

# The Voice of the Shepherd

by Michael Koulianos

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*The sermon emphasizes the critical need for Christians to hear and recognize the voice of God through scripture and community guidance.*

**Duration:** 40:44

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:15, John 10:27

**Topics:** "Christ", "Hearing God's Voice", "Commitment to Community"

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## Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the importance of recognizing and following the voice of the Shepherd, Jesus Christ, as essential for spiritual growth and community life. He expresses hope for the next generation and stresses that understanding God's voice is crucial for navigating life's seasons and challenges. Koulianos warns against relying solely on personal feelings or opinions, advocating for the authority of Scripture as the ultimate guide for love and relationships. He encourages the congregation to seek wise counsel and to be open to correction, highlighting that true worship involves living in obedience to God's Word. The sermon calls for a return to commitment and community in the church, contrasting it with the transient nature of modern church attendance.

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## Transcript

Take, I'm, we are, I am very hopeful regarding the Lord's work on the earth. I'm certainly not a pessimist. I don't know how you can survive this world being absolutely pessimistic.

And I have great hope for this next generation. God always has people waiting to step in the game. But I think, I think something that needs to be taught is the voice of the shepherd.

The voice of the shepherd. And typically, on Sunday or Monday, I get a text from Johan, who's our media director, and he says, what are we calling that message? Because I'm just not a three-point preacher. And we just all, you know, kind of feel what, what we're sensing on that message, and then we go for it.

You're never going to hear, like, the 12 steps to smiling. That's just not our flow here. But I do feel the need.

It's like clockwork, those thermoses, aren't they? They're like our, I guess they're our tambourine. You know, they do make non- or BPA-free plastic ones now. Just, just, just a side note.

I love who's ever spilled, I love you. I'm happy to baptize you with that. We need to be taught how to hear the voice of God.

It's vital. And Jesus said, my sheep know my voice, listen carefully, a stranger they will not follow. And so I'd like to just dive into this.

It's probably going to take me two to three weeks, but I just think regarding where the church is, where we're all at, it's vital we hear the Lord. And then my gut is, is that we'll transition, we're going to transition into a space where I will teach you by the word of God, how to transition properly. Life is seasonal, but oftentimes such language can be an excuse for presumption.

So instead of seeking the Lord, we make our decision and then say, well, you know, it's seasonal, life's seasonal. Life is also about steadiness. Life is also about consistency.

Life is also about commitment. Does that make sense? So there's a few things I would love to see the Lord reintroduced to us. For example, the power of sacrifice, the glory in sacrifice.

When somebody says, for instance, I love you, and you don't believe it, and their life hasn't proven it, it's a fair question to ask, what does love mean to you? What does love mean? And before I go any further regarding the voice of the Lord, you have to determine the ultimate authority. If you can't agree on the ultimate authority as Christians, then you just begin to redefine based on your opinion. Does that make sense? So as Christians, the ultimate authority is the holy word of God.

And so the scriptures define what it means to love someone. And as followers of Jesus and as his creation, we do not have the authority to tell him what love actually is, if he has defined it differently. Is this making sense to you? So we don't get to go to the potter and say, as the clay, you got this wrong.

Talk to me here. Are we the frozen chosen this morning? Or are we just super glued? Someone drop a thermos just to make me feel like we're in a Pentecostal meeting. Okay.

All right. So let me just start there. It's the scriptures.

It's the scriptures, not our heart. Oh, I know. You're like, but I'm prophetic.

It's the scriptures. Not our heart. I'm talking about ultimate authority.

You say, well, what about my heart? Let me help you with it. It is deceitfully wicked. That didn't help you, did it? It's deceitfully wicked.

Wait, are you telling me I can't trust it? Not really. Well, why is that? Because you don't know it. Yeah, I know my heart.

Isn't that a typical line in every argument? I know my heart. You don't know your heart. I'm never coming back to this church.

He just told me I didn't know my heart. No, God did. Because the Bible says, you alone, oh Lord, know the hearts of men.

Well, then what do we do? Depend on the Lord. Does this make sense? So I want to methodically walk through how to hear the voice of God, and how to transition into certain assignments and seasons

properly, so that you don't miss holy moments. Because the way you exit is always the way you enter.

Just, I mean, think about this. Think of how different church life is now than it was in the early church. Today, if you don't like a church, you just get up and drive four minutes down the road and go to that one.

So you have this circular motion of offended people who come and sit seasonally, never allow the Lord to change them, and they just go try to find another church where they can hide. And then it takes a few years until they bump up against this thing, you ready for this, called mankind, where people aren't as perfect as they want them to be. And in those moments, you are forced to either run or flush it out biblically.

