

## Community: Hearing One Voice

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**Sermon Series: A  
Community With  
Vision**

John 10:1-6

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center—a focal  
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How many of you have seen the plans for the new Town Green for Vienna? How many of you visited the Wright building while VPC's temporary offices were located there? How many of you think the Town Green will be a dramatic improvement over what sits on that property now? I think over the numerous months, when I was freezing or sweltering in my temporary "office," I came to know most every nook and cranny of the Wright building. And over that time frame, I don't believe I came to discover ANY particularly redeeming quality to that edifice! Except, perhaps, for the fact that I had to climb a steep flight of stairs every time I went up to my office, and so I was able to get a little more exercise that way. Of course, it's much more enjoyable to take the WIDE stairs up to the second floor of the new ministry center!!

Former Mayor Robinson had a vision and dream for a park that would serve as the "center," if you will, of the community of Vienna. And as the Wright building gets demolished and the beautiful asphalt parking lot begins to disappear, that vision of a green pastoral landscape will slowly come to fruition. (Yes, I know we'll lose yet more parking options, which is one of the reasons we are again reminding you of the need for

"servant parking" on Sunday morning!) The new Town Green will become, in many ways, the focal point of the community. Now, I'm not about to pretend that EVERYONE is wholeheartedly in favor of this project, but it will certainly be a "beautiful" addition to our town. I can't help but wonder how WE might leverage our proximity to the Town Green as a way of reaching out to our neighbors...but that's a message for another day.

Every community needs a center—a focal point. Mayor Robinson had a vision of a park as the center of this town. Our leadership here at VPC has a vision of having Jesus Christ as the focal point of our community.

Last week, Pete talked about our desire that we be passionately Christ-centered. He lifted up for us the reality that our heart and our soul...I mean REAL heart and soul, get passionate about Jesus. We are a "joyfully contagious, Christ-centered community..." Jesus Christ is our center—not the building, not Pete James (sorry, buddy), not even the small group we may be part of or our friends—Jesus Christ is our center.

Today, we're talking about being a community that is focused on Jesus Christ. Our Scripture passage for the day is a classic story from the book of John. Now John is

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***“...the sheep  
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- John 10:3

***Jesus knows us  
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sheep, know  
his voice?***

very much unlike the other three Gospel writers. Matthew, Mark and Luke all use what we might call a “historical narrative” approach to their writing. They tell the stories of what Jesus did, where he went, and what he said. John, on the other hand, uses a lot more metaphor and symbolism in his writing. Chapter 10 talks about Jesus as the Great Shepherd. And the Church has certainly been drawn to the image of Jesus as a Shepherd. We see pictures everywhere—especially in our children’s Bible story books and in our children’s Sunday School classes, of Jesus as a Shepherd—surrounded by sheep or children—pastoral and gentle. Amazing how those 1st century photographers captured those images, isn’t it! I’m sure our captivation with the Shepherd imagery is boosted by the popularity and imagery of Psalm 23. But, whatever the reason, we’ve become quite attracted to John’s image of Jesus as our Shepherd— and it’s a GOOD image to hold on to.

The shepherd is the one who protects the sheep, tends to the sheep, nurses the sheep—and he’s also the one who leads the sheep. The text tells us that the sheep “hear his voice and he leads them out.” Imagine what it would be like if all the sheep just went their own way when they left the fold. Sheep are prone to do that. In fact, Jesus tells another parable about the shepherd heading off to find the one that got lost. The sheep need to follow the voice of the

shepherd. Sometimes they used another person “bringing up the rear,” but the sheep followed their shepherd as he led them to the places of green pastures and still waters—places where they could be fed and nurtured. Our text is explicit in emphasizing the role of the voice—as the shepherd calls them by name and they hear and recognize his voice. I believe the “voice” in this text is both literal and figurative. Literal in the sense that they do, indeed, hear the shepherd calling to them and directing them... figurative in that calling them by name indicates relationship.

Remember, John is being symbolic here in speaking of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus knows us by name as his disciples—but do we, the sheep, know his voice?

How many of you listen to the radio in your car? Maybe it’s not the radio but a CD or MP3 player—many of us listen to sounds—to voices all day long. Now I confess to being a bit of a channel surfer in the car—not so much at home with the remote—but with the car radio—I’m always checking to see what’s on my favorite presets. And one of those presets, not surprising, is WTOP. How many of us listen to WTOP in the car? The number one rated station isn’t it? They play an awesome mix of music don’t they? No, why do we tune to WTOP? “News, traffic, weather...”—tell me, what would happen if you tuned into WTOP and it sounded like this [played a recording of lots of

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***But we must all LISTEN for one voice.***

different news broadcasts, all being given at the same time.]]?

Pretty hard to follow, isn't it? You can pick out words, even phrases, maybe you heard voices you recognized on that recording (thanks to Tom MacDonald for putting that together for me). I think of that recording as a metaphor for our life together in community. The only way that we're going to be UNITED as one Body is by listening to the ONE VOICE of the Savior. Part of being a community—instead of just a random gathering of people—is having a central focus. And that central focus is the voice of the Shepherd, Jesus Christ. We cannot literally follow the shepherd—so we must FIGURATIVELY follow him by listening to his voice.

Like those news broadcasts, we get voices speaking to us from all over creation. One of my favorite bumper stickers says, "You're just jealous because I hear all the voices." But seriously, when we think about it, we hear voices that are trying to influence us from all over the map. Voices from business and industry, entertainment, politics, religion, our families, our sports teams, our neighbors. How many voices speak to us on a given day—how about even in one hour? Jesus is competing for time—he's competing for "bandwidth" in today's technologically driven society.

All of us in this room are DIFFERENT—hate to break it to you—but we're all different. SOME of us are very different—and maybe you know who you are!! The only

way we can be a COMMUNITY TOGETHER is by listening for the one voice that we follow. But for me, the beauty of that is that Jesus speaks to EACH of us in different ways. We don't have to all think and act alike in order to be an authentic community. We can be a true community without uniformity. How boring (and unfaithful!) it would be if all of us turned into "clones" when we stepped into the church. We celebrate our diversity—I rejoice in it. But we must all LISTEN for one voice.

Jesus may be calling some of us to step up to the plate and get involved in hands-on ministry—to love and serve. Jesus may be calling others of us to step BACK from the church and spend more time with our families or our other relationships. Community comes in listening to ONE voice...and that voice leads us out as disciples into the world. Jesus doesn't just gather us together in the fold, he leads us out in discipleship.

Do you get it? If yes, that's great! If not, that's okay too—really! Verse 6 of our text says that Jesus told them this, and they didn't understand. On our mission statement, it says that we are a "people learning to follow Jesus." "Learning" means that we haven't got it all figured out yet. So, if you're still scratching your head—keep scratching. If you still can't find Jesus' voice in the midst of the chaotic noise of your world—keep listening. Being a disciple means that we are headed down the path of learning to follow Jesus and learning to hear his voice.

Let us pray...

Lord, there are so many voices clamoring for our attention. Give us ears that hear and heed your voice so that we can be a COMMUNITY learning to follow you. Amen.

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