

My sheep hear my voice

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Date: 05 February 2023

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[0 : 00] Once said, what a man is on his knees before God, that he is and nothing more. That was by a Scottish preacher, Robert Murray McShane.

! What a man is on his knees before God, that he is and nothing more. We are human beings coming before a great and mighty God.

As we saw this morning from this chapter, we are utterly dependent upon our God to answer prayer.

And as we'll see again this evening, we see in these few verses, Elijah on his knees before the Lord.

And we'll learn four more lessons for our prayers as we look at these few verses. As you may recall from this morning, the situation for Israel is that they're in a time of drought.

[1 : 09] This chapter is kind of bookended by the thought that rain is going to come and rain coming again. So if you have a look there in verse 1, we see this.

After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah. Go and present yourself to Ahab, the king, Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.

Elijah hears from God that rain is going to come again on the land. His judgment is coming towards an end.

But first, God's people need to see something. They need to see that he truly is God and they need to bow down and worship him and not Baal.

Not other gods. There's something more important than their physical needs. It's their spiritual needs. Their need to be worshipping the Lord.

[2 : 18] And so we saw this morning that contest, that kind of God contest. Who is the real God? Who is the God who answers by fire? And we saw that it is the Lord Almighty who rains down fire from heaven in direct contrast with Baal, who does not hear, who does not answer people's cries, who is totally powerless.

But there's still no rain. God answering by fire has not solved the problem of no rain. In fact, it probably makes it worse, really, fire in a land that's suffering a drought.

The sky is still scorching. The ground is still dry. Or as Moses spoke to God's people in Deuteronomy, the sky of your head will be bronze and the ground beneath you iron.

A warning that if they turn to other gods, a drought would come. The sky like bronze. The ground beneath like iron.

God was doing what his word said if people turned to other gods. But it could be easy for us to think, as we've been looking at this passage today, that Elijah's kind of in charge in this chapter.

[3 : 41] It's him who organizes everything to do with the contest. He sets up the altar. He does things. But we mustn't take our eyes off.

It's really God. It's really God who answers prayer. It's only God who could have answered by fire. And we see now that it's only God who can answer Elijah's prayer for rain.

It's only God who could send rain, who can control the weather. It's not Elijah. Elijah is just on his knees before the Lord. So, verse 42.

So, Ahab went off to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground, and put his face between his knees.

He is bowing down before God, praying that God will remove judgment on the land. But there is nothing there that tells us he's praying.

[4 : 42] But we have a little commentary on this part of God's word. If you turn to James chapter 5, verse 17 and 18, we read this very helpful thing about Elijah praying here.

James 5, verse 17 to 18. You might want to put a finger in 1 Kings 18 so we can go back there.

It says, Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, but it did. And it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. We get a real insight here into what's going on in 1 Kings 18.42.

Elijah is praying earnestly to God that it would rain again. And God indeed, as we'll see, does send rain. So we are going to learn four more things from Elijah as he prays.

[5 : 58] And the first is a praying posture. A praying posture. Elijah, it says, is on his knees before the Lord.

He bent down to the ground, put his face between his knees. He's in a praying posture. He recognizes that he's a human being coming towards the Lord.

And he's showing that just in the way he is praying. And though we are not told or commanded anywhere in particular a posture of praying, we can pray sitting, we can pray standing, we can pray walking, kneeling.

It is helpful to note the posture that Elijah comes. Helpful to note because it's like he's bowing down before the Lord Almighty.

He is the king. He is the sovereign one. Only he can send the rain. He comes as a creature, helpless, coming before his creator.

[7 : 03] The one who governs all things. The one who can answer by fire, as we have seen. The Lord who rules and reigns.

And so he bows his knees towards the sovereign Lord Almighty, saying, please do something only you can do and make it rain. Send this rain that you have promised.

So even if we don't ourselves fall on our knees physically before the Lord, in our praying it's important that we remember who we pray to.

We're not trying to bend God to our own wills, not trying to come before him and saying, God, I want this, I want that. Although I think, I know that I can sometimes come like that and forget that I'm coming to the Lord Almighty.

We need to remember who we are coming to. The king of kings, the creator of the universe. God, the Lord. Praying for things that only he can do.

[8 : 15] Praying that he will turn people's hearts to him. Praying his kingdom will come. Submit to his will. And maybe it could be helpful for some of us, maybe at some point this week, if we're able to, maybe just helpful to pray on your knees before the Lord.

