**Why we Flock Together (5-7-17)**

Acts 2: 42-47 1 Peter 2: 18-25 John 10:1-10

**Responsive Reading**: Psalm 23

**Summary:** Birds flock together if “of a feather,” but Christians flock together although we differ wildly within our group; what gives?

 My summary is obviously very “tongue in cheek,” but it is probably one solid hint why Jesus did not choose to refer to Himself as “the Good Birder.” Of course, sheep – although they do flock together – are at least equally challenged in the brains and insight department!

There are many voices in this world calling our names and demanding that they lead us. If we are like sheep, then we must make our life choices as Psalm 23 indicates: “in the presence of our enemies.” The crowd of authorities vying for dominance while Peter tries to advise his friends is a fine example. Most of the “masters’ would be Romans, hated foreign occupying troops. Some might be worthy of respect, like Jarius, but most would be feared, tyrannical, and brutal. Authorities who had influence with the Romans might be noble, like Joseph of Arimathea. Then, there were most tax collectors, Caiaphas, and the factions which bribed or otherwise manipulated the mob to support Barabbas over Jesus.

To all these voices (whether kind or harsh, fair or unfair), Peter encourages respect. To follow our shepherd’s example meant to avoid returning threats for threats or violence for violence. Jesus commands his disciples to sheathe their swords, and He heals the severed ear of the slave arresting Him.

This is very pertinent to us today. Those who head up political power, both in the previous administration and in this current one, have experienced an amazing level of disrespect. The most common form of political comment is accusation.

So, I have not flocked to DC with other women nor walked on Washington with the scientists, faith coalitions, water protectors, or bumblebee champions. Yet, I do flock here at Gaines UCC to the only Voice I know and trust to lead me. Like a lamb, I graze in trust that my shepherd has already culled the poisonous weeds and dammed the streams to make safe, quiet waters. I trust his rod to defend me against bear and wolf, and know his staff will hook around me to pull me back from any precipice.

In Jesus’ day, sheepfolds were often communal. Many flocks were kept in a central paddock. Several shepherds might come at once, usually early, to move their flocks to pasture. Each sheep knew its own master’s voice, despite the many voices calling. The same name might even be called by different voices; after all, there are probably many ewes named “Snowball.”

Even if 16 different voices all call “Sheryl” and all 16 even know that it starts with an “S,” I will still flock together here. I will try to respect other voices and give them their due, but only one Voice died for me. In case you missed it, loving Jesus, is why we get together. I’ll stay here to find good pasture and trust ***this*** rod and ***this*** staff. Oh, look: it’s Communion Sunday. Come on, let’s flock together!