

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

Scripture

Psalm 118:20-23
John 10:1-18

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (02/22/2026) To know Jesus is to know God on a first name basis
- (03/01/2026) We must let the light of Jesus illuminate our situations and hearts.
- (03/08/26) Jesus is the bread of life. Through faith in Jesus, we have abundant & eternal life. So, no matter how hard it gets, we can say, “So What!? I have abundant & eternal life” and then take the next step.
- (03/15/26) As followers of Jesus, we show people the vineyard. To do that we must stay connected to Jesus and allow Him to prune our hearts.

Core theological idea: As followers of Jesus, we are all capable of hearing and recognizing the Shepherd’s voice. But the question is: Do we hear and recognize the Shepherd’s voice?

Challenge/purpose: To encourage people to practice the means of grace with open minds and hearts so they can hear and recognize the Shepherd’s voice.

The Sermon

Have you ever heard your mother scream, “DO YOU HEAR THE WORDS COMNG FROM MY MOUTH?!!” I used to hear it a lot when I was growing up. (I still hear it from my wife.)

My mom would come home with a car full of groceries while I was glued to the television watching Star Trek or G.I. Joe. She would then have the audacity to tell me to unload the car during an exciting episode. This was before streaming - hitting pause was not an option. I had to either rush during a commercial or miss part of the episode. So, I would remain fixated on the television, ignore my mom, and not hear a word she said. To get rid of her, I’d say, “Yes, mom. No problem. Whatever you say.”

Then, about an hour or two later, she would discover that I did not unload the car. She would try in vain to remain calm while asking me why I failed to unload the

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

car. To which I would reply, with a straight face, “I don’t remember you telling me to do that.”

That is when her eyes would narrow and she would hiss, “I DID TELL YOU!!! DO YOU NOT HEAR THE WORDS COMING FROM MY MOUTH?!!”

This makes me wonder, does God ever want to grab and shake us while screaming, “DO YOU HEAR THE WORDS COMING FROM MY MOUTH?!” We get busy with all our responsibilities, worries, pleasures and even sins and this distracts us from God’s authoritative yet loving voice. We get too busy to listen to God.

In John 10, Jesus uses the imagery of a sheep pen to teach us about the Kingdom of God. In this imagery, we are the sheep. Jesus tells us that the sheep follow their shepherd because the sheep know their shepherd’s voice. He then goes on to say, “I am the good shepherd”

With this statement, Jesus, once again, claims to be God in the flesh. In Psalm 23:1, King David wrote, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” Then, about 1,000 years later, Jesus stated, “I am the good shepherd.” The Jewish people listening to Jesus would have connected his statement with Psalm 23 and other Old Testament passages depicting God as a shepherd.

So, Jesus is the good shepherd and we, the sheep, can hear and recognize his voice. If you have repented and received God’s forgiveness through faith in Jesus, you are capable of hearing & recognizing the Shepherd’s voice. But, although we can hear & recognize the Shepherd’s voice, do we hear & recognize his voice? When I was a kid, I was capable of hearing my mom’s voice, but I chose not to do so while watching television. Likewise, we are capable of hearing and recognizing the Shepherds voice, but do we hear his voice when we are distracted?

During his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the adoring crowd heard & recognized the shepherd’s voice. As Jesus rode on a donkey, people waved palm branches, laid down cloaks and sang Hosanna at the top of their voices! The palm branches represented freedom and the cloaks demonstrated royalty. Hosanna means, “God, save us now!!” This admiring crowd knew Jesus was King of kings. They knew he was the shepherd spoken of in Psalm 23. They were responding to the Shepherd’s voice!

But, in less than one week, there was another crowd. A disillusioned, even angry crowd that did not hear & recognize the shepherd’s voice. Instead of praising

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

Jesus and shouting ‘Hosanna” they shouted, “crucify him!”. They neither heard nor recognized the Shepherd’s voice.

Which crowd are we part of? Although we are capable of hearing & recognizing the shepherd’s voice, we do not always do so. Hearing and recognizing the shepherd’s voice requires effort. It doesn’t happen automatically. Like a radio, we must tune our spiritual ears to the Shepherd’s frequency.

To tune our spiritual ears to the Shepherd’s frequency, we must approach the means of grace expecting to hear from the Shepherd. The means of grace consist of prayer, fasting, worship, Bible study and serving others. We can discern the shepherd’s voice through each of these means of grace.