Just to think, this is what I'm doing. I'm coming as a humble servant before the Lord. My king. A very kind of tangible, clear way for us to see what we are doing as we come to the King in prayer. Lesson number one, praying posture. Lesson number two, praying promises. They're all beginning with P. Praying promises.

Elijah is sure that rain is coming. He says that with great certainty in verse 41. And Elijah said to Ahab, go eat and drink, for there is the sound of heavy rain.

But as he sends his servant off, there's no sign of rain. But Elijah is sure that it's coming because he's heard from the Lord at the beginning of chapter 18.

[9 : 35] And so he's praying, that would happen. And he's praying, reminding, almost like reminding God. Not that God needs reminding, but saying, you have said this. Please do it, Lord.

Taking his promise and turning it into prayer. It's like when someone asking, like when you know someone who maybe said, well, if you ever want this doing, just let me know.

And you come to them and you say, you know when you said that. No, I forgot about that. I recently had the joy of asking a friend of mine to bake a wedding cake.

He's very into baking. And I remember him baking a wedding cake for some people a couple of years ago. And I said, you remember when you baked that wedding cake? Do you think you could bake one for us?

Yes. The answer was a yes. Yes. Sorry for leaving you in suspense. And God wants to hear from us like that.

[10 : 39] Praying the promises of Scripture. Praying to God, you know you said this. Well, please do this. A few promises of Scripture I was thinking of in Habakkuk.

It says, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And then Jesus, and I think these are connected. Jesus in the Lord's Prayer teaches us to pray, your kingdom come.

Surely, as we ask God that his kingdom would come, it's asking him that he would fulfill this promise in Habakkuk. May the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Or as some of us were praying on Friday, reminding ourselves of Matthew 9.38, where Jesus says, Ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest field.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. So we ask him. We say, you have said this, and we ask for it, Lord. Or at the end of Revelation, Jesus says, Behold, I am coming soon.

[11 : 48] And God's people pray, come, Lord Jesus, come. We still pray that. He has promised, and we pray, come, Lord Jesus, come. As we pray that word of God back to him, he uses our prayers to fulfill his purposes in his promises.

It's exciting to think that prayers, which we can offer up even this evening, God may be using to fulfill his promises, to fulfill his purposes here in Brighton and Hove and beyond around the world. That's really exciting. So surely, as Elijah prays for this, reminds God, you've said you're going to bring rain, so please bring rain.

Surely it's going to be like the fire, and God answers straight away. Well, no, not exactly, as I'm sure you know. Verse 43, Elijah says to his servant, Go and look towards the sea.

And he went up and looked. There is nothing there, he said. Seven times, Elijah said, go back. And not until the seventh time, the servant reported a cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea.

[13 : 17] Lesson number three, praying persistently. Sometimes God will answer our prayers, and we've seen that in this passage, more or less straight away.

But here, Elijah must have agonized with prayer. You've just told me, God, that you'd send rain, but there is no rain, so please send it. Seven times later, there's a sign of the rain coming as he sees that cloud, just a small cloud, but it's the beginning of the answer.

Why does it say take seven trips? Why doesn't God just do it? But Elijah is praying in accordance with God's promises, knowing that this seems to be God's will.

But God seems to just take his time. He seems to be slow, but God is not slow, as we would understand it, the Bible says. I think many of us would love it if God was kind of like Amazon, where we order our thing, and it comes the next day.

And sometimes God is like that. We've seen recently, Mark and I were praying that new people would come to see why, and two days later, over double the numbers.

[14 : 40] Praise God for that. But other times, he'll make us wait. More often than not, it seems. Sometimes we may have to agonize with him in prayer, it feels like.

Why won't he answer? And we may not ever really know, but we hold on to his promises, and we hold on to his word, what we know about him here, that he does hear, he does answer our prayers. We don't have a God who doesn't hear, who doesn't answer like Baal. He does hear. He does answer. We are merely servants bowing before the king.

We're not gods. God's. And as Elijah keeps coming seven times, keeps praying persistently, he is demonstrating where his faith is.

He knows it can only be God who can answer this prayer. Only God's. Only God's. He can move the heavens to send fire, to send rain, to change things to act.

[15 : 57] And we need to hold on to that as a church. It struck me as we were meeting on Monday evening over Zoom.

