

I. Advanced Organizer

A. Story of the Jesus Movement

1. 1968 - a time of great unrest in the country
2. Vietnam War protests increasing
3. Civil Rights struggle; demonstrations around the country, sometimes violent; King was assassinated on April 4th
4. Next week, LBJ signed the Civil Rights Act
5. Shootouts around the country related to Black activism between police and Black Panthers and other activists
6. Presidential election in 1968 - lots of people drawing parallels between then and now
 - a) June 5, leading democratic candidate Robert Kennedy was shot
 - b) In August, Republican's nominee Richard Nixon. His acceptance speech focused on "law and order" and called on "silent majority" to rise up. They did. In November Nixon beats vice president Hubert Humphrey and takes the White House
7. In the midst of all this, counter-culture emerged in the Bay Area - Berkeley and San Francisco
 - a) also a fresh experience of God
 - b) **Lonnie Frisbee was a young hippie** from Southern California who made his way to the Bay Area; was a part of what was happening here, experimented with a number of things, including, in his own words, "flying saucers, drugs, marijuana and LSD, metaphysical meditation, hypnosis." And then one day, on a California beach, Lonnie had an encounter with God. He had a vision in which he believed God came to him and told him that his role was to bring a sea of people to Christ, and he saw an ocean as large as the Pacific, filled with human beings holding out their arms for grace. It was a trip like any other, he would later say except in his words, "this one lasted. It was real and it was solid and it changed my life."

Lonnie began to preach to other hippies on beaches and soon **became the catalytic voice** behind the Jesus People revival of the late 1960s and 1970s. At the same time that great social unrest was taking place, thousands and thousands of young hippies came to faith, experiencing outpourings of supernatural phenomena: prophetic words being spoken, healings, speaking in tongues and more. The Jesus People filled up tent revival meetings with thousands in attendance, and the movement gave birth to at least two denominations of churches directly, Calvary Chapel and Vineyard USA. Those church movements have gone on to fuel the growth of many other movements and non-denominational churches embracing contemporary worship, a casual atmosphere, and a dynamic connection with God.

B. The Jesus Movement and the 1960s is **only a recent example of a phenomenon that can be observed throughout the church's history, interplay between times of social upheaval and times of people experiencing fresh need to connect with God in dynamic ways**

- a) revivals in the US throughout the 18th and 19th century, including the Azusa St. Revival that led to pentecostalism
- b) Medieval mystics, arose in late Middle Ages, 14th century wake of Black Death that killed half or more of those living in Europe at the time, Peasant revolts...and from this setting also the Medieval Mystics. Causation not totally clear, but correlation is interesting.

- C. We're facing our own time of unrest, division, social challenges. There are important issues to consider and to be informed about. Lots of commentary coming to us through media, social media. Can feel like an overwhelming amount of noise. Might we, as those who were affected 50 years ago by a similar wave of challenges, be served by a fresh connection with Jesus?
1. Beginning of a new series exploring this connection.

II. (John 10: Story of the Good Shepherd)

- A. **Start by looking at story from life of Jesus**, as reported by John
- B. Helpful to **understand what context John was writing in**, what he thought it was important to remember
1. Most scholars think **John wrote toward the end of the 1st century**. Early Christians beginning to experience **real heat**. While John's community was able to stay with their Jewish practices and worship in the synagogue for decades, eventually, **the Jews that surrounded them started to feel threatened and responded by saying they needed to expel this group**. They had coexisted harmoniously, but **now the Jews say they're on their own**. Christians are rejected by their own, in a sense. Romans had looked mostly tolerantly upon the Jews, which provided some cover, but once expelled, they were more in danger. **Roman persecution is picking up**. Culture of fear; not clear who is safe. In this context, John wanted his community to hear this story from Jesus.
 2. In John's gospel, this comes right after a **resonant incident in the life of Jesus**. Jesus has healed a man who was born blind, but the Pharisees refuse to acknowledge this miracle as pointing to Jesus' identity as Messiah, instead they're trying to discredit him for healing on the Sabbath. It even says in response to this healing, that the leaders had decided that anyone who confessed Jesus was to be put out of the synagogue, something that would be particularly resonant to John's readers. We pick it up in John 10, verse 1
- C. **"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! 2 But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. 5 They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."**

6 Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, 7 so he explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. 9 Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. 10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. 12 A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. 13 The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, 15 just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen

to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

17 “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. 18 No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.”

19 When he said these things, the people were again divided in their opinions about him. 20 Some said, “He’s demon possessed and out of his mind. Why listen to a man like that?” 21 Others said, “This doesn’t sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

D. A few things to note:

1. **There are competitors for the sheep’s attention.**

a) **Thieves and robbers** - “those who have come before”

(1) for those who heard these words, the people Jesus told this story to - **gives context for the rejection they’re receiving from the religious leaders in Israel**. This would also resonate with John’s audience who’ve been suffering fresh rejection from the Jewish leaders in their era as well.

(2) **comes to steal and kill and destroy**

(a) these leaders **concern is for themselves**, building up their **own wealth and power**

(b) they can be **slick and tricky - steal** (slippery; taking without you realizing quite what happened); or **they can be outright violent** (kill and destroy)

b) **Hired Hand** - will run when he sees wolf coming

(1) he’s doing a job, but **he doesn’t have ownership of the sheep; not invested**

(2) perhaps this would resonate for the listeners of both Jesus, and later John’s audience as **other religious leaders, either Jewish or Christian**; not trying to actively hurt the sheep, but **folks who aren’t gonna stick their necks out** and put themselves on the line when the wolves (like the Romans) come to attack

(3) Think of **your Facebook friend** who is strangely silent when someone attacks you online. Quietly they’ll tell you they’re on your side, but they’re not gonna let folk know when things get contentious. Perhaps this is why so many LGBTQ folks in the wake of **Orlando** found the **silence of some of their straight Christians** on social media painful. **African-American folk** seemed to experience a similar painful dissonance after the shootings of black men by police officers were broadcast over the internet.

c) **Good Shepherd** - the ideal vision of leadership

(1) this was a metaphor employed throughout the ancient world, not just in the Bible; **often ancient Kings were referred to as shepherds**

(2) tradition in the Old Testament

(a) Psalm 23 (NRSV) - “**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.”

