

John 10:22-42

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[0 : 00] through 42. If you are reading from the white Bibles, you can find it starting on page 993, ending on 994.

Again, John chapter 10 verses 22 through 42. Please remain standing for the word of God. At this time, the feast of dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade of Solomon. 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. Jesus answered them, I told you, you do not believe the works that I do in my father's name, bear witness about me.

But you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the hands of the father. I and the father are one. The Jews picked up stones again to stone them. Jesus answered them. I've shown you many good works from the father for which of them are you going to stone me? 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. Jesus answered them. It is not written in your law. I said, you are gods. If he called them gods to whom the word of God came and scripture cannot be broken. Do you say to him whom the father consecrated and sent into the world, you are blaspheming because I said I am the son of God. If I am not doing the work of my father, then don't believe me. 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. And again, they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. He went away again across to the Jordan to the place where John had been baptized and at first and there he remained. And many came to him and they said, John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true. And many believed in him there. This is the word of the Lord. Grace be to God.

Let's just pause for a brief prayer. Father, we we come to you and we know that you speak through your word. And so would your word fall on receptive ears that we would be those who hear and listen and embrace. And in so doing, that the text would be true of us, that many would believe in you here. We ask these things for Jesus sake. Amen. Amen.

The world is divided in many ways. Chicago pizza versus New York pizza.

[3 : 42] The Green Bay Packers or the Chicago Bears. Chicago Cubs or the Chicago White Sox. Is Christmas music okay before Thanksgiving or is it only appropriate after? Are you a donkey or are you an elephant?

Are you male or female? Are you male or female? Married or unmarried? Some of these are more trivial than others, but the point being made is that humanity is divided. Sometimes because we have been assigned by a place in society, other times via self-identification or self-choosing. And this morning we come to such a division.

A division I'd like to mention that transcends all before mentioned divisions. One that is more significant and substantial than any category culture can assign, designate, or create. It is the one division that supersedes ethnicity, gender, marital status, race, or people group, or social standing. It is the clearest division in the Bible. Do you believe or not? Belief versus unbelief. The text is asking us this morning, when it comes to the words and the works of Jesus, do you believe? It is not asking, what do you believe?

It is not inviting you to think aloud, what do you think of Jesus? What are your thoughts? Rather, it's summoning you to an answer. It's not a question inviting an opinion. Rather, it's one demanding a decision.

I'm asking this morning, do you believe in the Jesus as revealed in the Scriptures? I'm asking you this morning, do you believe in the Jesus according to John's Gospel? And this is a question that cuts to the heart, for it demands and commands one's allegiance and ultimately one's full fidelity. And this is what the text holds out to us this morning. The contrast is readily apparent. The Jews in Jerusalem are divided over Jesus' sanity. You saw that on the heels of last week's text in chapter 10, verse 19. This guy is demonic. He's unreasonable. He's insane. Why would you ever listen to him? They're baffled by his miracle working capacity. There are many rival opinions going back and forth. But as I mentioned, the issue at hand is not one's sentiment about Jesus, but it's one's belief in and acceptance of Jesus. The rival opinions are going back and forth. But John, the writer, wants to get to the heart of the matter, which is unbelief by the Jews in Jerusalem. You see that in verses 25 and 26.

[7 : 15] Jesus answers them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe. Again in verse 38. But I do them even though you do not believe. And it's further highlighted by the contrast at the end of this chapter. It ends, and many believed in him there.

So catch the picture. The Jews in Jerusalem were noted for their unbelief. But the Jews across the Jordan are noted for their belief. Unbelief or belief is the visible marker of division in the text. Unbelief and belief or belief is the demarcation of all of humanity. Unbelief and belief. The Bible, when you boil it down, if you could, is not asking the question, are you good or bad? Though it addresses it. The Bible is not addressing the question, are you Jew or Greek? Though it addresses it. The Bible, when it comes down to it, is asking, do you believe or not? The line is very clear. And I want to propose to you this morning that Jesus, the good shepherd, is able to secure his sheep despite even the most vigorous attempts to stifle him. Jesus will keep and he will save those who are his. And I want to handle our text in two episodes. There's a divine act to secure the sheep 22 to 30. And there is a human attempt to stifle the sun in verses 31 and 39.