For, was it seven years you've been praying about this building to become yours? Like, that's a long time. Elijah just prayed seven times.

That's seven years of praying persistently. People in this church, and the building is now owned by us, and we've been able to do things with it, and it's good.

Another example is praying for future ministry. I know you've been praying for some years for that, and God seems to be beginning to answer that in very strange ways, but God seems to be beginning to answer that.

But we keep praying. As we've been reminding ourselves the last few weeks, we pray for a team of elders, not just one elder. We keep praying for that. We persist in our prayers.

[16 : 56] Persevere in our prayers, knowing there must be a good reason for the delay, and God will act at just the right time. In the Old Testament, there were promises of a Messiah to come, and it must have just seemed like, why is he not coming now?

Why do we have to wait so long? And yet the Bible assures us at just the right time, Jesus came. At just the right time, Jesus died. God is faithful.

He does hear, and he does answer our prayers. And finally, prayers power. This might be a slight stretch, but bear with.

Through these chapters with Elijah, we see King Ahab, who has led the people away from the Lord through his marriage, and to Jezebel, and Jezebel bringing in Baal, and other foreign gods.

But now God, and God was sending that judgment of the drought for three and a half years, but now God was relenting in his judgment through the power of prayer, through his servant Elijah.

[18:12] Elijah, remember, he's just a human being like us. And the answer, what God does, comes in remarkable ways.

So verse 44, as we've seen already, a cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea. Rain is coming. God is answering. So Elijah says, said, go and tell Ahab, hitch up your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.

Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rainstorm came on, and Ahab rose off to Jezreel. The power of the Lord came on Elijah, tucking his cloak into his belt.

He ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel. So he goes to speak to Ahab. He tells him, the rain is coming. You might want to get your chariot and get off quickly before the rain stops you.

And as that happens, the hand of the Lord, who has been answering the prayers for rain, is on Elijah. And we see this very strange thing, really.

[19:29] The power of the Lord came on Elijah, and tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab. Ahab was on a chariot. Elijah's running ahead.

It's amazing. It seems like a complete miracle. Because it is. Because the power of the Lord is on him. And we pray to a God who is powerful, who can answer in the most completely, ridiculously amazing ways.

The prophet through whom God's word was spoken, through whom prayer was answered, God was having his hand on him. And I think the idea, as I've been reading a few commentators on this, because I've got no idea what it's about really, but the idea is that King Ahab should be a king who is following the Lord.

And so as he sees the prophet of the Lord who speaks God's word, he should see, that's what I'm meant to be doing. I'm meant to be following God's word.

Remember Elijah's question to the people in verse 21. As Elijah went before the people, he said, how long will you waver or limp between two opinions?

[20:55] If the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal is God, follow him. He's kind of saying to Ahab, will you follow me? And we know as we read on, he doesn't.

And the question we've been asking ourselves is, today, is we following the Lord? And if we are, are we turning to him in prayer as Elijah does time and time again in these chapters?

Are we looking to him, the Lord who answers prayer? Will we continue to do that? We have done this week. Will we continue to do that through the rest of this year and beyond?

Knowing that God does hear. Knowing that he does answer. Remember our posture in prayer.

We're coming to the Lord Almighty. We come on our knees before him. Remember the promises. Pray the promises to God.

[22:00] Remember we need to pray persistently. More often than not, we need to pray persistently. Keep trusting, keep holding on to the Lord and know that he is and he will work.

And know that he is powerful. We're going to pray together. We're going to pray together now. I'll lead us in a prayer. Then we'll sing.

And then we'll pen. We're looking at verses 22 to 42 that David kindly read for us. John chapter 10. Over this last couple of weeks, I've discovered this.

It's a new piece of very, very clever technology. It's called ChatGPT. It's a piece of artificial intelligence, which sounds very clever, doesn't it?

And apparently, and I've tried this out, you can have a conversation with it. You can ask it any question in the world and it will know the answer.

[23:11] You can ask it to do very clever things like write me a song. And it can write you a song about anything that you ask it to write a song about. It can write you an essay.

It can even write a sermon. And I've tried it and I'm not going to preach the sermon that it suggested. But it can write a sermon, which would work. It's terrifyingly clever.

And I was reading a few articles this week about it and it's been labeled a disruption. It could bring down Google in the next couple of years, apparently.

Would you believe? It's been labeled a disruption. It could change many jobs. It could change the way people study. It could change all sorts of things.

