

## SERMON : JOHN 1:1-10 (EASTER 4, 2020)

**MAY the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. <Amen>**

My mother was once asked by a census-taker how many children she had. She replied, “Well, there’s Robert and Bryan and David ...”. “Never mind the names,” the man interrupted, “Just give me the numbers”. My mother angrily replied, “They don’t have numbers, they all have names!”

In our modern world we are often reduced to numbers and statistics, especially by government. Here in Aotearoa\New Zealand, our governments - national and local know us by our IRD numbers, driving licence numbers, Rates Valuation numbers, customer numbers and that “identity” is included in almost all of our lifetime records and transactions. We are no longer identities\people, we have become numbers.

Even our opinions are reflected by numbers in census and survey results. No wonder many people have an “identity crisis”.

Thankfully, our Saviour Jesus Christ is not like this. He knows each and every one of us by our names, just like a shepherd knows each and every one of the sheep in his flock.

Personal names and identities are of vital importance to God; therefore, it is not surprising that Jesus knows us by our names. After all, he is the Good Shepherd.

The parable of the good shepherd and his sheep is a beautiful reference to God’s intimate knowledge of all of us. A good shepherd looks after his flock and knows his sheep. Sheep seek the security of the flock and follow the lead of the shepherd. When several flocks are grazing together in a field, they are still able to distinguish the voice of their own shepherd and follow his movements, clap, voice, etc. Sheep need a leader not because they are dumb, but because **they know they can’t go it alone**. They need someone to lead and to guide them.

Jesus is our shepherd. People who truly belong to God listen to and believe in the words of Jesus. We must distinguish his voice from all the other voices we hear in our daily lives and follow Him in faith. Are you listening?

Only Jesus provides the security of an eternal kingdom.

No forces (other than our own human frailties) can snatch us out of His good care and keeping.

Christianity is about HOPE : because we often find ourselves (as mere humans) filled with doubts and fears about an earthly future where nothing is certain. <PAUSE>

Sheep can’t spend their entire lives in the sheepfold. After all, there’s no food in the sheepfold. The sheep might be comfortable and safe in the sheepfold, but the sheep must follow the shepherd out of the fold in order to find sustenance, in order to live. In the same way, Jesus calls out to us. He speaks the word that will bring us out of the places of comfort and safety that we have built around us.

When we retreat to the safety and comfort of our own personal sheepfolds, we can't fully enjoy the fullness of a life lived in God. Life is not the same as existence. Ease of life does not bring joy to life, and a less demanding life often means a less fulfilling life.

A good shepherd is also willing to lay down his life in order to protect his flock. Jesus as our shepherd willingly laid down his life so that those who believe in him would be redeemed and saved. As we continue our Easter journey, our walks along our roads, we are constantly reminded that Jesus gave his life for the great flock of humanity so that anyone who believes in him can become **part of GOD'S FLOCK**.

Jesus came to give us eternal life, offer us forgiveness, set us free from guilt and human failings, and give us a fuller, meaningful life here on earth.

We can live abundant lives because He provides forgiveness and hope.

In order to seek the gifts he offers us, we have to continually follow him and obey him without reservation. Don't we all want to experience the joy of living and moving in grace-filled rhythm, in tune with something larger than ourselves? Don't we all want the sense that we are living and moving in perfect rhythm to the song of the Christian life?

<PAUSE>

I mentioned, above, "God's flock" ... we can't enter God's flock by deeds, philosophy or ritual. **We have to come through Jesus.**

The voice of the good shepherd helps us when we have to make difficult choices. Choices about who we are, what we believe, what really matters to us, and what confidence and hope we have for the future.

The Good Shepherd whispers his love for us. Are you listening?

The Good Shepherd calls us into an ongoing relationship with him. Are you listening?

<PAUSE>

BUT REMEMBER - - - When we follow The Good Shepherd that does not mean that our life will be perfect and carefree. In fact, there will be times, when the storms of life might become stronger. Consider this; Jesus does not protect those he loves from bad things happening, but uses bad things to fulfil his plans for our lives.

In our times of trial, He is glad not because we are suffering, but through our trials we have the chance to grow in faith and display his glory.

That is the very purpose of our existence.

I offer these words in the name of our Lord and Saviour, our unchanging, eternal Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

I runga e te Ingoa o te Atua, te Matua, te Tama me te Wairua Tapu.  
In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit <AMEN>