

<sup>22</sup> *At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter,* <sup>23</sup> *and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon.* <sup>24</sup> *So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah tell us plainly."* <sup>25</sup> *Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me;* <sup>26</sup> *but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.* <sup>27</sup> *My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.* <sup>28</sup> *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.* <sup>29</sup> *What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.* <sup>30</sup> *The Father and I are one."*

Sometimes the most unlikely people can be the best heroes. Through Netflix I have been watching series made in Great Britain some time ago based on Agatha Christie's character Miss Jane Marple, called "Miss Marple" What makes it most interesting is the main character of the show, Miss Jane Marple is a single woman in her eighties . To look at her you'd almost laughingly feel this woman couldn't get to the store much less solve murders. But she does, much to the astonishment of everyone else involved including the authorities involved!

Perhaps that is why she became a popular figure in literature. She didn't "fit "the part, and forced readers to think differently as to who could be a detective.

In the scripture lesson above we get that same idea as Jesus interacts with the religious authorities in this latter part of the "good shepherd", chapter 10 of John's gospel. Their view of Messiah was something like a powerful super hero. He was to be the "all powerful king", the new David who would crush the roman oppressor. He would also be the ultimate voice of authority of the law.

For them Jesus did not meet those standards. He came from a backwater town in Galilee, his "father" was a carpenter, his mother a simple peasant woman. Then he takes up not with the religious authorities, but gathers to himself fishermen, a religious revolutionary, and even a despised tax collector. In their eyes he seems to be constantly breaking the law, and when he does speak to them, it is a word of correction.

But those who gladly hear him, are transformed by him because God had fashioned the idea of messiah differently than the ideas of the religious authorities. Messiah was to reconcile people to God, not make it more difficult for them. It seems as if Jesus was always looking for anyone who wanted to open their heart to God. It was to these folks Jesus "voice" was heard. This meant that Jesus went to people written off by the religious authorities of that day. Jesus wanted to turn people not to the law but the "Lord".

Today we have a similar struggle. Too often when we think about Christianity, we think of faith groups within the Christian tradition. We tend to go by the terms, "Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Lutheran "forgetting who's behind it all, and who the shepherd really is. We really understand what the relationship between God and ourselves is when we know Jesus the Good Shepherd. So I would leave you with one thought; "Do you know the faith or the Shepherd? When you know the shepherd He makes a promise.

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If you haven't already, get to know the Shepherd, Jesus.