For example, when we go to worship on Sunday mornings, we should expect to hear a personal message from God. But, if you go to worship and count down the minutes until you can rush out to Dillons or Dairy Queen, you will probably not hear the Shepherd’s voice. If you criticize the music or think about your ‘honey do’ list, you probably will not hear the Shepherd’s voice. But if, on Sunday mornings, when we get ready for church or sit down in the pews, we pray and say, “Ok God, I am ready to hear your voice” we will likely hear the Shepherd’s voice sometime during the worship service. In every worship service, there are at least 4 elements: Scripture reading, preaching, praise singing, and prayer. If these elements are present, you can always hear the Shepherd’s voice. Even if the worship service is totally disorganized, the singers are off-key, and the pastor is sick, you just need to listen and expect to hear the Shepherd’s voice.

This is also true when it comes to Bible study. Before arriving at your group Bible study or starting your personal study, talk to God and say, “Ok Lord, I expect to hear your voice.” Whenever Bible study gives you a life changing insight, that is the Shepherd’s voice.

Sometimes, to hear the Shepherd’s voice, we need to quiet our hearts and minds. We need to tune out all our distractions. Our responsibilities, worries, various pleasures and even sin can keep us from hearing the Shepherd’s voice.

To quiet our hearts and minds, we can use a meditative, focusing prayer. It’s very simple. You breath in and then say “Jesus” as you breath out. Repeat this over and over until your mind is clear of everything and you’re totally focused on the Shepherd - it may take several minutes. Try this meditative prayer the next time you are totally stressed out and see what happens. Or do this type of praying before you worship or study Scripture and see what happens. You may hear the Shepherd’s voice.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

As we look for opportunities to love others and stand up for justice, we may hear the Shepherd’s voice. If you see a homeless person and you feel a tug at your heart to help that person, that may be the Shepherd’s voice. If you learn of an injustice while watching the news and you feel intense indignation, that may be the Shepherd’s voice. If a friend needs financial help and you feel a nudge to gift him with some money, that may be the Shepherd’s voice.

Along with hearing the Shepherd’s voice, we must also learn to recognize it. Jesus warns us of false prophets, and many people have used God’s written word to justify evil. Just look at how the slave masters from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries used the Bible to rationalize the evil institution of slavery. They claimed to be hearing the Shepherd’s voice. So, when we think we are hearing from God, how do we know it is a message from God?

The litmus test to discern if you are hearing the Shepherd’s voice is love, justice, mercy, and righteousness. If the slave holders had used this litmus test, they would have known that what they were hearing was not the Shepherd’s voice.

If you hear a voice, whether it is through prayer, Bible study, or a sermon, and it is influencing you to be judgmental, hateful, arrogant, or oppressive, then it is not the Shepherd’s voice. But, if you hear a voice, whether it is through prayer, Bible study, or a sermon, and it is influencing you to be more loving, faithful, or merciful, then it may be the Shepherd’s voice.

In 1958, there was this young pastor of a small rural church in Pennsylvania who was very happy and comfortable. He knew his congregants well and they liked him. Everything was good. But then, one morning, he heard the shepherd’s voice. While eating breakfast, he was perusing through Life Magazine and saw a picture of seven New York city teenagers charged with murder. As he stared at the picture, he knew he had to leave his comfortable church, go to New York, and spread God’s love among the drug addicts and gang members of New York.

The pastor’s name was Rev. David Wilkerson and he heard, recognized and obeyed the Shepherd’s voice. He moved to New York City and started ministering to lost youth. You can read about his ministry to the drug addicts and gang members of New York in his book, “The Cross and the Switchblade”.

His ministry blossomed into a nation-wide ministry known as Teen Challenge with over 100 centers throughout the U.S. Through this ministry, tens of thousands of teen-agers and young adults found freedom from drugs through

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

faith in Jesus.¹ I’ve witnessed the power of this ministry when I preached and taught at the Teen Challenge Center in Sanford, Florida. I met numerous former drug addicts who are now dedicated followers of Christ exhibiting joy and peace. This all started back in 1958 when David Wilkerson recognized and followed The Shepherd’s voice.

Listen for the Shepherds voice. Be part of the adoring crowd singing “Hosanna!!!” Who knows what God will lead you to do?

