

Jeff's Jottings

Following the voice we already know ...

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You've had weeks, I'm sure, like this one has been for me: good and important, vital for the future, and very full. What keeps you going through weeks like that? What keeps you focused on what's important?

Sometimes, for me, it's been a bunny, and a shepherd.

Many of you, I'm sure, have read Margaret Wise Brown's children's book, *The Runaway Bunny*. When a little bunny says that he is running away from home, his mother responds by saying that wherever he goes, she will be there with him. No matter what he becomes – a fish in a stream, a flower in a hidden garden, or a rock on a mountain – his mother's love will find him and support him.

"I will run after you, for I am your mommy."

When the little bunny finally realizes he can never escape his mother's love, his mother simply says, "Have a carrot."

It's not all so simple, of course. Life is hard, and choices are hard. We've all fallen, and we have the skinned knees and bruised hearts to prove it ... even though we do our best to hide that. We desperately want life to go right, and then it doesn't, and no matter what we think we know, the shouldas and couldas, with judgment and shame, sit lurking just on the other side of the door we'd rather keep closed.

Life doesn't come gold-plated, and simply knowing the truth of who you are and who God is and what Jesus says doesn't make the challenge of every day go away. Life is tough.

But amidst that toughness — amidst the plethora of voices in life that promise us answers, there is still one thing we know beyond any doubt, beyond any experience: *My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. No one will snatch them out of my hand.*

You've had your week; I've had mine. All weeks are good, it seems to me; a gift from God in ways we can see and in ways we often miss. But sitting down this morning, reflecting on a week that is far from over — and doing so in the context of a town turned purple over the loss of a favorite son — I found myself thinking about a bunny and a shepherd and being reminded of this: that knowing that what is finally most important is not what we want, but who wants us; not what we love, but who loves us; not how we measure our own worth, but how Jesus measures our worth; not what we decide, but whose voice guides us.

May we as a presbytery follow the voice we already know.