Now, in the early church, you couldn't just jump in your little electric glorified golf cart. Not a car, joking. You need to jump in your little car and drive to the next church.

You committed to the house of God and community. And then there was a way to govern in that context. Here's one.

This makes, should make us nervous. I love Jesus. I love everything about Jesus, even the stuff that scares me.

Raise your hand if you like that about it. Yeah, I don't want a God that I can completely figure out who works for us. Jesus is not on the Jesus image payroll.

He's not part of our team. We're part of His team. And He is the owner of the team.

There's like, He calls the shots, we do it. Amen? All right. Here's one, Matthew 18.

Let me read this to you. Go to verse 15. If you're there, say golf.

Oh, I feel the anointing. Okay. Matthew 18, 15.

If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. Let me just read you a different translation.

Give me one moment. I'm going to switch to the New King James just for this one. Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he hears you, you've gained your brother. If he will not hear, take with you one or two more. That by the mouth of two or three witnesses, and by the way, that's an Old Testament quote, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word might be established.

And if he refuses to hear them, ready? Tell it to the church. If he refuses to even hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Do you know who didn't say that? John the Baptist.

That's the Jesus of all the coloring books. That's who said that. Now, to get the Lord's results, you must employ the Lord's methods.

If you don't use the Lord's process, the Lord's result is not guaranteed. And he's meticulous here and very clear. It's not even open to, you don't need to be this amazing exegetical theologian to figure this one out.

It's literally kindergarten level. This is how you deal with offense. Okay? Why would he say that to, this is Matthew 5, or this is Matthew 18, where he's teaching about the gathering, the company of saints.

Two or three gather together in my name. I am there even in the midst of them. That's five verses later.

So the context here is how we walk together in God's presence. Now, in charismatic Pentecostal circles, listen, it's my opinion, my opinion, that we have taken a scalpel and tried to divide the clear written scriptures and what we sense from the Lord or what we feel. And so in our commitment to be spiritual, listen, we disobey the scriptures because we feel otherwise.

Now, even the thought that we would make such a choice is demonic. Well, I'm not even talking about the choice being demonic. I'm saying the lie that makes you feel forced to choose between the word and what you deem as being spiritual is a demonic ploy.

Because I just want to say this out loud and very clear, trust the scriptures above your visions, your dreams, and what you sense and feel. Notice I haven't even gotten into how to hear the Lord here. But I wanted to show you something so basic.

Now, here's the question. What would church be like if step three was actually accomplished? Where a pastor stood up and said, so-and-so did A, B, C, and D. This was our process. They did not receive it.

This was the sin. Is it there? Okay, who's the head of the church? Okay, but we got to get that better. Who's the head of the church? Okay, so he's telling us as the head of the church, Ephesians 5, how the church should operate.

What would church be like if such situations were addressed publicly? You'd be like, I'll be out of here. And I get it, but that doesn't remove the text. It just doesn't.

I mean, is it there? I just need a full yes or no. Okay, if it's there, I guess the question is, do we obey? Okay, so what would such process is actually birth? A value for His presence, a love for brother and sister, and the fear of the Lord. Holiness, that's right, and that is not a curse word.

That's a beautiful thing. It's the point of the Christian life. Holiness is to be like Jesus.

Making sense? Okay, so let me read you another one regarding how the Lord views things, and then I'm going to get into how to hear the Lord. Look at Matthew 5, 23 and 24. This one's going to just blow your mind, slap your dentures.

Look at your neighbor and check for them. All right, don't check for dentures right now. Stay focused.

All right, Matthew 5, 23 and 24. Are you ready? What do you say? Golf. All right.

If you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar. Okay, where's the altar? In the temple. All right, where's the temple? You just got back from Israel? Say Jerusalem.

All right, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you. Not that you've done something, but that somebody has something against you because you've done something. Leave your sacrifice where? There at the altar.

Go and be reconciled to that person, then come and offer your sacrifice to God. Okay, let me tell you what our circles do. We offer our sacrifice to God and never clean up the mess behind us.

Listen, assuming God received our sacrifice. Okay, ladies, raise your hand. Raise your hand if you'd like your husband on your next birthday to buy you a jackhammer instead of a nice purse.

Okay, if there's one of you out there, I'd love to meet you. All right, then you could lay hands on Jess. All right.