Let us pray.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wilkerson ; <https://www.teenchallengeusa.com/> ; <https://globaltc.org/our-history/>

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

Sermon Outline

- I. Have you ever heard your mother scream, “DO YOU HEAR THE WORDS COMING FROM MY MOUTH?!”
- A. I used to hear it a lot when I was growing up. (I still hear it from my wife.)
- My mom would come home with a car full of groceries while I was glued to the television watching Star Trek or G.I. Joe.
 - She would then have the audacity to tell me to unload the car during an exciting episode.
 - This was before streaming - hitting pause was not an option.
 - I had to either rush during a commercial or miss part of the episode.
 - So, I would remain fixated on the television, ignore my mom, and not hear a word she said.
 - To get rid of her, I’d say, “Yes, mom. No problem. Whatever you say.”
 - Then, about an hour or two later, she would discover that I did not unload the car.
 - She would try in vain to remain calm while asking me why I failed to unload the car.
 - To which I would reply, with a straight face, “I don’t remember you telling me to do that.”
 - That is when her eyes would narrow and she would hiss, “I DID TELL YOU!!! DO YOU NOT HEAR THE WORDS COMING FROM MY MOUTH?!”
- B. This makes me wonder, does God ever want to grab and shake us while screaming, “DO YOU HEAR THE WORDS COMING FROM MY MOUTH?!”

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

- We get busy with all our responsibilities, worries, pleasures and even sins and this distracts us from God’s authoritative yet loving voice.
 - We get too busy to listen to God.
- II. In John 10, Jesus uses the imagery of a sheep pen to teach us about the Kingdom of God.
- A. In this imagery, we are the sheep.
- Jesus tells us that the sheep follow their shepherd because the sheep know their shepherd’s voice.
 - He then goes on to say, “I am the good shepherd”
- B. With this statement, Jesus, once again, claims to be God in the flesh.
- In Psalm 23:1, King David wrote, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”
 - Then, about 1,000 years later, Jesus stated, “I am the good shepherd.”
 - The Jewish people listening to Jesus would have connected his statement with Psalm 23 and other Old Testament passages depicting God as a shepherd.
- III. So, Jesus is the good shepherd and we, the sheep, can hear and recognize his voice.
- A. If you have repented and received God’s forgiveness through faith in Jesus, you are capable of hearing & recognizing the Shepherd’s voice.
- But, although we can hear & recognize the Shepherd’s voice, do we hear & recognize his voice?
 - When I was a kid, I capable of hearing my mom’s voice but I chose not to do so while watching television.
 - Likewise, we are capable of hearing and recognizing the Shepherds voice but do we hear his voice when we are distracted?

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

- B. The two crowds – One heard and recognized the Shepherd’s voice and the other crowd didn’t
- During his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the adoring crowd heard & recognized the shepherd’s voice.
 - As Jesus rode on a donkey, people waved palm branches, laid down cloaks and sang Hosanna at the top of their voices!
 - The palm branches represented freedom and the cloaks demonstrated royalty.
 - Hosanna means, “God, save us now!!”
 - This admiring crowd knew Jesus was King of kings.
 - They knew he was the shepherd spoken of in Psalm 23.
 - They were responding to the Shepherd’s voice!
 - But, just one week later, there was another crowd.
 - A disillusioned, even angry crowd that did not hear & recognize the shepherd’s voice.
 - Instead of praising Jesus and shouting ‘Hosanna’ they shouted, “crucify him!’.
 - They neither heard nor recognized the Shepherd’s voice.
 - Which crowd are we part of?
 - Although we are capable of hearing & recognizing the shepherd’s voice, we do not always do so.
 - Hearing and recognizing the shepherd’s voice requires effort.
 - It doesn’t happen automatically.
 - Like radio, we must tune our spiritual ears to the Shepherd’s frequency.

IV. To tune our spiritual ears to the Shepherd’s frequency, we must approach the means of grace expecting to hear from the Shepherd.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

- A. The means of grace consist of prayer, fasting, worship, Bible study and serving others.
- B. We can discern the shepherd’s voice through each of these means of grace.
- C. For example, when we go to worship on Sunday mornings, we should expect to hear a personal message from God.
 - But, if you go to worship and count down the minutes until you can rush out to Dillons Restaurant or Dairy Queen, you will probably not hear the Shepherd’s voice.
 - If you criticize the music or think about your ‘honey do’ list, you probably will not hear the Shepherd’s voice.
 - But if, on Sunday mornings, when we get ready for church or sit down in the pews, we pray and say, “Ok God, I am ready to hear your voice” we will likely hear the Shepherd’s voice sometime during the worship service.
 - In every worship service, there are always at least 4 elements: Scripture reading, preaching, praise singing, and prayer.
 - If these elements are present, you can always hear the Shepherd’s voice.
 - Even if the worship service is totally disorganized, the singers are off-key, and the pastor is sick.
 - You just need to listen and expect to hear the Shepherd’s voice.
- D. This is also true when it comes to Bible study.
 - Before arriving at your group Bible study or starting your personal study, talk to God and say, “Ok Lord, I expect to hear your voice.”
 - Whenever Bible study gives you a life changing insight, that is the Shepherd’s voice.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

