

## THE GOSPEL OF BELIEF - Studies in John's Gospel

Part forty-two - Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 10:00 a.m.

Teaching #1719 - Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church

### DISCIPLES WHO LISTEN, FOLLOW, AND REMAIN

**John 10:22-42** - "At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, [23] and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. [24] So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." [25] Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, [26] but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. [27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of *my hand*. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of *the Father's hand*. [30] *I and the Father are one.*" [31] The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. [32] Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" [33] The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." [34] Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? [35] If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— [36] do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? [37] If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; [38] but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." [39] Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. [40] He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. [41] And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." [42] And many believed in him there."

This is the final pre-crucifixion conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. The next time Jesus comes into this city will be His final Passover and execution. He won't return before that time.

What might not be obvious on a casual reading is the passing of time taking place in this tenth chapter. Our opening verse today identifies this confrontation as taking place at the "**Feast of Dedication**" (22). This feast took place about two months after the "**Feast of Booths**" where the string of events beginning in chapter seven began to unfold. And the reason that matters is we begin to get a feel for how persistently these same religious leaders **kept at Jesus over a prolonged period of time**. Their anger and resentment isn't **cooling**. It's **growing**. There is no rest for Jesus in these closing months. John would say Jesus' **time** was coming.

The passage opens with Jesus walking around in the temple. He's in the **colonnade of Solomon** (23), probably because it is now winter and this was a somewhat sheltered area. Jesus is looking for **solitude** and He's looking for **warmth**. And He finds neither. John is very careful wording the way the religious leaders, seeing their moment, **surround** Jesus in a way that makes it impossible for Him to retreat - "**...the Jews gathered around him....**" (24). There is a **circling** of Jesus. Get a picture of paparazzi swarming a celebrity at the airport. Jesus has nowhere to go.

One more opening thought. As we work our way through this tough text recall to your mind Jesus' blunt words in **John 9:39** - "Jesus said, '**For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.**'"

Just hold on to those words because Jesus directed them at the very same people surrounding Him in today's text. We are seeing a group of people who are "**becoming blind**" (9:39). "**Becoming**" is the important verb. Then and now people are always **becoming** something as they deal with God the Son. He constantly **effects** lives. Nothing remains **static** in the presence of Jesus. Just the slightest genuine belief and more light and grace is given. **Respond** to resistible grace and more grace is given. Turn from what has been revealed by grace and blindness gradually deepens. Such is the dynamic reality of Jesus Christ.

That's what is unfolding rather dramatically in today's text. Jesus is still **trying** to reach these stubborn truth resisters. That's a frequently overlooked point. But they will have none of His marvelous grace.

### 1) THE IMPOSSIBLE QUESTION DESIGNED TO PUT JESUS IN AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION

**John 10:22-26** - "At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, [23] and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. [24] So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, **"How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."**[25] Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, [26] but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep."

Jesus knows He will lose no matter how He answers their question about His Messiahship. They make it clear they want a simple **"yes,"** or **"no"** answer to their question - **"If you are the Christ, tell us plainly"** (24). The question is designed to limit Jesus' response to two unacceptable choices.

If Jesus merely answers, **"Yes,"** the people will assume Jesus is the **kind** of political Messiah they have been looking for to deliver the Jewish people from all their Roman-like oppressors. They will come and take Jesus by force to make Him their earthly king. This is the kind of misunderstood Messiahship Jesus constantly dodged all through the synoptic gospels. This was why He constantly told people **not** to say who healed them, etc.

But if Jesus answers, **"No,"** He won't be telling the people the truth. He will deny the very reason the Father sent the Son into this fallen world. To be clear, Jesus **is** the long awaited Messiah. But He is **not** the kind of Messiah the Jewish people immediately wanted.

And now we begin to understand why **"I am the Messiah"** isn't listed as one of the great **"I am's"** of Jesus in the gospels. Jesus gives the answer these Jewish leaders weren't expecting - **John 10:25** - "Jesus answered them, **"I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me...."** His **answer** takes them in a different direction than their **question**.

Think about this. Their question makes it look as though their unbelief was **Jesus'** fault - **John 10:24** - **"....How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."** There you have it. They **want** to know the truth about Jesus, but they **can't** know. And the **reason** they can't know is Jesus won't reveal Himself. He's keeping them in **"suspense"** (24).

Jesus says different. Jesus says they don't believe in Him, not because He hasn't enabled faith, but because they have chosen to ignore everything they **could** have already received from Him - **"I told you, and you do not believe...."** (25).