And if my voice runs out, Dave, you just come up and you just read it. The divine act to secure the sheep in contrast to the human attempt to stifle the sun.

God will secure his sheep firstly. We find ourselves at another Jewish festival or feast. The feast of dedication. Incidentally, it will be celebrated next month. It's even still celebrated. It's known as the feast of Hanukkah or the festival of lights. It's not a festival that was instituted by God in the Old Testament.

[9 : 56] Rather, it was instituted by the Jews in celebration of the reclamation of the temple after it had been overtaken. The Syrian Empire led by...

The Syrian Empire in 167 BC overtook Jerusalem. They took over the temple and they desecrated it. It was horrific. They had not only desecrated it, but they had erected a statue of Zeus inside of it. And on the sacrificial altar, they took a pig and they slay it there. It was horrible. And three short years after it, under a rebellion led by Judas Maccabeus, a successful revolt took place. And they took over or they reclaimed the temple, the Jews did. And the feast that is being celebrated in our passage this morning was held in order to re-consecrate the temple to the Lord after it had been profaned.

While they're celebrating the consecration of the temple, the one consecrated by God, according to verse 36, is walking through it.

[11 : 12] And as Jesus is walking in the temple area, specifically in the colonnade of Solomon, a sheltered portion of the temple during the winter season, He's approached by the Jews and He's asked a question.

How long, Jesus, will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly. Tell us plainly. Another way to translate the question would be, how long, Jesus, will You continue to annoy us? Just tell us plainly.

They wanted Him to disclose whether or not He was the Christ. Are You the Christ? And up to this point in John's Gospel, Jesus had not made it explicit, identifying Himself as the Messiah. He had done so probably in private to the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. And actually in John chapter 9, the previous chapter, He might have disclosed it to the formerly blind man.

[12 : 21] But nothing of the sort publicly. For there would certainly be repercussions if He did so. He could accelerate His demise because there would be a specific call to an insurrection of sorts.

He could attract the wrong crowd looking for a military figure when He was not one, at least not at this point. And instead, Jesus replies, I have already told you, in verse 25, implying that the summation of His words and His works attests to the fact that He is the Christ.

He has already disclosed Himself, at least in His mind, to the extent that He was identifiable here. And the adage applies appropriately.

If it waddles like a duck, if it quacks like a duck, and if it looks like a duck, it is a duck.

And I'm not equating Jesus to a duck. But the signs were there. The works affirmed that He was the Christ.

[13:32] His words affirmed that He was the Christ. For He had eclipsed all the Old Testament prophets in signs and wonders, and He had brought about a new age.

The truth of the matter is, regardless of the words or works of Jesus, the text conveys that there are some who simply will not believe. Even if He said, I am the Christ. We should not think that the festivities of that Hanukkah celebration would have somehow stopped.

There would have been a coronation ceremony on the spot. They are an obtuse people. They saw Jesus with their eyes, but they did not perceive Him to be the Messiah.

They were a blinded people, or a deaf people, hearing the very words of Jesus. But not understanding in their hearts. Jesus' explanation is given in verse 26.

Why? You do not believe. Because you are simply not among my sheep. It's been 22 weeks since we started this series in John, and I know some of us weren't even here.

[14:42] And it may be a distant memory when we started, but when we first commence in chapter 1, you'll remember that John laid these signposts, introduced these incredible statements that we were to encounter along the way.

One being that Jesus would come to His own people, and His own people would not receive Him. And though Christ would reign supreme, the reality is that He would not reign in the lives of all He encountered.

Here we find that though Jesus is the Good Shepherd, He will not be the Shepherd of all. Here we find that though the outset of Jesus' arrival, there was, from the outset of Jesus' arrival, there was a recognition that not all will bow the knee to Jesus.

His fold of sheep are far larger than anyone conceives, but do not be mistaken, it will not encompass all people.

