

Easter 4B: April 22, 2018  
 Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's  
 Acts 4:32-37  
 Psalm 23  
 1 John 3:1-8  
 John 10:11-16

In the late 1960's someone published a collection of wisdom sayings common to American mothers. Some of those sayings sound very familiar to me; "OK, you can go to Randy's house, but don't overstay your welcome." "Just because somebody jumps off a bridge, does that mean that you jump, too?" And the one I remember the most, "Don't make me call your father." Can you hear your mother's voice there?

This fourth Sunday of Easter is also called Good Shepherd Sunday, after this day's Gospel reading where we hear Jesus describe himself as the good shepherd.

Like the Good Shepherd, moms and dads, grandparents, godparents, teachers, and "special others" touch our lives, teach us, lead, comfort and mentor us through life. They teach us that we matter and they prepare us for life. Not all of these important people are our biological mothers or fathers. I remember the voice of my high school science teacher – Frank Gordon. And the voice of my wrestling coach – Steve Jakowski. And my boy scout master – Dick Spry. All of these voices in my life gave me the gift of caring for me in ways that developed who I am, and what I stand for. Remind yourself of the voices of people who shepherded you.

The house I was raised in was just inside the limits of our little village - population 1,800. One of my favorite things to do as a young boy was playing softball. My friends and I played ball almost every weekday before supper. About a block away from my home was an auction barn for cattle. My friends and I would use the field around the sales barn as our personal softball field. A fly ball over the roof of the sales barn was an automatic home run. I remember when I was playing ball, my mother would call me home for dinner, and her voice would penetrate that distance as though she was standing next to me. I knew her voice, and through any other voices, I heard her call me. And her calls were about keeping me fed, getting me home safely at night, keeping me out of trouble (as best she could), and just checking on me.

Even our Lord's mother used the pull of her relationship with Jesus to remind him of his truest nature. At the wedding in Cana, he was enjoying time with his friends when Mary insisted that he share his gifts; and that began his ministry of miracles as he turned water into excellent wine.

The power of these voices in our lives helps you and me appreciate what it means for Jesus to be our good shepherd. Jesus says, “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father”. We know Jesus through Sunday School, Adult Education, prayer, private reading, activities within our faith family, and ministry outside our faith community. Through our lives as Christian women and men we learn to hear and recognize Jesus’ voice; hearing it in our hearts, through our thoughts, in the words or actions of people around us, and even sometimes audibly. We know when it is him because we recognize how that voice makes us feel inside when we hear it. This is one way that you ‘practice the presence of God,’ as we learn to recognize the voices that have shaped us.

In Acts, Luke describes the feeling that “the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul.” They knew by the way they felt that Jesus’ Spirit was with them. Their shared love for Jesus brought them not only close to him, but close to each other. Jesus explained that this is not only a relationship between us and Jesus, but a relationship that grows out of the love that he shares with God the Father.

As we travel along in our faith journey, may we continually, actively listen for our Good Shepherd’s voice; the voice that calls to provide care for us, to feed our spirits, to bring us home safely, to keep us out of trouble, and to simply let us know how much he cares for us.

Let us pray. Dear Shepherd Christ, we thank you for your loving care. We pray that you give us the discernment to hear your voice; to filter out all the other voices that compete for our time and attention. Allow your glory to be revealed through us; guide us to follow your lead. We pray this in your precious Name. Amen.