that I might ask you at times to put cotton  
balls in your ears,

So that we will be one flock with one shepherd.

But, more often than not, I will ask you to take the cotton balls OUT of  
your ears,

So that you can hear the voice of the Shepherd who knows you and  
loves you as his child.

Listen:

Do *you* hear his voice?

AMEN.

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