

Sixth Sunday of the Resurrection – Hearing the Shepherd’s Voice

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
May 21, 2017
Gospel Reading: John 9:39-10:10*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we hear a familiar Gospel passage about how sheep recognize and follow their shepherd’s voice. This is not unique to sheep. In fact, anyone who has a pet dog or cat will know that animals can recognize their owner’s voices. Even more amazing is that they will not follow a stranger’s voice – and this is true with sheep as well.

There is a true story of a man in Australia who was arrested and charged with stealing a sheep. But he claimed emphatically that it was one of his own that had been missing for many days. When the case went to court, the judge was puzzled, not knowing how to decide the matter. At last he asked that the sheep be brought into the courtroom. Then he ordered the plaintiff to step outside and call the animal. The sheep made no response except to raise its head and look frightened. The judge then instructed the defendant to go to the courtyard and call the sheep. When the accused man began to make his distinctive call, the sheep bounded toward the door. It was obvious that he recognized the familiar voice of his owner.

Naturally, our shepherd’s voice is Jesus Christ, but the question arises, how do we recognize His voice, or more practically, how do we know the truth (His voice) is being preached? There are numerous priests, pastors, churches, organizations and things speaking to us and demanding our attention, wanting us to follow them. It is quite overwhelming to figure out which is true and which is false.

The answer is found in the Gospel of Luke (7:18-23) when St. John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to Jesus and they ask Him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we wait for another?” The Gospel tells us that in their presence He healed many and removed evil spirits from others. Jesus then turns to the two disciples and says, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard; the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleaned, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor.”

We recognize the truth by what we see and hear. We must always ask: is what I see and hear Christ-like? Is this what Jesus taught and practiced or not?

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
May 21, 2017*

These past two weeks have been eventful weeks for the Armenian communities of Texas, for Texas has become the 46th State to recognize the Armenian Genocide. This was done thanks to two things: what our State Representatives heard and saw.

Listening: Just as sheep recognize and follow their shepherd's voice and flee from a stranger's voice, our representatives heard and recognized our voices, following our requests to vote yes for [HR 191](#), while they ran from those voices advocating genocide denial.

Seeing: Our representatives also saw what perpetrators of genocide denial did to peaceful protestors in front of the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C. How they [attack, beat and intimidate](#) others, doing the opposite of what Christ teaches.

Ultimately, listening to and following our shepherd, Jesus Christ, will show the world who we are and why our cause, genocide recognition, is a just cause. It boils down to one very important fact: we must not present what we know people (facts), but who we know (Christ Jesus).

Two men were called on, in a large classroom, to recite the 23rd Psalm. One was a published orator trained in speech technique and drama. He repeated the psalm in a powerful way. When he finished, the audience cheered and even asked for an encore that they might hear his wonderful voice again.

Then the other man, who was much older, repeated the same words - "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want..." but when he finished, no sound came from the large class. Instead, people sat in a deep mood of devotion and prayer. Then the first man, the orator, stood to his feet. "I have a confession to make, he said. The difference between what you have just heard from my old friend, and what you heard from me is this: I know the Psalm, but my friend knows the Shepherd."

This is a time to celebrate and be thankful that our state recognized the Armenian Genocide, but we must also remember there is still much work to be done. There are still four more states to recognize the genocide and the federal government. This work which we will undertake must be done with us following our Shepherd's voice and we growing more and more Christ like every day. In doing this, people will see Christ in us and Christ in our cause. Just as our State Representatives voted unanimously, 137 ayes to 0 nays, to justify our persecuted nation, so too will others join us in advocating against all genocide, in fighting injustice and ultimately, in knowing our Shepherd. Amen.