

Sermon April 26, 2026

Blindfold

John 10:1-10 The Message (MSG)

“Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he’s up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won’t follow a stranger’s voice but will scatter because they aren’t used to the sound of it.”

Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

Following the Voice

When I first moved to Maryland, I lived with my Godparents for several weeks, along with my dog and cat. They lived in a sprawling house in Bethesda in a neighborhood filled with sprawling houses and huge yards. One day, I couldn’t find my cat, Wendell. I knew he was gone and I had to find him. He had never been outside before and was very shy. I had no idea if he’d be able to find his way home. So my dog and I went on a walk to search for him. As we walked up and down the roads around the house, I’d call out his name: “Wendell... Wendell.” Nothing. No response.

I tried again: "Wendell... Wendell." The silence was overpowering. The more I called, the more worried I became. Finally, heartbroken. I turned around and headed back home. I thought I'd try one more time

"Wendell... Wendell."

And then I heard it... it was very faint and I wasn't sure that I had even heard it. A teeny tiny "mew"

"Wendell... Wendell."

Mew.

Every time I called his name, I heard him call back to me. As the mews got louder, I knew I was closer.

"Wendell... mew... Wendell. Mew..."

I found him in a neighbor's yard, cowering in the back of a gardening shed. He'd been in a fight, but he was ok. Words can't describe the relief and joy I felt as he crept into my arms.... Or how much I longed to hear his beautiful voice when he was lost. And, I can only imagine how much he longed to hear my voice too.

We all long to hear a blessed voice. A voice that brings us comfort when we are down. The mere sound of the voice lifts us up, because we know that the closer the voice is to us, the sooner we will be embraced in those loving arms. We long to hear the voice of our own Good Shepherd... our Holy Mother... our Sacred Father.

We long to be with God.

When we hear 23rd Psalm, we remember this longing. We know the words, we've heard them so many times before because they bring us comfort during our lowest times.

Words proclaiming that the Holy Shepherd cares for us... that we will want for nothing. Just as Jesus tells us to remember the lilies of the field, so are

we to remember a shepherd who leaves no one behind and cares for each and every one in his fold. No matter how dark and dangerous the valley can become, we know that our shepherd will come to us and comfort us. And when the Shepherd comes, as Jesus says, we will know the voice. And we will follow it.

Perhaps it is because we know that Jesus completely understands what we experience that we are so willing to follow his voice when he calls. The power of a loving voice and our response to it is huge. I remember a young mother that I worked with when I was a Parent Educator. Brandy was suffering from post-partum depression, and I visited her at her home each week. My goal was to work on parenting skills and strengthening the parent-child bond, but she was an especially difficult case. Each week, I would find her sitting in her apartment with the blinds closed. She provided for her baby's basic needs, but nothing more. She would leave the baby in his bouncy seat for hours. She sat, day after day, in darkness. Slowly, as we worked together, I encouraged her to let the light in, to literally open the blinds. That would be the first thing I would do. Then I would pick up that precious little baby and gently encourage her to interact with him. Sometimes, I would just model playtime for her, hoping that one day she would reach for him herself. But she only did what I asked her to do and nothing more. After several visits, I had no confidence that her life changed when I was not with her. I pictured her in the dark, alone with her baby near her, but not with her. I knew that soon I would need to call Protective Services. But, I decided to try one more time. I showed her how whenever she spoke, her baby turned towards her. I said, "look how his face lights up. That's because he knows the sound of your voice." The change was not immediate, but at my next visit I noticed that the blinds were already open and for the first time, she opened the door with her baby in her arms. The journey towards healing had begun.

The Lord is my shepherd. We know his voice and we follow him.

What would happen if we really lived into this simple but profound belief: "The Lord is my shepherd." If we lived like we knew that the shepherd will care for us; that the shepherd will guide us... that the shepherd will find us when we are lost. If we turned to the shepherd who was even willing to take on our vulnerability—to face the worst that human beings can do to one another, in order to protect us from harm. The One who cares for me and for you and for you... always and forever.

Because the Lord is our shepherd and that is all we really need.

Jesus, the good shepherd, leads us to what we need: food, water, air; faith, deep rest, and real love. Trusting him frees us to enjoy all of those good gifts as fully as God gives them. As we follow our shepherd, we experience abundant, blessed life that no one can take away. As Jesus guides us towards the gate, we have the freedom to love whomever we find ourselves with in the flock, and know that they are loved by Jesus too.

Jesus is our Lord and shepherd, and so we need fear no evil; surely, as we follow the sound of his voice, goodness and mercy will follow us. All the days of our lives. Amen

Sending Forth

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of God's hand.

My beloved... your strength may fail but God's hand never will Amen