(b) Ezekiel 34: “**For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search and find my sheep. 12 I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on that dark and cloudy day... 15 I myself will tend my sheep and give them a place to lie down in peace, says the Sovereign Lord.**

16 I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again."

- (c) what makes this shepherd different from the others is that the shepherd's interest is not himself. The thieves and robbers are interested in their own power. The hired hand is interested in his paycheck. *But the shepherd loves the sheep: "my purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life"*

2. The sheep can tell the difference.

a) he calls them by name

- (1) this shepherd isn't just saying "here, sheep". He seems to have names for his sheep. He knows each one. He speaks intimately, personally to each one.

b) They know his voice

- (1) this is a real thing that most of us haven't experienced if we didn't grow up in an agricultural community. Sheep are sensitive to the voices of their shepherds. They can distinguish between voices, and they will only respond to the voice of their leader.

- (2) **video** of sheep (2 minutes)

- (3) During **WWI a group of Turkish soldiers** was passing through the hill country near Jerusalem. Happened upon a shepherd who was asleep; decided to steal his sheep so they could eat them. Shepherd woke up in the middle of this and was distraught. He's unarmed; feels helpless. And then he decides to try calling the sheep. Next thing you know, soldiers are overwhelmed, because sheep forcefully return to their shepherd; can't be stolen.

3. It's the shepherd that keeps the sheep safe.

- a) Jesus makes clear - this good shepherd is most unique **because he is a protector**; would even give himself for sheep. Normally this would make sheep vulnerable, but here it becomes clear that **this is the only thing that can make the sheep truly safe**.
- b) Their safety **isn't the walls of the sheep pen**. Their safety isn't having tighter security. No tightened security (no beefed up law and order) can ultimately keep the thieves and robbers from sneaking in. In the end, the only safety for the sheep is the shepherd himself.
- c) For the **late first century Jesus followers** who huddled secretly in homes, no longer allowed to worship with their fellow Jews in the synagogues, forced to meet on the down-low, sharing the news of the day, the updates of their friends who'd been captured and imprisoned, or worse yet, executed, by the Romans, this story called for something unique. Don't give in to fear. Don't be manipulated by those who can't really protect you. **Listen to the voice of your shepherd**. He is your safety. He is your protector. He is your source of life.
- d) **A recurring image in their artwork from the earliest centuries - Jesus the Good Shepherd**. They put it on the walls of the houses they met in and the catacombs where they buried their dead. This was their hope. They were followers of the good shepherd. (show images)

E. What about us?

- 1. Are you able to hear the shepherd's voice?** What does that even mean?
- 2. Can be different for different people.** Perhaps this is like the **sheep being called by name**; Jesus seems to call us in different ways. We'll talk over the next few weeks about some of the ways this can look and some of the specific practices that folks who've seemed to really experience something engaged in. Here are some preliminary examples...
- 3. You might here God's voice through:**

a) the Bible.

- (1) Usually this is more about providing context for decisions and direction from God, if only in the sense that whatever God guides us to do will never contradict what God has already written down in the Bible.
 - (a) Is God saying you should have an affair? No. Bible comes about pretty clearly and strongly against adultery. Is God telling you to cheat on your taxes? No, theft and lying aren't cool in the Bible.
- (2) Sometimes, less frequently, people experience a sense that God is speaking to them more directly through actual parts of the Bible. Might feel like certain passages resonate with you and prompt you.
 - (a) When I was trying to decide what to do as I graduated from college, I kept coming across these passages in the Bible that would jump out at me, where Jesus was talking about sending his followers out to be "light in the darkness" or "sheep among wolves". I felt these calls of Jesus really deeply, and I interpreted that to mean that I should put myself in a place where I would not be surrounded by people of faith, like at my Starbucks store and in the music clubs of Chicago. These words had a strong influence on my choice to pursue music and the direction that that took me, as well as how I'd understand my specific call to ministry down the line.

b) Impressions in your mind

- (1) ultimately, this is God speaking through your imagination
- (2) words that enter your mind
- (3) feelings, emotions
- (4) mental pictures
- (5) works of creativity - through songwriting, drawing, etc.
- (6) might be for us, might be for others
- (7) My own experience - praying about where to go to school; feeling really clearly when I toured Northwestern that I should go there; similarly, when another student came to my theatre class and pitched a group - felt the chills, etc. This was for me.

c) desires

- (1) not all desires are from God, but the things that are moving us and drawing us, can be a part of pointing us in the direction he's leading us

d) God's people

- (1) other spiritual journeyers often are part of what help us discern
 - (a) through prayer
 - (b) through modeling
 - (c) through gifts of listening

e) Usually listening to God happens through combination of these things

F. Call to Action -

1. We want Haven to be a community where we can hear the shepherd's voice; whatever that means for each of us. If that sounds like something that you'd like more of, I just want to end by praying for you.
2. Have folks stand, pray. Encourage you to come to the prayer corner for further encouragement. If you feel like you might have a picture for someone in the room, bring it to Liz.