Any ladies out here want a three wood or a dozen golf balls instead of a wonderful weekend to some whimsical little mountain town where lattes abound. All right, where you can get your little vegan quiches and post and your leather journal and you can process it all. Counsel yourself and draw little vines and flowers and leaves on the vines and cool little colors.

You can do it all. Choose all your filters for the pictures and make them look just right and then filter your this and that. You make it just look amazing.

How many of you would rather have a new football than do that? None of you. Okay, what's the point? Is that we don't get to tell the person receiving the gift what they want. They determine that and then we give them what they have told us they want.

And what I want to say is, is that if we do not worship according to Jesus's blueprint, the sacrifice is not received. So are we commanded as a New Testament church to offer goats and sheep in this building? No. Why? Why? I'll tell you why.

Because that ended with the Lamb of God bleeding on the tree. What is our version today of a sweet smelling sacrifice? What do the scriptures teach? A life of worship. Yes, our worship here, but additionally a life laid down.

And that's why Paul wrote to the church, I have poured myself out. That's offering language. I've given myself up.

I've poured myself out. Is this making sense? Let me give you context here. When Jesus says, and by the way, there's only one altar in Israel when he's saying this.

In fact, God was very clear. You don't just get to erect your own altars and have your own altar of sacrifice anywhere you want. In the temple.

The temple's in Jerusalem. Now, how many of you have been to Israel? Okay, how many of you want to take a Jesus image trip next spring or fall? It's already in the works. Calm down.

All right. Let me teach. All right.

Okay. Now, it's a long drive. Maybe a couple hour drive from Jerusalem to Galilee.

Would you say that? Okay. Some theologians would say that it would take two weeks to walk that far. Are you with me? Two weeks.

Why? Well, because you don't just show up with your little, you know, man purse and go to the altar. You take your family, your animals, your caravan. You don't take the entire trip in a day.

You stop. Maybe you go from village to village. You have family in this village.

So, some theologians would say it would take two weeks to get from Galilee to Jerusalem. Two weeks on that trip. So, let me give you the backdrop here.

You take that sacrifice, which by the way, sometimes you had to buy that sacrifice. That's the reason Jesus overturned the money tables, because they would sell sacrifice. He didn't, he did not overturn them because there was the mere exchange going on.

They were up charging the saints knowing that they were so far from home, or the, I shouldn't say the saints, the Jews, they were so far from home that they had no other place to get them. It's kind of like filling your gas tank near the airport or near Disney here. They get you good.

They know where you're at, right? If Jesus walked into Orlando, he would upturn those gas pumps. Would he not? And wouldn't you be praising if he did? Okay. Now, now Jesus is saying you do all that for the holiest moment of the year.

And you bring that sacrifice to the altar. And you finally get there. And you finally press through the crowds.

And it's your moment to be made right with the Lord. And all of a sudden, you're giving that sacrifice to the priest who's about to kill that sacrifice and your conscience says, the Lord says to you, somebody has ought with you. Jesus says, leave the sacrifice there.

Travel another two weeks. Listen, make it right. Then come all the way back and offer your sacrifice.

This is what that means, guys. You living a holy life in obedience to God is more precious than any song you will ever sing. You doing it God's way is worship to the Lord.

You singing a song out of the will of God and willfully disobedient is not an offering he receives. So you might need to make some phone calls today and send some text messages. And the Bible teaches regarding marriage, Peter even writes that if we do not live properly with our wives, God doesn't hear our prayers.

Do you see how programmed we get? And we just forget about simple commands from Jesus. All right. Let me give you a few scriptures regarding how to hear the voice of the Lord.

Proverbs 11.14. I'm sorry. Proverbs 12.1. How is this? Is this okay today? All right. Proverbs 12.1. What do you say? Yeah, there you go.

All right. To learn, you must love discipline. I don't know if I read that right.

To learn, you must love a hug. To learn, you must love discipline. Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen.

This is the living. It is stupid. I can't believe that word's in the Bible.

It is stupid to hate correction. What am I talking about here? Allowing others into your process. Others who are in authority in your life that's been given by God.

The moment you say to a person, a leader, the moment you say, God has spoken to me, you are going to tie the hands of that leader. Because the God card is a really tough card to fight. And so what you're going

to discover, I wish I had one of those cool PowerPoints.

It's going to be my first one ever. Maybe we can do one sometime. I'll backslide for service and have a PowerPoint.

So if I had this huge pie, it would be broken up. And primarily, as I said, it would be what does the Word teach. But how many of you know, who live here in Longwood maybe, that the Bible never mentions the city Longwood? So that tells me that I need specifics from the Word.

