

- Good morning!
- Do you or someone you know have a cat or a dog?
- And how do you or the person you know try to get the cat or dog to come to you? *[offer it food; call its name; open some sort of food in the kitchen]*
- And does the cat or dog usually come to you when you call it? *[yes/no/maybe...dogs tend to do so more than cats]*
- Why is it that you want the dog or cat to come to you? *[because you want to keep it from doing something that is not very good for it (like playing near the road) or because you like it and want to pet the cat or dog] ...*
- In other words, you want the animal to come to you because you care about it, right?
- Do you think the cat/dog knows that you care about it? *[ Yeah, most likely]*
- In today's scripture story, Jesus is talking about something that's a lot like pets going to their owners when called.
- But instead of talking about pets and their owners, Jesus talks about sheep and their shepherd.
- He says that sheep follow the shepherd because the sheep know the shepherd's voice and will follow the shepherd wherever the shepherd goes.
- The reason that sheep do this is because they have learned that when they go where the shepherd goes, then they end up in places where they can eat, drink, sleep and be safe (which are things that sheep really like, by the way).
- In other words, the sheep trust the shepherd because the shepherd cares for them and wants to help them live a better way.
- The reason Jesus is talking about shepherds and sheep is because he's saying it is sort of the same thing with him and us: That he is like a shepherd and we are like his sheep.
- Because, if we choose to follow Jesus, we will learn what he does, what is important to him, and what he says by reading the Bible stories about him.
- As we learn those things about Jesus by following him, we will see how Jesus leads us to and shows us how to live God's better way.
- And the reason why he will do this is because Jesus cares for us, just like a shepherd cares for his sheep and an owner cares for his pet.
- This is the good news for today: When we choose to follow Jesus, then Jesus shows us how to live God's life and live it abundantly (a fancy word that means "a lot"). Let's pray.
- This is a repeat-after-me prayer.

**Dear God, Dear God,**

**Thank you for Jesus...Thank you for Jesus...**

**...who cares for us...who cares for us...**

**...and teaches us...and teaches us...**

**...how to live your better way...how to live your better way.**

**Amen.**