

## Who're Ya Gonna Call? – John 10:1-10

With apologies to the Ghostbusters, when you're in trouble, who're ya gonna call?

When you are stuck, or the car runs out of petrol, who're ya gonna call?

When something strange happens in your neighbourhood, who're ya gonna call?

When we are younger of course we call on our parents first of all. But as we get older (and they get older!) it's a part of us being mature to learn to make our own mind up about things. Of course that most often means finding out what other people think.

So the question still remains: who're you gonna call? Who're you gonna follow?

A very important Christian writer from last century, a man called Harry Blamires, summed up the answer like this: He said "*hold fast to Christ – and as for the rest, remain uncommitted.*"

This is what the Lord Jesus urges us to do. For as he says in our Gospel passage today from John chapter 10, he is the one to follow – the only one.

Let's look again at what he says.

He speaks firstly about:

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### a) **the Shepherd and his sheep** (1 – 5)

It's all very straightforward and understandable, a part of everyday life in the ancient world. If you own the sheep and are their Shepherd, and you go to see them and collect them after they've been locked up in the public pound for the night, then you will go in by the gate, and the gatekeeper will recognise you and let you in. But if you don't own them and want to steal them you obviously try not to be seen. But even then you might not be successful in getting the sheep to do what you want because the sheep know their Shepherd's voice and they'll only go with him.

I know this is a long way from the way we farm sheep in Australia. But we still get the picture.

What's really hard to understand is that our writer, the disciple John, says the people who first heard Jesus did not understand. This was:

### b) **very familiar – but they didn't get it!** John writes in verse 6:

*Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.*

How come?

We know that the people that he was speaking to specially were the religious leaders. The Pharisees. The intelligent ones. The educated ones. Why did they not understand?

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Because they'd forgotten their Bible. They'd forgotten what it really says about God. They had come to believe and to teach others that God expected a lot from people. And if they did not obey him perfectly he would be really hard on them.

What these teachers taught people about what God said was a huge bunch of rules. People had to get on God's good side by obeying these rules. And there would be hell to pay if they didn't keep obeying them. But is that what God is like, and is that what he expects?

Never!

The Lord Jesus does two things here.

Firstly, He uses the lovely language we find used about God and by God in the Old Testament – the language of the Shepherd – to take these hardhearted leaders back to the truth about God.

Truth like that found on the lips of their father Jacob in Genesis chapter 48: “.... the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who was been my Shepherd all my life to this day.....”

Or these words in Psalm 80: “hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.”

Or these words from Isaiah chapter 40: “the sovereign Lord tends his flock like a Shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.”

And these words from Jeremiah chapter 31: “hear the word of the Lord, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: “he who scattered Israel will gather them and watch over his flock like a Shepherd.”

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And above all they had forgotten the wonderfully intimate words of our Old Testament reading today, Psalm 23:

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.”  
And I'm sure you know the rest!

God IS more than the owner of his people – he is their shepherd.

So much had the Pharisees pushed to the side this essential aspect of the character of God as the true, Almighty, and loving Shepherd of his sheep that the Lord Jesus calls them thieves and robbers. We would say that they had forgotten all about grace and taught that true religion was only about keeping laws to stay out of trouble.

Sadly there have always been so-called Christian leaders who have been false shepherds. While appearing to want what is best for the sheep they do not feed them with God's true word but contradict it or neglect it; while appearing to belong to Christ they are only intent on making a name themselves by being outrageous, conforming to the culture around them, or abusing the sheep under their care in some way.

Jesus could not be more different. And that is because as he goes on to say in verses 7 to 10:

**c) Jesus is the only one to follow – for he is the only access to God.**

“I am the gate for the sheep,” he says in verse 7.

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“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture,” he says in verse 9.

And in verse 10: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Jesus is the gate. The only way into a right relationship with God. Remember there will be no one in heaven who has not come to know God through Jesus, and to put their trust in him, on earth. That's what Jesus is saying here. “I am the gate.” But what do we find when we use that gate?

So many things and people promise us life, don't they? Jobs, relationships, travel, meeting different people, adopting different philosophies, being less narrow in our ideas and interests. But if Jesus is right none of those things is right. And everything else apart from Jesus cannot deliver on their promises.

But if you choose to listen to Jesus – I mean really listen to him – to follow and trust him alone as your Lord and saviour, then you will have life....New life... Eternal life... And you will have it fully, without the need for anything else. Will you miss out? No. You will not miss out on anything that is life as God meant it to be.

How then, can we not follow Jesus? Who ya gonna call?