Jesus' answer is the reason I said to remember His words in **John 9:39** - "Jesus said, **"For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."** These Jewish leaders **choose** not to receive grace and light from Jesus's words and works. Their blindness didn't happen overnight. **Jesus** didn't create their blindness. **They** created their blindness by refusing His resistible grace and truth.

This also helps explain Jesus' words in **10:26** - **"....but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep."** It's easy to read this verse like it was the only one in the chapter. But it has a context. Jesus doesn't say, **"You cannot believe because you are not among my sheep,"** but, **"You do not believe because you are not among my sheep."**

His point, given these words are addressed to **Jewish leaders** - and very **proud ones**, at that - is His divine life isn't imparted along Jewish ethnic lines. His life is given to those who **hear** and **follow** Him.

Just to make this point more strongly, Jesus is very clear that, even though He has already emphatically stated these Jewish leaders **are not His sheep**, He still **calls** them to believe and **desires** them to believe - **John 10:37-38** - "If I am not doing the works of my Father, **then do not believe me;** [38] but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, **believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."**

So, says Jesus, they are entitled to **not** believe Him if there is no compelling evidence in His works (37). These words seem strangely unnecessary if they **couldn't** believe in the first place. It's like telling people they are free **not to come** to my birthday party if they're busy when they were never invited to come in the first place.

But there's more. These same **non-sheep** people are **urged** by Jesus **to** believe - and more - to **"know and understand"** the divine nature and assignment of the Savior and the Father who sent Him (38). Again, very strange words if they are already **disqualified** by not being Jesus' sheep.

I'm not trying to be pig-headed here. There is lots of room for humility dealing with the Biblical text. I'm simply saying I

don't believe **Calvinists own John chapter 10**. Though I **am** reformed, I am **not** a Calvinist (Calvinists don't **own** the Reformation!). And I'm very comfortable with this text speaking for itself if all the verses are taken together.

## 2) WHAT JESUS' SHEEP DO - THEY LISTEN AND THEY FOLLOW

**John 10:27** - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

"Hear" is in the continuous present tense - "**My sheep are listening to my voice...**" "They are **always** listening. Listening is the one main thing my sheep **do**." This is Jesus' way of saying we will immediately go wrong the moment we **stop** listening. In other words, losing life - losing our way - messing up our whole lives - isn't usually the result of **denying** our Lord or **renouncing** our Lord. It's usually a far more simple matter of **not paying attention - just for a moment - while something else seemed more demanding or entertaining**.

Live all of your life **thinking** about your Shepherd. Let Him speak into **everything** about your day. Never **not** consider His voice. Don't look elsewhere for your heart's direction.

The **second** thing Jesus' sheep do is **follow** - **John 10:27** - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." And I hope you see the logic in Jesus' words. He's saying something profound, yet easily missed. There is a **relationship** between **hearing** and **following**. Each one enhances the other.

It is **hearing** the Shepherd that enables any following at all. But it is **following** the Shepherd that enables **ongoing hearing** in the future. Do you see it? First the Shepherd speaks by grace. We do nothing to deserve this. We **hear**. And as we **follow** that voice - as we **stay close** to what we have heard - we make it easier to **hear more**.

We all know how **distance** effects **hearing**. You can whisper to someone you are hugging. You have to shout to someone across the soccer field.

We have a **speaking** Shepherd. But **hearing** Him isn't automatic. It is as we **follow** what we have **already received** that we receive more. We never grow out of this discipline. We hear. Then we **follow closely** what we have heard. This makes **more** hearing much simpler.

## 3) WHAT JESUS DOES FOR HIS LISTENING, FOLLOWING SHEEP - HE KNOWS THEM, GIVES THEM ETERNAL LIFE, AND PROTECTS THEM

**John 10:27-29** - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

Jesus paints a magnificent picture of blessing for His following sheep. **First, He knows them (27)**. But doesn't Jesus - omniscient Jesus - know **everyone**? He seems to **know** even the thoughts of these unbelieving Jewish leaders only too well.

But this doesn't catch the meaning of the **knowing** Jesus expresses toward His following sheep. He **knows** His following sheep **relationally**. He is **invested** in their care and their good. That's why He speaks to them. They are **His** sheep in a special way. As they hear and as they follow they are objects of His **ever-deepening, expanding grace** in a way only they can be.