E. Sometimes, to hear the Shepherd’s voice, we need to quiet our hearts and minds.

- We need to tune out all our distractions.
 - Our responsibilities, worries, various pleasures and even sin can keep us from hearing the Shepherd’s voice.
- To quiet our hearts and minds, we can use a meditative, focusing prayer. It’s very simple.
 - You simply repeat a short phrase.
 - The phrase could be: “Jesus is Lord” , “The Lord is my shepherd” , “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” , “Father God, I love you” or “Jesus” .
 - Breath in, then say the phrase; breath in, then say the phrase; breath in, then say the phrase over and over again.
 - You repeat this until your mind is clear of everything and you’re totally focused on the Shepherd.
- Try this meditative type of prayer the next time you are totally stressed out and see what happens.
- Or, do this type of praying before you worship or study Scripture and see what happens.
- You may hear the Shepherd’s voice.

F. As we look for opportunities to love others and stand up for justice, we may hear the Shepherd’s voice.

- If you see a homeless person and you feel a tug at your heart to help that person, that may be the Shepherd’s voice.
- If you learn of an injustice while watching the news and you feel intense indignation, that may be the Shepherd’s voice.
- If a friend needs financial help and you feel a nudge to gift him with some money, that may be the Shepherd’s voice.

V. Along with hearing the Shepherd’s voice, we must also learn to recognize it.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

A. Jesus warns us of false prophets and many people have used God’s written word to justify evil.

- Just look at how the slave masters from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries used the Bible to rationalize the evil institution of slavery.
 - They claimed to be hearing the Shepherd’s voice.
 - So, when we think we are hearing from God, how do we know it is a message from God?

B. The litmus test to discern if you are hearing the Shepherd’s voice is love, justice, mercy, and righteousness.

- If the slave holders had used this litmus test, they would have known that what they were hearing was not the Shepherd’s voice.
- If you hear a voice, whether it is through prayer, Bible study, or a sermon, and it is influencing you to be judgmental, hateful, arrogant, or oppressive, then it is not the Shepherd’s voice.
- But, if you hear a voice, whether it is through prayer, Bible study, or a sermon, and it is influencing you to be more loving, faithful, or merciful, then it may be the Shepherd’s voice.

VI. In 1958, a young pastor of a small rural church in Pennsylvania was settling in.

A. He was very happy and comfortable at this church.

- He knew the people well and they liked him.
- Everything was good.

B. But then, one morning, he heard the shepherd’s voice.

- While eating breakfast, he was perusing through Life Magazine and saw a picture of seven New York city teenagers charged with murder.
- As he stared at the picture, he knew he had to leave his comfortable church, go to New York, and spread God’s love among the drug addicts and gang members of New York.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Do We Hear and Recognize the Shepherd’s Voice?”
(Part VI of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 29, 2026

- C. The pastor’s name was Rev. David Wilkerson and he recognized and obeyed the Shepherd’s voice.
- He moved to New York City and started ministering to lost youth.
 - You can read about his ministry to the drug addicts and gang members of New York in his book, “The Cross and the Switchblade”.
- D. His ministry blossomed into a nation-wide ministry known as Teen Challenge with over 100 centers throughout the U.S.
- Through this ministry, tens of thousands of teen-agers and young adults found freedom from drugs through faith in Jesus.²
 - I’ve witnessed the power of this ministry when I preached and taught at the Teen Challenge Center in Sanford, Florida.
 - I met numerous former drug addicts who are now dedicated followers of Christ exhibiting joy and peace.
 - This all started back in 1958 when David Wilkerson, recognized and followed The Shepherd’s voice.
- VII. Listen for the Shepherds voice.
- A. Be part of the adoring crowd singing “Hosanna!!!”
- B. Who knows what God will lead you to do?

Let us pray.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wilkerson ; <https://www.teenchallengeusa.com/> ; <https://globaltc.org/our-history/>