

Easter 4 Sermon, May 3, 2020  
Quit Your Hokey-Pokey Existence. Live Life To The Full!  
John 10:1-10

“You put your right arm in, you put your right arm out, you put your right arm in and you shake it all about. You do the Hokey-Pokey and you turn yourself around. That’s what it’s all about!”

Nothing will get people out on a wedding reception dance floor like the Hokey-Pokey. It’s a fun little jig but what if the last line of that ditty is true? What if the Hokey-Pokey is really what it’s all about?

In a way life often feels like one unending Hokey-Pokey dance. “You put yourself in the car, you take yourself out of the car, you put yourself in work, and you shake yourself about. You do the Hokey-Pokey and you turn yourself around (to do it all over again the next morning, and the morning after that). Is that what it’s all about?!?” Are you tired of your Hokey-Pokey existence? If so, listen closely to our sermon text because it’s going to tell you how to live life to the full!

There is no shortage of people who will tell you how to live life to the full. Their voices are only a computer click away. One website suggested going for a daily walk. Another said to learn a new skill. Most said to do whatever you want, whenever you want. These “experts” were certain that you can’t live life to the full if you’re trying to live up to someone else’s expectations.

But what does our Savior say? Listen: “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:1-3, 10).

Jesus compares us to sheep and teaches that the way to a full life is by listening to him, the Good Shepherd. But Satan wants you to doubt Jesus. Satan worked on Adam and Eve and he works on you and me. Satan is the thief Jesus described who is only interested in stealing, killing, and destroying.

Do you want a lasting relationship with the one you love? Then follow God’s plan for marriage. Husbands, love your wives by serving them. Wives, respect your husbands and encourage them in their work and support their leadership in your family. Want to enjoy your youth? Don’t ruin it by experimenting with drugs or seeing how far you can get on a date. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, not a nightclub you own where anything goes.

Listening to Jesus is what leads to a full life. Look at how much he loves you. He compares himself to a shepherd who calls his sheep by name. How does he do it? We only have two kids and four grandchildren. You could ask any one of them and they can tell you how often we get their names mixed up. Even though billions of sheep are in Jesus’ flock, he knows

each one of our names. He also knows our fears. He knows our needs. And like a good shepherd he will provide for those needs. You know he will because this Good Shepherd gave up his life to save you from your rebellious ways.

Listening to Jesus doesn't just mean hearing what he has to say though does it? The sheep who hears his shepherd's command to "Come!" but remains standing still isn't really listening is he? Those who listen, follow. And so if you really want to live life to the full, it's not good enough to spend an hour on Sunday morning listening to Jesus. You'll want to follow him the rest of the week with your actions and attitudes. Jesus put it this way: "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture" (John 10:3b, 4, 9). Jesus' sheep follow him wherever he leads because they trust it will lead to green pastures. When Jesus calls us to turn away from the sinful pleasures of this world, we will do so trusting that life won't become dull because of it.

But following Jesus doesn't always seem to lead to green pastures, does it? The Good Shepherd is standing on guard for you when the doctor delivers the bombshell that you have cancer. Nor is Jesus sprawled out on a couch in heaven mindlessly flipping through magazines as your job search stretches on for months. He's standing there by you, holding your hand when your loved one closes their eyes for the last time and is in the arms of Jesus.

When your life feels like an endless Hokey-Pokey dance, it's time to sit down and have a chat with your Good Shepherd. But don't just talk to him prayer, listen to him speak to you. If you can spend a couple hours a day on Face-Book, you should be able to sneak fifteen minutes reading God's word.

Do you want to live life to the full? Then make listening to Jesus a priority. Jesus beckons you to follow him and he promises to lead you to green pastures where your cup will overflow with blessings even as it overflows now with forgiveness and his love. Amen.

May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.