

# THE HEART OF THE MATTER - "THE HEART'S VOICE"

## Eastertide

John 10:1-10

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Peter Ilgenfritz  
University Congregational United Church of Christ  
Seattle, Washington 98125  
May 7, 2017

Scripture:

**John 10:1-10<sup>1</sup>**

Jesus said, "Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of the sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know they're 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. The shepherd 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 strangers' 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.

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Pastor Peter Ilgenfritz

SYNOPSIS by Jeff Keith <sup>2</sup>

Peter began by sharing how this was his first sermon with us after about a month. His sermon from a month ago ("Gifts of the Dark Wood: The Gift of Temptation" – "You don't have to be 'good'.") was met with a variety of strong reactions, including some perplexity and confusion, and even some anger. People said they didn't understand it. The best response was from someone who told him, "I didn't have a clue. But it was about being good. I was sitting in the back. So, I got up and left, and went out to enjoy a beautiful day!" Peter's response: "You got it!"

Peter has learned to trust the truth. Many folks will say things like: "Good job." "Your sermon was great." Or, whatever... The question is, "What is keeping us honest and truthful?"

Peter presented a retelling of Jesus' healing of the blind man story when Jesus spit into mud and put the mud onto the blind man's eyes and restored the man's vision. First, the disciples raised the question, "What had this man or his parents and family done (sin?) that caused the man's blindness?" Then, Jesus was accused of breaking Sabbath law by working on a Sabbath day. What did they not see? They weren't getting it.

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<sup>1</sup> Paraphrase, from *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, translation by Eugene Peterson, 1993-2002.

<sup>2</sup> The recording system failed. Jeff Keith makes notes of music, sermon content, and prayer announcements for those on the Prayer List, in case they couldn't attend the service.

## SERMON TITLE

Peter tried to explain: In today's scripture, there is the story of thieves entering the sheep pasture. But the sheep follow the good shepherd's voice and respond to his call, not to a stranger or a thief's voice. But the disciples didn't understand the parable. Finally, Jesus had to be literal and say, "I am the good shepherd. Follow me." When Peter looks back at last month's sermon responses he had some who said, "Ah... I get it! I don't have to be "good". I must be true to myself." Today we shared in the gifts of three baptisms of three of our youth (Ainsley Perkins; Sophie Turner; Mayyadah Zagelow). Indeed, it is a beautiful day! It is not about being good. It is all about being loved. After Jesus' second attempt some people said, "I don't get it. I am not sure." But then some folks said, "I'd really like to see where love takes me!" Peter: "The gate is open. Let us go out and on to the journey of our lives." Amen!

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Prepared by Beth Bartholomew from [www.universityucc.org/Sermons/2017/5/11/2017](http://www.universityucc.org/Sermons/2017/5/11/2017)