But apparently, other things have been labeled a disruption that we just consider a normal part of our lives now. Spotify was labeled a disruption to the music industry.

[24 : 15] How would people ever really make money properly through music again? And now it's something we live with. It's something that I would struggle to live without. Uber.

You can order a taxi on your phone. That was labeled a disruption and now is a normal part of many people's lives. Netflix, a disruption to the film industry.

Airbnb, a disruption to the hotel industry. Some of us will think, yes, this stuff is great.

We love them. Others of us maybe think, yeah, I wish these things weren't around actually. They are a bit of a disruption. Some of us will love them.

Some of us won't. But then as I was looking at this passage, I was thinking perhaps that the greatest kind of disruptor in history is the Lord Jesus.

[25 : 16] God come to earth to live, to die, to rise again. He has changed the course of history. And there are people in this passage who view him simply as a disruption that we've got to get out of the way.

A threat to their lives rather than the saviour that he can be. The one who came to give life.

And as we've been looking in John's gospel over these last few months, as we've been in particularly chapters 5 to 10, I think we've been seeing as Jesus makes more and more claims to be God's, we've been seeing this conflict between the Jewish leaders and Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus who says clearly that he is God's. And these Jewish leaders who want him out the way and dead, a disruption to their lives.

And you know what? In the past, the Jewish religion has had other disruptions. I'll tell you about this guy briefly, a brief history lesson.

[26 : 42] This guy is called Antiochus Epiphanes. About 200 years before this event that we've read in John chapter 10, he ruled the Syrian empire.

And he wanted to establish an empire-wide religion to make things simple. And as part of that, part of his empire was Jerusalem. And so he went to Jerusalem and he went into the temple and he sacrificed a pig.

And that was a big no-no in the Jewish religion. Pigs are seen as unclean, dirty animals. How dare you sacrifice a pig in the temple?

He was seen as a great disruptor to the Jewish religion. But then this guy came along. He's called Judas Maccabeus. And he led kind of revolt against this.

He went back to the temple and claimed it to the rightful worship of the Lord. And I tell you this because in verse 22, we read this, then came the festival of dedication at Jerusalem.

[28 : 03] And it was the time when they celebrated Judas Maccabeus coming in and restoring right order in the temple of God.

And it's celebrated even today. It's more widely known as Hanukkah. And it's celebrated with lots of lights and the giving of gifts as they celebrate this hero, Judas Maccabeus.

But as we arrive at this festival in John chapter 10, we see someone who comes as an even greater hero. The hero we all need.

The one who comes to fulfill the temple. He said earlier in John's gospel, destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days. He's talking about himself.

He has come to bring people to God. And yet, in this chapter, he's seen more of a, by the Jewish leaders, as more of a disruption than a savior, than a hero.

[29 : 18] And that is because these Jewish leaders he speaks to and interacts with, they do not believe. There is much unbelief going on in this little passage.

Three times we get Jesus saying, those who do not believe. So in verse 25, I did tell you, but you do not believe. Verse 26, but you do not believe.

Verse 37, do not believe in me unless there is unbelief going on with these people that Jesus speaks to.

I was thinking about their unbelief and I was thinking how crazy it is that Jesus stands there and he says that he is God and they just can't see it.

And I was thinking about it a bit like this. Hopefully this is of some help to us as we try and understand this passage together. Without these glasses, I cannot see very well.

[30 : 26] I cannot see anything that's written in front of me. But with the glasses on, I can see very well. And every few years, I, like some of you, will go to the optician and they'll, I'll have my eyes looked at again and they'll put various lenses and some of them you can't see anything at all and then eventually you get a pair of glasses that you can see clearly again through.

And it's very, very helpful. But these Jewish leaders who are with Jesus spiritually, they do not see him clearly even though he's standing in front of them.

Even though I might have the Bible in front of me, I cannot read it unless I have these glasses to see. It's not plain to them who Jesus is and they say this in verse 24.

The Jews who were gathered round him saying, how long will you keep us in suspense if you are the Messiah? Tell us plainly. Just tell us already if you are the Messiah or not.

Their patience is running out. Why won't he just tell us? And yet Jesus says, Jesus who's standing in front of them, Jesus says, I did tell you, verse 25, I did tell you but you do not believe.

[31 : 59] He may not have ever said, I am the Messiah directly, but he said enough that they should see as Jewish people with all their knowledge of God, of all their knowledge of the scriptures, they should see that he is God.