Make no mistake. Our Father, through Jesus, the Son, **loves** the whole world. This is the **emphatic declaration** of **John 3:16** - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." We must constantly rejoice - rejoice **unselfishly** - that God loves the wicked and longs for their repentance. We must always interpret God's love for the whole world **through the lens** of Jesus Christ. Jesus reveals a God who **loves** the whole world and **dies** for the whole world.

But while there is a redeeming loving reach for the whole world, there is a **fellowship** with those already in the fold. The grace of our Lord **received** creates an **inner kindred bond** that only this divine family shares. Believe it. Jesus **actually loves** you today. He **knows** you in that special inside way you **know** your children.

This is a harder truth to grasp because most of the church's worship centers on how much **we** love **Jesus**. And we **should** express this. But our text is describing how much **God** loves **us**. How much do you love your children - your grand-children. God loves you **more** than that.

**Second, Jesus gives His following sheep eternal life (28).** This giving is also in the continuous present tense. He **is giving** to His following sheep eternal life. Eternal life doesn't come from **nowhere**. True, there is always a beginning point - a moment when belief in Jesus plants that seed in our hearts. But it is a common mistake to think of this as the **end** of the entry of eternal life from our gracious Shepherd.

What Jesus is stating in this short verse is a theme He will greatly amplify in **John 15:1-5** - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. [2] Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. [3] Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. [4] **Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.** [5] **I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.**"

There is an **ongoing giving** of eternal life from Jesus. What Jesus calls **abiding** in John 15 He calls **hearing and following** in John 10. This is how the life of the Shepherd is **transfused** into His following sheep.

**Third, the Shepherd gives His following sheep protection.** Look at these precious words of promise - **John 10:28-29** - "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

No doubt these words refer back to Jesus' own words in **verses 10-13** - "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. [11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. [12] He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. [13] He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

Jesus is the One who reminded the crowd of the dangers sheep can face. There are many who can offer no protection when the wolves come after the sheep. But we follow no such shepherd. Ours suffers no limitations in terms of His protection and keeping capacity.

And notice the way Jesus deliberately **interchanges** the "**hands**" in our text - **John 10:28-29** - "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of **my hand**." [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the **Father's hand**."

This is the way Jesus leads into His summary statement in **verse 30** - "I and the Father are one." Whether the Son's hands or the Father's, we are in the **same** hands. We have a mighty Shepherd indeed!

#### 4) **THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF LIFE-GIVING BELIEF IN JESUS CHRIST**

**John 10:30-38** - "I and the Father are one." [31] The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. [32] Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" [33] The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." [34] Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?" [35] If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— [36] do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" [37] If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; [38] but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

There is a twisted ending to this account. As our text today opened these Jewish leaders made their request look as reasonable as sunshine - **10:24** - "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." "All we want is the truth!"

Then Jesus **tells** them the truth. He is Father God's Messiah - "**I and the Father are one (30).**" And they attack Him with stones to kill Him. "All we want is the truth. But if you say something we don't accept, we'll kill you!" So we learn not everyone who **says** he is after divine truth really is.

We have to hurry. These leaders then tell Jesus it isn't because of what He **did** that they want to stone Him (Though this is a change from their response to His miracles performed on the Sabbath!). It's what Jesus **said** - **making Himself equal with**

**God** - that leads to their cries of **blasphemy (36)**.

Jesus then appeals to **Psalm 82:6** to show that even **human judges** who were God's temporary representatives over Israel were called "**gods**" as they distributed His laws among the people. So how could **Jesus** - who was so uniquely "**sent into the world**" by His own heavenly Father be accused of blasphemy?

This is the logic of **verses 35-36** - "**If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— [36] do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"**

Take special note of the way Jesus described Himself as being "**sent into the world**." This clearly implies an existence **before** He came. His **divine nature** is all over those remarks.

Jesus again invites their acceptance of His words and Person. He offers grace to these non-sheep - **John 10:37-38** - "**If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; [38] but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.**"

But there is only so much time to confront spiritual blindness. We're beholding the fulfillment of the **John 9:39** principle - "**Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."**

#### 5) **THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE - YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THE NON-LISTENERS WILL COME INTO THE SHEEP-FOLD**

**John 10:40-42** - "**He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. [41] And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." [42] And many believed in him there."**

Look at these people becoming believers. They heard the words of John the Baptist, who is long dead. John didn't **see** any of these fruits of his faithful, rather unrefined witness to the Lamb of God. But Jesus saw it. So keep sowing the Word. Keep prayerfully trusting Father God's loving heart for the non-sheep.

You never know. You just never know.