

Sermon Preached on
Fourth Sunday of Easter
(April 17, 2016)
"Straight Talk"

At our Men's breakfast, someone asked me what today's sermon title was. I said, "It's Straight Talk. Somebody said it reminded them of a cell phone commercial. Another said it was so vague as to mean nothing. I'm going to have to get better at sermon titles...

What I meant was plain talk. As in when the leaders told Jesus to tell them plainly whether or not he was the Messiah. (Quick note: it says "the Jews", but we are to understand the Jewish leaders, remembering that John was writing to a gentile audience who were unfamiliar with Jewish nuances).

Jesus responds to their demand with the following:

- A) You're not listening
- B) You're not watching... Because
- C) You're not my sheep

That is, Jesus' words were words of love. His actions were actions of love - and if someone is not tuned in to a loving response to the world, nothing you do or say will make sense. I mean, you already know there are people - even today - for whom all the plain speaking in the world, all the plain evidence available will mean nothing.

- *There are people who refuse to believe in evolution
- *There are people who refuse to believe the world is round,
- *There are people who refuse to believe there was a moon landing
- *There are people today who refuse to believe in climate change
- *There are people who refuse vaccines because they think they cause
- *There are people who claim kids these days are no good...

In Jesus' day, even rising from death did not convince those who had already set themselves against him. They could not shift and would not. Or as Jesus said, "You're not my sheep. My sheep know my voice."

For Jesus, it's always been the voice, the grace, the love. You recognize what is loving versus what is rude, hateful, arrogant, self-centered, condescending (& more). The first is of Jesus' voice, the others are not. Choose. This is one reason why the miracles were never Jesus' main focus.

Same with Tabitha (which most don't even know) - didn't make others believe - they were simply acts of love which only meant something to people tuned into love. And the lesson for us is to move on. That is to say, We hear his voice. We know his voice and follow. We tell our story. We Love. And then we don't worry if others choose not to get it. We move on.

In the end, what John is saying is simple. Your journey with Christ can't depend on what others say, do, believe or refuse to believe. Look at the world and look in your heart.

Then listen.

You'll know when you hear his voice. It's plain enough. And when you hear it, you'll know what to do. Amen.