And they certainly have seen that enough that they would stone Jesus. Have a look just to help us get a bit more context.

Chapter 5, verse 18, we see this. In fact, I'll start at verse 17.

In his defense, Jesus said to them, my father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working. for this reason, they tried all the more to kill him.

Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father and making himself equal with God. They're trying to kill him.

[33 : 13] They want to kill him. They see that what he says is blasphemous, that he's making himself equal with God. He's telling them plainly, so plainly that they want him dead.

They refuse to believe. And then chapter 8, verse 58, we see it again.

Chapter 8, verse 58, very truly I tell you, Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I am. Jesus is saying he's, I am, the great I am.

He is God, he is eternal. At this, they picked up stones to stone him. They want him dead. He's been very, very clear about who he is, but they just won't believe it.

They think it's blasphemy. It's like an optician giving me these glasses and I throw them off and say, no, I won't have them, even though I can see perfectly well through them, even though they can see in many ways what Jesus is saying, yet they do not come to believe truly who he is.

[34 : 28] They do not come and say, yes, you're right in what you say, you are God. No, they stone him and they want him dead. They're in a place of unbelief.

He's told them plainly already, he says that. And this morning as we look at this passage again, we're going to be confronted again with who Jesus is.

Confronted again with who they think is a disruption to them. And we'll see again that they want to kill him. They want to stone him. They want to seize him, take him away, kill him, want him dead.

And this morning as we do that, let's think, who do we see Jesus as? Do we see him as God? Do we see him as our saviour?

Or do we see him merely as a disruption to our lives that we just would rather be out the way?

We're going to see kind of two halves of this passage.

[35 : 37] We're going to begin firstly thinking about those who do believe, those who do believe in Jesus. last time we were in John chapter 10 we saw a great statement of Jesus, I am the good shepherd.

And here we kind of see that shepherd and sheep imagery come through again as Jesus describes those who do believe. Verse 26, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

they do not believe because they are not his sheep. But those who are his sheep, what are they like?

Well, verse 27, my sheep listen to my voice. That's the first thing we see. They listen to his voice.

They hear his voice. I was thinking about people who listen to voices and to bring it right up to date, I was thinking of Alexas.

They listen to our voices. They're always ready to hear our words and respond to us. Alexas or other smart speakers I'm sure are available.

[36 : 55] They will listen to your voice and they'll respond. respond. Those who are Jesus' sheep, we will listen to his voice. We will listen to his voice and love his voice and take him at his words.

We sang a song picking up on some of Jesus' words just now about how we can rest in him. Jesus says, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

They're glorious words of Jesus that we can listen to and respond to. We can find our rest in the Lord Jesus. If we are his sheep, we'll hear those words and we'll gladly listen and we'll gladly respond.

Or as Jesus said in that previous chapter, I'm the good shepherd and the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. more precious words of the Lord Jesus, words of life for those who will listen, for those who are his sheep.

And we come today and the thing that is central to what we do as a church is listen to the voice of our Lord Jesus, to listen to his words.

[38 : 23] We open his word because we love to listen to his voice. And they're words that we can treasure, words that we can love, words that we can hold on to.

But these Jewish unbelievers, they're not treasuring the words of God. They're not hearing and listening to his voice. They're not taking what he says seriously.

Instead, they want him out the way. He's a disruption. And for those, for all of us, as we hear his voice this morning, there was a time when we too had our ears kind of deafened to him, where we wouldn't listen.

But praise God that he would open our ears and we would listen and we would respond. Praise God for that work. Not only do his sheep listen, but they are known by him.

My sheep listen to my voice. I know them. We can be known by the Lord Jesus, by God himself. Not just listening, but he actually comes to us and he knows us.

[39 : 44] He even knows our deepest, darkest sin and yet he still will come and know us and love us and save us, bring us into his sheepfolds, make us his sheep.

And yet for these Jewish people who are wanting to stone him, they aren't known by Jesus in the same way.

They're not known as true children, true sheep of God. They reject him and he knows their hearts. He knows that they're unbelieving and that they're hardened to him.

It's amazing, isn't it, that anyone would be known by Jesus at all. people. We all naturally have hardened hearts.

We all naturally would want to throw stones at Jesus with these Jewish leaders. Naturally, we'd all view him just as a disruption that we want out the way and yet Jesus has mercy and he delights to know his people.

[41 : 01] It's a mystery, but one we can be thankful for, that Jesus does know his sheep. And the next thing we see is that they follow him.

They listen to his words, they are known by him and they follow him. Follow his words.

follow his words when he says, take up your cross and follow me. It might mean suffering with the Lord Jesus, but we know where it is going because he also gives us eternal life.

That's what he continues to say. Verse 28, I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hands.

These are precious, precious promises to those of us who follow the Lord Jesus this morning. That he gives us eternal life.

[42 : 11] It's a precious, precious gift. Often precious gifts might be particularly fragile gifts.

You know when you get a package and it says handle with care? Maybe it's a precious vase that we're given or something like that. And if you dropped it, it would smash on the floor and it would be no more.

You'd lose the gift. This gift that Jesus gives of eternal life is certainly precious. We should certainly not mess around with it, but the wonderful news is that it cannot be broken.

It cannot be smashed to pieces on the floor because it says, and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hands. My father who has given them to me is greater than all.

No one can snatch them out of my father's hands. It is a secure gift of eternal life that he gives his sheep.

[43 : 22] sheep. Why is it so secure? It's not because of us or what we have done. It's because we're safe in Jesus.

We're safe in the father, he says. My father who has given me, he's greater than all. No one is greater than him and so no one can snatch them out of his hands.

Maybe there's times when you fear losing your salvation. Fear you might do something, it would be like dropping a vase on the floor, you can't fix it and mend it, just lose it.

That's not so with our salvation. If we are one of Jesus' sheep, we have eternal life that no one can take out of our hands.

It's a wonderful verse that we as Christian people can hold on to and treasure. And this week as we've heard of our sister Enid who's gone to be with the Lord, I was thinking about her and how God has kept her and held her fast and she is now enjoying that precious gift of eternal life.

[44 : 38] She is safe with the Lord Jesus. God has held on to her throughout her life, not let her go. And now she gets to enjoy the rest of it.

Safe in the presence of God. The good shepherd holds on to his sheep. No one can snatch them out of his hands.

And what kind of holds this all together is verse 30, I and the Father are one. one. I and the Father are one.

This is a big thing. We're talking about the Trinity, about who God is. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God.

It's a big thing that holds us together but it's an amazing thing. It's not that Jesus is just standing on his own and saying oh yes I hold them and the Father is up there holding them too but they are one.

[45 : 47] One God in three persons, one being. This is God come down to earth and he's saying these precious wonderful things about those who are his sheep.

But he says this in front of religious, very religious, very Jewish people. people who would have claimed to believe in God and yet hear God standing in front of them saying I and the Father are one and they just hate it.

They can't believe it. They can't believe that Jesus would come and say this. And so they're prepared to pick up stones and throw them at him.

Verse 31, again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him. They want him dead. They do not believe that he could possibly be God's, that these things could possibly be true for anyone.

They see him as a disruption. And yet those of us that are his sheep, his followers, we see no, he's not a disruption. He gives us eternal life.

[47 : 07] He is God's. We are held safe in God's hands. But no, not according to these Jewish people, these Jewish leaders, these opponents of Jesus.

They want him out the way and dead. And so we move on to kind of those who do not believe. Those who do not believe.

those who just see Jesus as this great disruptor and not this great saviour. He's shown them very, very clearly who he is.

Shown them again. I am the father of one, he says. But they refuse. They don't have the eyes to see who he is.

So Jesus moves on and speaks less about what he says about himself to be true. He speaks more about his works, the things he does.

[48 : 11] If you're not going to believe the things I say, at least believe me because of what I do. That's what he's saying. Because he's done many things, many things that would show that he is God.

We've looked at some of them in this book of John. Who can open the eyes of the blind but God alone? Who can turn water into wine but God alone?

Who can feed 5,000 people with just five loaves and two fishes but God alone? Who can walk on the water but God alone?

