

John 10:11-18 ALL WE LIKE SHEEP
The Rev. Corinne Hodges, May 3, 2009, SJOC

- I. **Sheep sighting & almost crash on bike in Ireland:** Foggy day, no clear view, coasted downhill; Sheep left safety of home, wrong side of fence & shepherd nowhere to be found. Dangerous roadway. Left everything comfortable, slow, easy pace of life for a fast, unpredictable path with strangers, where it had to face obstacles alone. Cause: large, deep hole.
- II. **What are sheep like?** In paintings, green, pleasant, peaceful, tranquil. Real life? Sheep unruly, wander, scattered, complaining (all those bahhs!) Left to own devices get lost, go wrong way, need constant attention, to be fed, find themselves trouble. Sound familiar? Really not talking about sheep at all, but people w/ many of same characteristics.
- III. Other readings in bible focus on leader's responsibility to shepherd flock, but not what Gospel says here. **Leader is Christ only--one shepherd, one flock. Our role here is not to be shepherds to others but to be fellow sheep with them.** Yep, hungry, tired, lost, complaining sheep, all trying to find our way. Sheep who sometimes make it through holes they are not supposed to & often can't get back on their own.
- IV. **Role of shepherd:** Difference btwn Western & Middle Eastern shepherding.
 - A. Western done from rear with sheepdogs nipping at sheep's heels. Shepherd follows distance off. Sheep no security, no model or example, face danger & fears alone. In crisis, can't trust shepherd to be there in time.
 - B. ME shepherding done with shepherd in front, calling out to the sheep who follow the voice. For shepherd, can be dangerous, protecting investment first hit by thieves and wild animals—use of crook. ME way builds trust, comfort, shepherd close by, sees all, “knowing” is not a cognitive knowing but relational, takes trust...the idea that the shepherd never asks the sheep to go where he himself has not gone.
 - C. Kind of shepherd Christ is: Good shepherd who is a model shepherd, meets the needs of sheep, lays down life for flock, leads vs. follows. With Easter theme ties to Jesus who has gone before us into the Resurrection, offers us new life.
- V. **Sheep's/our role:**
 - A. In relation to shepherd, listen to voice, know it, respond.
 1. How do we hear his voice? What can we focus on that will lead us into the future, esp. when we cannot see the way ourselves?
 2. Focusing on Christ keeps us from following voice of strangers, going down wrong paths, falling through holes.

B. In relation to each other—1Jn love and care for each other not in words but action. Lay down our lives for one another.

1. Remember when you were lost, hurt and scared? What helped you? Can you offer that to someone else?
2. Remember when you were tired, hungry and complaining? How can we be compassionate to those that are feeling that now?
3. What about when you were new and did not know anyone? When everyone was a stranger? What can we do to welcome new people into the fold?

VI. I need a shepherd; you need a shepherd; we all need a shepherd. But our message today is more than just a pretty, peaceful, idyllic picture of Christ finding us anywhere, scrambling into the crevices of life, picking us up when we fall and freeing us when we are trapped. The scene today shows that **we all are sheep**. Our relationship with God is not just between us and Christ, but other people as well. University of Chicago professor Cynthia Lindner, “Our being is bound up with the entire flock.”