He is a Good Shepherd, but He is not a universal Shepherd. There are sheep who are not His. There are sheep that the Father has not given to Him. And before we relegate this all to simple divine determinism, or sound the predestinarian note, it's worthwhile to mention that in, at least for John, he has mentioned, embedded in his language, this participatory element in all this.

[16:24] It is here where people will go to the point, and they'll say, this is the grand doctrine of election, that God had picked out people. But it's not absent of human participation.

That people hear, the Bible tells us. That people follow, the Bible tells us. See, having, I've only pastored for 15 years, but I have never come across a Christian, who is a Christian, by force.

I understand that some teenagers, in this room, even university students, in this room, feel that they had come to church, by force, because I was one, or under parental persuasion, or because, I actually know for a fact, because your tuition is being covered by mom and dad.

But get this, your mom and dad cannot force you to be a Christian. They will point you to Christ.

They will prayerfully go about leading you to Christ. They will encourage you toward Christ, to embrace him. But embracing Christ is something that you will have to do under your own volition, by your own choice.

[17:47] The image is there. Jesus is not walking around the deserts of Judea, chasing down reluctant sheep, and throwing them into his pen. It's absurd.

That's not what he's doing. And at this point in my life, I have not met a Christian who has told me, that they are a Christian against their own will. I don't want to be here.

Bing. God is holding me hostage. My affections are held captive. My will is restrained. No. There are certainly unlikely converts.

There are certainly reluctant converts. There are certainly surprising converts. But if you were to tell me that you were a convert, unwilling to follow the Lord, then I'll tell you this.

You're unconverted. You're unconverted. See the picture here. The shepherd is not a forceful or heavy-handed shepherd.

[18 : 52] He does not use his staff to strike the sheep into the pen. He uses the voice, his voice, to summon the sheep into his fold.

The text shows the good shepherd calls out to them, and his voice is distinguishable from all others. The shepherd knows those who are his, and the sheep know which shepherd to follow.

For being one of Jesus' sheep is demonstrated by this threefold action in verse 27, that the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd.

The sheep are known by the shepherd, and the sheep will follow. And as a result, the Bible tells us, they are given eternal life. They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of his hand.

The good shepherd doesn't force the sheep into his fold, but for those in his fold, he will demonstrate himself to be invincible by securing them forever.

[19 : 58] The image of double-handed security is quite vivid, isn't it? It's as if I took my wedding band, and Jesus grabs a hold of it.

And then God the Father grabs a hold of that hand and secures it. And I go to our nursery, and I go to my little Josiah and say, hey, Josiah, get the ring.

Take it. It's laughable. Who dares to steal sheep from the Lord? It's absurd.

But that's the picture of the Lord's love for his sheep, that he will not lose even one that is given to him.

Security is the emphasis. The eternal life that they are given will never be removed. Though they die, they will never perish. Though they are weak and feeble, they will never be lost.

[21 : 03] This is the great comfort of being under a good shepherd, isn't it? That your salvation is entirely dependent on the strength of the shepherd's ability to deliver, to protect, to uphold, and to keep.

All of it. Your life is protected by that shepherd. So when the other hirelings in chapter 10 run away when the enemy comes, you have a shepherd that will stand and fight and preserve your very life, even from yourself.

The picture conveys this reality. Your salvation does not depend on your ability to hold on to Christ, but on Christ's ability to hold on to you.

Wow. Wow, wow, wow. Wow. It is one of the most precious things about the Christian faith that your continuance in eternal life depends not on your feeble hold of Jesus, but on his mighty, firm grip on you.

And therefore, you can be assured that you will be there in the end. Jesus states, I and the Father are one. In other words, the Father and the Son have this collaborative effort to be on mission, united in purpose for the security and the preservation of the saints.

[22 : 31] It would almost seem from this image that all the powers of heaven, Father, Son, and certainly the Holy Spirit are at work for the preservation of the believer. The good shepherd can and will secure his sheep.

There are those who hear his voice, are known by him and follow after him. The voice of the shepherd is calling out and summoning the sheep to come. And though there are those who do not recognize this call, John does not withhold showing us that there are many, according to verse 42, that hear this call and believe.

And the contrast is, as the good shepherd is out there summoning and securing sheep, it brings about those who rise up and attempt to stifle God the Son.

