

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
(John 10:10)*

If I had to choose which passage of scripture to cut out and save if I could not have my Bible, this would be the one...or maybe *one* out of many. I like to call it a “life verse”, one that comes to memory and has great personal meaning. Years ago I was struck with the contrast found in these words of Jesus. Disciples of many generations and different cultural experiences have discovered that the purpose and person of Jesus is radically different from one He describes as a thief. Jesus came to give life, to increase the quality of life, and the primary thing that makes a difference to us who follow Him is the recognition of the clarity of His voice. Disciples of Jesus are compared to sheep presented with the ability to listen and follow the sound of their Shepherd’s voice. For me, it seems lately there is an incredible amount of competition for my listening ear. Many voices are vying for my attention. The target is my heart. Because where my heart will go, my head will surely follow. I didn’t always know the heart has ears!

If I am honest with the Lord I can get pretty distracted by other voices. Sometimes the voice seems logical and makes good sense to me. I find that I can go down good roads that turn out to be wrong roads. Rational voices are especially enticing. And sometimes the competing voices can be cautionary...after all we should be careful Christians. But the problem with that kind of thinking is that I can play it too safe and miss the thrilling adventure of following the Lord. One of the greatest competing voices is one that wins the battle more often than I would like. If you’ve ever talked yourself out of following Jesus you know what I’m talking about. I have discovered that if I follow my heart, as they say, I can wind up in some pretty empty and despairing places. When we listen to voices that take us in the wrong direction from where the Lord is leading we will suffer loss. We will discover that the thief was behind it all, no matter how well-intentioned the other voices were in their counsel. We are robbed of abundant living, large living, when we listen to lesser voices, strange voices, idolatrous voices. Following the wrong voice can be pretty depressing. Consider the voice of despair that was coming from within a suffering man of God as we hear Job’s lament.

I should have been as though I had not been, carried from womb to tomb. (Job 10:19)

In the midst of unspeakable affliction, while listening to other voices (*his comforting friends*) Job reveals that the most discouraging voice comes out of his own mouth straight from his own heart. I don’t want to be accused of beating up and piling on Job since I have suffered too. Maybe you have suffered as well. But the truth of it all is when we declare before the Lord the perceived worthlessness of our lives we have become the devil’s best advertisement.

So here’s our hope...*we have to make choices about voices*. Who will guide you and comfort you no matter what kind of day or year or life you have had with the uncontested ability to give life, abundant life to us? The Good Shepherd, Jesus our Lord. The thief...comes to kill, steal, and destroy. The problem is that we usually find out when we have lost the joy of our life, or our peace has been destroyed, and our hope has been murdered, we have listened to the wrong voice and traveled the wrong way. Who has your ear lately...the Shepherd or the thief? Let the Word of God speak to you today...read...and heed the Shepherd of the sheep. Do what He says.

You’ll be glad that you did

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam