

“Known” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter 4 – April 21, 2024

- I. **John 10:14** - “I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me.”
- II. **Most people screen their calls today.**
 - a. More often than not, when I call a person on my cell phone and they don’t recognize my number, they let it go to voicemail.
 - i. Sometimes people wait until I start leaving a message, and then they pick up when they realize it’s me... some don’t.
 - ii. Many of us screen our calls so that we don’t have to deal with salespeople or scams...
 - iii. It’s interesting, but many of our older members have started screening their calls, when it used to be the norm to answer every call.... Because there was a time when caller I.D., answering machines, and voicemail didn’t exist.
 - b. I suppose screening calls makes sense, but I read a strange story about someone who got lost in the Colorado Rockies.
 - i. There is a beautiful drive through Leadville, Colorado where you can see a bunch of fourteen-thousand-foot peaks, including Mount Elbert, the tallest mountain in the Rockies.
 - ii. The story begins with a hiker who decided to climb Mount Elbert, but got lost somewhere along the way.
 1. They set out at 9 a.m. on a route that normally takes about seven hours to summit the mountain and return.
 2. Someone called search and rescue teams at about 8 p.m., and a team went out and looked for the hiker until 3 a.m., when they gave up for the night.
 3. More searchers began looking the next morning, but the hiker made it out on their own after 24 hours and a cold night in the high country.
 - iii. The search and rescue team made contact with the hiker and found out that they had received multiple calls from the rescuers, but didn’t pick up because they didn’t recognize the number and figured it was just spam.
 1. A rescuer was quoted as saying, “One notable take-away is that the subject ignored repeated phone calls from us because they didn’t recognize the number.”¹
 - iv. This is a funny illustration, but the person who ignored these calls could have died up there!
 1. The situation was grave, but they were unwilling to answer a call from someone they did not know.
- III. **The Lord Jesus is our Good Shepherd who calls out to the lost sheep.**
 - a. On the one hand, He is always looking for those who do not know Him.

- b. Jesus is calling out and looking for people constantly – as He tells us in Luke 19:10 – “I came to seek and save the lost”... and that includes people who were outside the Jewish faith.
 - i. Many of Jesus’ travels included going into places that were not Jewish, including Samaria, where the people were supposed to be outside the saving grace of God – as far as the Jewish people were concerned.
 - ii. Yet, Jesus broke down the barriers that would separate these people from grace, and He spent time with them – like the woman at the well.
 - 1. There He approached a Samaritan woman, giving her faith and a zeal for God.
 - 2. In fact, once she figured out Jesus knew her personal life even though He was a complete stranger, she ran to tell anyone in town who would listen, and it says, “Many Samaritans from that town believed in [Jesus] because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’” (John 4:39)
 - 3. Jesus knew her, and all the people of that village, and He made the effort to go to them and make that contact.
 - iii. In the same way, the little man, Zacchaeus did not know the one true God, and was living his life without any regard for the Good Shepherd.
 - 1. It says that Jesus went into Jericho and met Zacchaeus where he was at – in a sycamore tree – but when people were not happy that Jesus would spend time with sinners like Zacchaeus and his friends, Jesus says, “I came to seek and save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)
- c. Jesus first came to teach to the lost house of Israel, the Jewish people whom God had chosen from the time of Abraham... but even they didn’t know Him.
 - i. It says in Luke 13:34, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”
 - ii. Jesus is all about calling to the people He was sent to gather as the Good Shepherd, but much of the time, people let the call go to voicemail.

IV. **Yet, Jesus says that we know Him and His voice when we have faith.**

- a. Maybe that’s why it’s very difficult to ignore His calls into our lives.
- b. Almost every time I read the Scriptures, Jesus calls to me – guiding, convicting, and promising.
 - i. Even when I’ve read the story many times before, a different perspective hits me, and I realize I’ve been straying.

- c. At any point reading God's Word, we might receive that connection with God that opens our eyes to our wandering.
 - i. It might be in a parable that Jesus tells, and we see ourselves in the story.
 - ii. It might be how Jesus loved and cared for people in ways that we are unwilling to do.
 - iii. The struggles and hardships people faced throughout Scripture might show us the ways we are not trusting in God to get us through.
 - iv. Maybe even the places where the Pharisees looked down on others who didn't have the religious part right shows us where we are not loving others.
- d. At some point, whether it's in the Bible, or perhaps in a sermon, or the service we attend, a call comes through from our Good Shepherd.
 - i. "Hi this is Jesus, I'm trying get in touch with you... how are you? I've noticed you are not spending time close to Me and the rest of the flock, come back home to Me."
 - ii. As we hear that voice... the voice we know and love... we are called back home to the only place that gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation.
 - iii. Jesus Himself said, "And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

V. **Only through Jesus can we know God and be known by Him.**

- a. He gives us faith to hear Him, to trust in Him, to know Him... and be known by Him.
- b. You see, when He calls, we know His number and we don't let it go to voicemail, because it's not a voice of condemnation and anger – but one of love and forgiveness.
- c. He gathers up His sheep and keeps them safe and together, under His love and care.
- d. In this gift of knowing our Lord and being known by Him, we have a relationship that cannot be matched in any other way or place.
 - i. Jesus is the ultimate blessing to us because He loves us so much He was willing to lay down His life to buy us back from hell.
 - ii. He couldn't imagine a life without you, so He became the sacrifice that stopped sin from leading you away from Him forever.
 - iii. And not only that, but He rose back up in power and glory to be the Living Good Shepherd – the one who still leads and guides us today.
- e. As we have faith in Jesus, not only are our sins readily forgiven... but we are in a relationship that is always active.
 - i. He knows us – and we know Him – therefore we are constantly in touch and together.
 - ii. This is the gift of knowing the Good Shepherd and being known by Him – a constant presence of love and care... forever.

- f. So, as we go from here, when you hear the voice of Jesus calling, don't be afraid to answer the call. Amen.

¹ Source: Bill Chappell, "A lost hiker ignored rescuers' phone calls, thinking they were spam," NPR (10-26-21)