If the Bible doesn't mention Lakeland or Miami or Augusta National, I think it does mention Augusta in the book of Revelation when the New Jerusalem comes down. But the point is, there are specifics we need that we would call the hidden will of God. And until I steward the revealed will of God, which is the scriptures, I don't qualify to hear the hidden will of God.

Is this making sense? All right. So a part of the pie is you telling me, I feel this, but it is not the whole pie. And if you tell me I had a dream, it's still not the whole pie.

Because to fill the whole pie, you need scriptural advice from people in authority in your life, the scriptures themselves. But Jesus said, wisdom is found in its children. In other words, find people who live a life that is alluring to you.

In other words, Jesus is saying, if you don't know who's right, if you're confused, find the people who actually have the fruit. Copy them. It's that simple.

Copy the ones who seem to be parents like you want to be. Copy the ones who seem to know Jesus. Copy the ones who live a life of prayer.

Copy the ones whom God has used in those areas. Wisdom is found in its children. That's Jesus's way of saying, you disagree with me theologically, Pharisees, but look at me, look at my life, look at you.

Is this making sense? So I'm going to go through this pie, but I want to say, to hear the voice of God properly, according to the scriptures, to hear Him fully, you want to have a very, very full approach. Does this make sense? So if a vision doesn't line up with the word, the vision's wrong. If somebody gives you a prophetic word and it doesn't line up with scripture, it's wrong.

If you feel something in your heart and it doesn't line up with the word, it's wrong. Safety, listen, safety is not found. This is Proverbs 11, 14.

Turn there quickly. Just give me 10 more minutes and then we'll receive communion. This is going to be a long, long, long journey together.

Proverbs 11, 14. Without wise leadership, a nation falls. There is safety in having many advisors.

Many. So when you look, I want you to begin valuing longevity in God. Redetermine what you value, who you look up to, what you look up to, why you follow certain people that you follow.

Don't look for this, look for this. People who've stood the test of time. Look at the flicker in the eyes of the people who call them, who call him or who call him pastor.

Look for the fragrance in them. Don't look for their Instagram following or their TikTok following. None of that matters.

You say, doesn't it matter a little? No. How about a little bit? None. None of it matters.

TikTok does not get demons out of people. Do you follow me? So don't look at that. Determine what you're going to value and let heaven's lens be yours.

Value what God values. Value people who walked with Jesus in a pure manner for a long time, like Benny. This platform should not be, and a social media platform should not be, the lens by which you determine to submit or look up to somebody.

Look at their life. Instead of looking at their crowd shots, look at their marriage. Are you hearing me? Look at their children.

He's like, oh no, no, no. Kids are just jacked up. They don't need to be jacked up.

How many of you did not grow up in a house that was a democracy? My house wasn't democratic. It was a parental theocracy. Do you follow me? Why do kids need to be jacked up when the Bible says, such as the children? They have something we need.

The culture's jacked up, but it's not a promise from God. Thy children shall be jacked up. And if it is, I don't want to.

That one's not taped to my fridge. Look for those things in people. Look for humility.

I said, look for humility, not how loud they preach or how quiet they preach. Don't even look at the quality of their delivery. Don't look at the way in which they communicate.

That's a big one today, especially with younger preachers. This is how you communicate. I don't find that in the scriptures.

I find this is how you burn. I don't want to just communicate with my mouth. I want my eyes to say something.

I want to drip his presence. I want to exude the Lord. You see what I'm saying? Look for Jesus in their words, because the Bible says it's from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

If you want to know someone's heart, just listen to them for a little while. And if Jesus is part of a sermon and not the totality of the sermon, that's a problem. Because that's just putting the sprinkles on a Sunday we've constructed.

Listen to the word. Does the word flow from them? Is their heart, is their conscience captive, as Martin Luther said, to the word of God? How many of you remember when Jesus asked Peter, do you love me? Three times. You remember that? Okay.

Then every time Peter asked, Jesus connected it to his sheep. And he didn't say, speak encouragement to my sheep. He said, feed my sheep.

Feed my lambs. So that's why the preaching of the word is so vital. When you choose who to sit under and who to submit to, and why am I going here? Because you have to choose wisely who you allow to speak

into your life.

And if, scripturally speaking, I'll give you dozens of scriptures. I just did this with our staff. Scripturally speaking, you cannot claim to know God's will without His voice flowing from those He's appointed in your life.

If you don't believe me, I will give you dozens. But the point is, who do I allow to speak into my life? Now you can get really, really, really screwed up there. Because if you start looking for perfection, nobody will speak in your life.