Jesus doesn't just say he is God, he shows he is God by his works. God and Jesus said this in chapter 5 and verse 19 I would have looked at that I guess kind of last summertime chapter 5 and verse 19 Jesus said to them very truly I tell you the son can do nothing by himself he can only do what he sees his father doing because whatever the father does the son also does I and the father are one what I do I do because the father would do them because I am God because I am one with the father the works that he does shows that he is God but again verse 39 they tried to seize him

but he escaped their grasp again they won't believe what he says nor in the works that he does we've skipped over a few verses a few important verses but rather hard verses verse 34 Jesus in fact verse 33 we see they say we're not stoning you for any good work they replied but for blasphemy because you are mere man claimed to be gods but Jesus answered them verse 34 is it not written in your law I have said you are gods if he called them gods to whom the word of God came and scripture cannot be set aside what about the one whom the father set apart as his very own and sent into the world why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I am God's son what on earth does that mean what on earth is Jesus talking about when he says if he called them gods I've said you are gods who's he talking about

[51 : 22] I've been spending time reading a few different commentaries on this and this is where I've got to and hopefully it makes some kind of sense but know that the real point Jesus is making it here is that he is the son of God so if you don't quite get what Jesus is saying he is saying I am God's son and you can't see it to these Jewish people but let's work through it together and see if it can make some sort of sense I think he is calling those who are gods it's words from Psalm 82 they are those to whom the word of God came and I think he's talking about Jewish people as a whole they are people called and chosen out of all the world to be God's people back in the Old Testament they have received the words of the

Lord to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob the great promises they've received the law through Moses they have the temple and the sacrificial system they get to draw close to God and so they're in a very privileged and special position at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis we read that human beings they're created in the image of God all human beings are created in the image of God and that's a very special thing but these Jewish people they have a particularly special place in the Old Testament as people to whom the word of God came a unique and privileged position and Jesus is saying if your scriptures say this and scripture cannot be set aside it's God's word it is true and these people these Jewish leaders they love scripture they believe it they love it well if it calls them gods why then do you have a problem with me saying

I am God's son why do you have a problem with that that's the point he's making I am God's son why do you have a problem with that if your scriptures say this I've come and I am God's son and I'm here and I'm amongst you and I've come and I give you I can offer you eternal life the long awaited Messiah is there in front of them and he's been telling them plainly but they want to stone him they want to seize him they want him out the way he's a disruption to their lives and they hear this as we said earlier at the time of the festival of dedication that time when the Jewish temple worship was rededicated to God rather than to Antiochus Epiphanes and his regime of worship and here Jesus says that the father has set apart his very own and sent him into the world him he set him dedicated him to be his son and his son has come to earth and he's come to fulfill this festival he's come to fulfill the temple he's come to bring them to God God amongst them come to bring them to God no longer will they have to come to a temple and make animal sacrifices no it's through Jesus he is the great hero who has arrived amongst them and yet they still see him as a disruption it's possible that in all this passage that we've been looking at this morning you might just be thinking well if

Jesus knows they are not his sheep why doesn't he just open their blind eyes and make them see it is true that salvation is God's work but we do see in the Bible kind of the human responsibility side he has told them who he is he's said he's told them plainly and they are without an excuse but they choose to not take his claim seriously not to even consider for a moment could this be true and they want him out the way they want to stone him they want him dead but there were people who saw and we see that at the end of this little passage verse 40 then

[57 : 11] Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days there he stayed and many people came to him they said though John never performed a sign all that John said about this man was true and in that place many believed these Jewish leaders they don't come to believe in him here but there are others who come to see plainly who he is they remembered the testimony of John the Baptist who spoke about the one who would come after him and they see that this is Jesus that he surely!

is the Messiah God come to save God come to bring people to him and you know what all of this is written with a purpose all of John's gospel is written with a purpose I want us to just as we draw to a close think about John 20 30 to 31 I've got it on the screen here this is the purpose of John's gospel Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this

book but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name as we see the unbelief of the Jewish leaders to who Jesus is as we see Jesus declaring I and the father are one as we see that he gives his sheep eternal life he can offer eternal life to those who do believe these are all written so that you may believe or keep on believing in Jesus who is God come down to save and so we have two choices we can either believe in him or keep on believing in him or do what these Jewish people do and see him as just this great disruptor to their life lives and find any way they can to get rid of him so today will you come and believe in Jesus and find life in his name only he can do it and if you do you are so safe and secure in him him who is God that you can be held safely and securely in his hands and what a wonderful and precious thing that is let's pray father we do thank you that you have given us your word and in your word we can see Jesus and we do pray that you would help us for those of us who believe in him and know him and love him help us to keep on believing in him to know more of that security that we have in him that eternal life that we have in him father we pray for those who would who are not there yet we pray that you would help and have mercy lord we ask this in Jesus name amen