



“One Crew, One Flock”
John 10:1-6, 11-16
April 19, 2026

Rev. Amy Miracle
Broad Street Presbyterian Church
Columbus, Ohio

There is something comforting about belonging to a group that feels like home: a yoga class, a book club, an online gaming community, a pickleball league, a Bible study.

- You are familiar with the building or online space where you meet.
- You know the group’s patterns and quirks.
- You recognize everyone’s voice.

That’s what Jesus is describing in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John. He uses the image of a shepherd and sheep: a relationship built on trust and recognition. The sheep know the shepherd’s voice. They recognize it. They follow it.

And for the people listening to Jesus that day, the metaphor makes sense. They are the ones who know God’s voice. They are the people who belong.

And then Jesus says something surprising. Something that seems like an aside. Something that’s easy to miss if you aren’t paying attention. Jesus says,

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

Jesus doesn’t say that he *might have* other sheep or I *may someday have* other sheep. Jesus says, “I *have* other sheep.”

Already.

Already listening. Already belonging. Already part of something bigger than the flock his first audience can see. Interesting.

Throughout history, most of us religious folks have acted as if the shepherd speaks only to us. As if the pasture ends at the edges of our tradition.

But Jesus seems to suggest something else.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.

What does that mean exactly?

Does that mean that the shepherd's voice echoes in traditions other than Christianity?

- In the daily prayers of a Muslim neighbor
- In the stillness of a Buddhist sitting in meditation.
- In the ancient rhythms of Jewish Sabbath practice.
- In the wisdom of Indigenous communities who have listened to the land and its Creator for generations.

Jesus invites us to consider the possibility that people outside our fold may already be responding to the voice of God in ways we do not fully understand.

Many years ago, I spent two weeks in Turkey, a Muslim country. I wasn't sure how welcome I would be if folks knew I was a minister. So, the first week, when asked what I did, I fudged a bit – I said I was a teacher or a social worker. The second week I was met at a bus station by the owner of the travel agency who would help with that part of the trip. He was a small man, meticulously dressed and very welcoming. As we drove away from the bus station, he asked me, "What kind of work do you do?"

For some reason, I told him the truth. "I'm a minister."

He looked puzzled so I elaborated. "Pastor, priest."

"You are a priest? A priest?"

"Here it comes," I thought. He looked so serious.

Then he said, "You honor me by your presence."

"Oh," was the only thing that I could think of to say in response.

"Me, too. I too am a priest," he said. "I am the imam of my mosque." For over 25 years, he had been the spiritual leader of a congregation.

"It is I who am honored by your presence," I then said.

We sat in silence for a few minutes and then he said, "Same God."

"What?" I asked.

"We worship the same God. The same God," he insisted.

"Yes," I said, "The same God."

At that point we had reached the end of my non-existent Turkish and his limited English. But every few minutes he would turn, look at me, nod his head, and say, "Same God."

That's a nice story. But that's all it is. It's just a story about two people from different faith traditions experiencing a small moment of connection. It doesn't prove anything. Just as this reference to other sheep doesn't prove anything. It merely suggests. It merely suggests the possibility. It merely suggests the possibility that God is in another tradition, in ways that we will never understand and never fully grasp because we do not have access to it.

I want to be clear about this. That doesn't mean the story of Jesus suddenly doesn't matter. It does matter. For me, the story of Jesus – his shimmering life, his death, his resurrection tells me everything I need to know about God. The story of Jesus matters.

But perhaps Jesus himself is suggesting that the story we know about him isn't the only story that reveals God's love to the world. God is larger than any one tradition's ability to contain God.

Part of me is drawn to that idea. And part of me resists it. Is there enough of God's love and attention to go around? I remember as a young kid trying to imagine how God could possibly hear everyone's prayers. I thought that maybe there was some kind of switchboard system in the sky so that calls could get routed to God. And the more people who connected with God, the harder it was for me to get through. I worried that I would be put on hold, perhaps forever.

Of course, my thinking about all of this evolved and expanded over time. My understanding of God and how God works in the world got bigger and more complex. One thing I now know for certain is that God's love is big and deep and endless and the strongest force in the universe and... there is enough of it to go around... there is enough of God to go around. Because God is well... big. Immeasurably big.

I want to take a little detour now around the moon through the recent Artemis II mission. In the beginning, Artemis II was all about science. The four astronauts on board gathered data, took photographs, tested life support systems and fixed the toilet. But for the astronauts themselves, and for those of us who followed their journey, the mission also got us thinking about more profound things.

The crew did an amazing job of taking us with them. Of sharing their excitement and joy and wonder. We were all reminded of the smallness of the earth and the immensity of the universe.

We got to view the earth from space. From space, you can't tell who belongs to which flock. You can't see national borders. You can't discern religious traditions or political affiliations. All you see is one beautiful, fragile home. Just one small part of an immense universe.

Looking at the earth from that perspective it's not much a stretch to think that the creator of the universe is bigger than our tradition. Of course, God has other flocks. Why wouldn't God speak so that all of the people of our beautiful fragile home can hear and understand and know that they are loved and cherished by God.

At their first public appearance after they returned to earth, the Artemis II crew shared some of their experiences and reflections. Mission specialist Christiana Koch shared that she used to think she understood what a crew was. It was a group of people who worked and ate together, like the four astronauts on their mission, like a group of people rowing together on boat. Her thinking about all of this changed due to her experience in space. She said this:

A crew is a group that is in it all the time, no matter what, that is stroking together every minute with the same purpose, that is willing to sacrifice silently for each other, that gives grace, that holds accountable.

A crew has the same cares and the same needs, and a crew is inescapably, beautifully, dutifully linked,” she continued, “When we saw tiny Earth, people asked our crew what impressions we had. And honestly, what struck me wasn’t necessarily just Earth, it was all the blackness around it. Earth was just this lifeboat hanging undisturbingly in the universe.

She takes a moment to gather her emotions and her thoughts.

I know I haven’t learned everything that this journey has yet to teach me, but there’s one new thing I know, and that is, planet Earth – You. Are. A. Crew.

Yeah. We are a crew. Inescapably, beautifully, dutifully linked.

How would our lives, our life together be different if we assumed that God is speaking through other traditions? If we assume that God is at work in the life of every human being in the world, everyone we come in contact with?

Oh, the possibilities.

One crew. One flock. Same God.

Amen.