

## **He's In the World Today**

### **2. He's Calling Us**

John 10:22-30

The great Easter hymn, "He Lives!" begins with the words, "I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today." We believe that the resurrection of Christ is not just an event that happened 2,000 years ago. We do not believe that when Christ ascended to heaven he left us behind to try to get along as best we can until he returns.

Last week I talked about how the Resurrected Christ appeared to the disciples several times over a period of forty days between Easter Sunday and the day he ascended into heaven. But even that was not the end of his appearances. He continues to appear to people. Several months later he appeared to Paul as Paul was traveling to Damascus to arrest Christians. And his appearances have continued these 2,000 years. In many and various ways Christ has made his presence known to us. When I asked if Christ is a real presence in your life, the majority of you raised your hands.

The question I want to deal with this morning is this: How can those for whom Christ is not yet real presence enter into a relationship with Christ?

Some of you may be saying, "I don't know what you're talking about. I know about Christ. I believe in Christ. I am committed to living the Christian life. But I've never experienced the presence of Christ. How can I find him?"

Others of you may be saying, "Yes, I walk with Christ also. But I have friends and family members who don't know Christ. How can I help them enter into a relationship with Christ?"

Well, I've got good news. For those of you who haven't experienced the presence of Christ, you don't have to look for him. You are already in a relationship with the resurrected Christ--and so are our friends and family members. We have been in a relationship with Christ since our earliest moments.

We don't have to look for Christ. Christ looks for us.

There is a hymn that says it beautifully. I nearly selected it for one of our hymns this morning. But it is not one we are familiar with, so I spared you that. It is 341 in the hymnal, "I Sought the Lord." The first verse goes this way, "I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew he moved my soul to seek him, seeking me. It was not I that found, O Savior true; no, I was found of thee."

We don't know who wrote the words to this hymn. But they are a beautiful description of the reality. Christ calls out to each of us every day of our lives. We may not be aware of him. But we hear him in our hearts.

And it is our decision how we will respond to his call.

In our text, a group who oppose Jesus demand that he say straight out if he is the Messiah. Jesus responds by saying that it wouldn't make any difference how clearly he said it, they wouldn't believe him. Why? Because he

was not their shepherd. Jesus goes on to say that his sheep recognize his voice when they hear it and follow him.

There is a story about two children whose father had a sheep ranch. He gave them each a sheep of their own. They grew very attached to their pets and took good care of them. One day disaster struck. The two sheep found a way out of their pen and joined their father's large flock of sheep. When the children realized what had happened, they were devastated. They couldn't possibly pick their sheep out of this large flock of sheep. But their father knew exactly what to do. He told them to get the buckets they used to feed their sheep and fill them up. Then he told them to go out to the flock and call the names of their sheep. They did. And all the sheep ignored them—except for two. Their two sheep worked their way out of the flock and came to them.

In many ways sheep are dumb animals. But they are smart enough to recognize the voice of the one who feeds them. They know the voice of their shepherd.

People are like sheep in one way, and they are different from sheep in another way. We also can recognize the voice of our shepherd, like sheep. But, unlike sheep, we can choose which shepherd we will follow.

Christ calls us to follow him in the way of truth, and goodness, and righteousness, and love. In our hearts we hear him and can choose to follow him or reject him and follow other voices. Even those who don't know who he is can choose to follow him.

When Christ came and called, some left everything behind to follow him. Why? Because they had heard his voice long before that moment. They had been following him for years. They just didn't know who he was. When he called them, they recognized his voice.

Those who rejected Christ had rejected him long before they first met him. They had chosen to ignore his call to goodness and righteousness and follow the voice that called them to seek power, wealth, prestige, pleasure, and the other things this world says are the way to happiness and fulfillment. It didn't matter what Jesus said to them, they had already rejected him. They did not belong to him. They knew it, and Jesus knew it.

But those who are drawn to goodness are led by the Spirit of Christ. And when they hear Christ speak of goodness and righteousness, they recognize his voice and follow.

So, to those of you who are not yet aware of Christ's presence in your lives: He is active in your life. He is leading you. You are active in this church, most likely, because he has led you here. Follow your heart as it leads you to speak the truth and do what's right and loving. That is Christ leading you.

If you are doing that, all you have to do is ask, and he will reveal himself to you. He will make his presence known to you in the way and at the time he chooses. When he comes to you, he will recognize him. You've already known him for long time.

What about our friends and family members who don't know Christ? Well, they really do know Christ. Some of them are in a struggle as to which voice they will listen to. Will they listen to the voice of Christ, as he calls them to be

their best selves and be guided by truth and righteousness? Or will they follow the voice that calls them to sell their souls and live for themselves? These we have to encourage to choose the right way to live. We can influence their choices, and we have to do so.

Those who have decided to live a good and righteous life need to be told about who Christ really is. Too often Christ is presented as the champion of the narrow-minded, the self-righteous, the bigoted and the naively childish. There are many who belong to Christ who have rejected Christianity. We need to make certain they know who Christ really was: The one who stood up to Pharisees, who challenged those who love power, who reached out to the poor, the sick, the rejected, and the condemned, and who calls us to do the same. When those who are moved by the Spirit of Christ know who Christ truly is, they will recognize his voice and come to him.

There are those who belong to Christ's flock, who have simply not yet heard his call. We are the means by which Christ calls his own today. How sad it is for someone who belongs to Christ and who is ready to respond to Christ not to have the opportunity because no one gives the invitation.

There is an old story about a man who was raised on a farm in the days before telephones. He made a trip to a town many miles from his home. While he was there, he met a girl and fell in love with her. After he returned home and had time to think about it, he decided this was the girl he wanted to marry. He wrote a letter proposing marriage. His brother was going to the post office, and he gave him the letter and asked him to mail it. Then he waited. Days and weeks passed, and there was no answer. Finally, he decided that her answer was no. He never forgot her, and he never married. Many years later he was visiting his brother, and a cold spell blew in. He asked his brother if he had a coat he could borrow. His brother said, "Sure, Here's an old coat I haven't worn in years." The man put the coat on and put his hands in the pockets to warm them up. He felt something. He pulled it out. It was his letter to the girl. His brother had forgotten to mail it all those years earlier. It could well be that the girl had been waiting for that letter to come. He would never know.

There are those who are waiting for Christ's call. If it comes, they will recognize it and answer, because they have already said yes to the Spirit of Christ. They are just waiting on us to give them the invitation to follow Christ.

Christ is at work in the world calling out to those who belong to him. All we have to do is tell them who it is that is calling them. They will recognize Christ and have the joy of knowing him, as we do. What a joy it is to lead a sheep of Christ's flock to its Shepherd.

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