So perfection is not the resume of people we entrust to speak into our lives. But purity is. Purity is not perfection.

The purity of Jesus. There's this ever-increasing walk, to walk with the Lord. You see them becoming more and more like the Lord as they age.

Deeper humility. Those are the people you want to submit to. And the reason I say that is you look for perfection.

Pride sets in in you. You create your own standard. You lie to yourself and say they can't be trusted.

And then nobody speaks into your life except your little house. Okay. And you have to ask yourself this question.

Why am I not open to advice? Why? Sometimes it's because we've already made up our mind. And I just can't let them change it. If I let them change my mind, you ready? I look weak.

I look unspiritual. I am not the prophet that I think I am. And that's a lie from the devil.

Because when God sees you allow people whom he's given you in your life to speak into decisions and you change your mind, God doesn't see it as you screwing up. He sees it as humility. And humility is beautiful to Jesus.

So it's not a matter of whether or not God is speaking to you. The question is how does God speak? And God speaks through the counsel of many. Does that make sense? Let me give you two more and then we'll take communion.

Proverbs 11.6. Proverbs 11.6. The godliness of good people, listen, rescues them. The ambition, I thought ambition was great. The ambition of treacherous people traps them.

In other words, you make your call through an unsanctified ambition, you will entrap yourself. Proverbs 13.1. A wise child accepts a parent's discipline. Listen to the second part of the verse.

A mocker refuses to listen to correction. Now, Psalm chapter 1 teaches us to not fellowship with mockers or sit in the seat of the scoffer. Okay, let me touch on this.

Then we'll receive communion. It's gonna buzz, so just be patient here. Cover your ears.

Didn't happen. Thank you, Zach. We walk by faith.

That was not a wonder. It's just good audio engineering. All right.

If you grew up in church, you kind of learn how to be. It's one of the tragedies for PKs. It's something I never just put on my kids.

No, I do say when you walk in church, we worship. That's who we are. And for those of you who saw the picture Bill posted yesterday, worshiping as his wife's passing.

I'd like to be able to say I could do that. I don't know. I just know that, gosh.

Okay. Worship is a high value. That's why you come into the house of God and to sit at His feet and hear His word.

But kids, PKs, get really jacked up because they learn to disguise. And if you grew up in church, you learned the lingo. You learn how to walk in, how to get out, and how to make it out as safely as possible.

How to just be and never be known and never be seen and never be open and never be vulnerable. So you live this life of protecting you. And what you don't realize is setting in, and this isn't an attack on any of you who grew up this way, what you don't realize sets in is hypocritical religion.

And rather than you being like David saying, I need my own armor. I can't wear yours if I'm going to slay Goliath. You say, give me Saul's armor.

It's safer here. Remember, God cannot anoint your mask. Can I use the mask? It's better for Him to get the brutalized version of you and let Him heal it up and let Him deal with that.

And He'd rather anoint authenticity that's not perfect than religious fake hypocrisy. All right. So we do that.

And when we're around the church people, we know what to say and what not to say. And we know honor. And we know how to open doors.

And we know how to tell you I love you. We know how to encourage. We know how to never bring bad news.

But when you start to relax, things come out of your mouth that are jaded. Because in your head, you've been there and you've done that. And you slowly lose the fear of the Lord.

You think because you've been there so long and that people let you in, you can trash them. And you don't think anyone hears it. But the spiritual people around you pick up on the negativity.

And they pick up on something called mockery, negativity, pessimism. It's the sin of the spies. It's the sin of the spies.

If you are on Jesus Images team and you say we can't do that, you're going to go in the dark. You're going to go in the dark here. If you start saying that's too hard.

Michael will never go for that. Jess will never go. You're going to glow in the dark.

And that's the pessimism that sets in. And the Bible calls that being a fool. Fools hate correction.

The scripture teaches. So they look spiritual. They know how to walk through the motions.

But you can't change their mind. Let me leave you with this verse. The Bible says He gave them up to their passions.

Okay. So you feel like you have God's okay. And you kind of do.

It's just not His best okay. I feel like it's okay. I feel like I'm good here.

You feel like that now. But you didn't feel that three months ago. So God goes I'm going to give you up to that passion.

Listen to the second part of the verse. And it brought leanness to their soul. Yeah yeah you can do what you want.

But you'll never be satisfied from the decision. Because God is not a slave driver. He's a father.

Okay go do it. And then you have to answer this question. Is my heart still burning? No.

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