Don't you see it? Humanity will attempt to stifle the Son. Being Jesus' final words to the Jews, this is his last dialogue of sorts, the antagonism reaches a pinnacle here.

He's claimed oneness with the Father, enough to incite the Jews to pick up stones to put an end to this blasphemy.

[23 : 55] They interpreted Jesus' words claiming divinity. Jesus, you are a man and you make yourself out to be God. It's incredibly ironic because the accusation is completely reversed.

He is actually God trying to make himself out to be a man. And they can't figure it out if he's the promised Messiah or not. But from these actions, it would seem that they have come to at least some conclusion that he's making claims that only God can make.

The Jews are infuriated for God is one and he's the only recipient of glory and he won't give it to another. This is embedded in Jewish intellectual and religious tradition.

And so Jesus takes them to Psalm 82 where the psalmist uses this term, little g, God. And he applies it to people. He specifically applies it to, I believe, religious elite or people given the office of

judge.

And ironically, the very people holding the stones that they were to hurl or heap upon Jesus. They were called gods in the Old Testament.

[25 : 14] And Jesus is saying, if the scripture calls you gods, then certainly I have the right to call myself the son of God.

If these words are too hard to swallow, Jesus says, then let my works attest to the fact that I am the son of God. If you don't believe my words, at least look at my works.

And in so doing, I am doing only what God can do. If my words are so unbelievable or intolerable or shrouded in mystery, then evaluate my miraculous works.

And if you choose to do so, you will understand that I am who I say I am. In other words, take a look at the miracles. Go find the formerly blind man in John chapter 9 and summon him to give an account.

Or go to one of the 12 and tell them to recount that story of a man approaching them on the surface of the water in the middle of the storm.

[26 : 19] Or find just a few of the 5,000 that ate and ask them to give an account. Or tell the man who had been relegated to a mat for 38 years.

And hear what he has to say. Or get the official who was the recipient of that one o'clock miracle who walked 20 miles home on Jesus' word.

Ask him what he thinks. Or go to that young couple who probably ran out of money to bring about the wine in their festivities. Tell them what they think. Go look at all of that.

And then tell me who you think I am. Who you think. Revisit all of them. You see, when we talk about miracles today, our modern mind wants to dispel them.

But at least in this passage, it seems that Jesus is saying, look to them. Because what humanity continues to do over and over, not only the Jews of this day, but people of the present day says, get rid of the miracles.

[27 : 28] So Thomas Jefferson crafts his own Bible. Great moral teachings. But all those crazy things that are supernatural, let's just remove them. Or even a more recent movement, the academic movement, the quest for the historical Jesus.

Let's find the Jesus of history. the one who is historical, but not supernatural. Let's get rid of those miracles.

Let's overturn them. They're not feasible. We have relegated miracles to myths. They have some commendable qualities, but they're not believable.

Yet Jesus holds them up and tells us to evaluate them. And granted, there aren't witnesses available, because they're unavailable.

But in my skeptical mind, it's worth asking this question. Maybe two questions. What other figure in all of history is so dependent on the fact that they work miracles?

[28 : 37] miracles. There are great moral teachers. There are great social activists. There are great upright people who did good works, which Jesus did.

But how many of them actually, it requires them to have risen from the dead, or have raised the dead, or have fed the 5,000? Very few, if not none. And here's the question.

If you're an atheist, you don't have to answer it, because you don't believe any of this. But if you're agnostic, and you say, there's a God out there, let me ask you this question.

What kind of God must that be? And I bet you, if I sat down with you for a while, eventually it would come up. It must be a God that works miracles.

It must be a God who is able to allow me to bury a loved one and to raise that loved one.

[29 : 43] It must be a God who could break into the world and at least give us glimpses that is being reversed or transformed. It must be a God that demonstrates that none should starve.

It must be a God that has to demonstrate that no injustice will go unpunished. Because when it gets down to it, we need a God of miracles.

I don't want a God who cannot reverse everything that I experience and you experience. That's no God at all. Right?

And that's the God the Bible gives to you and to me. Well, we want, we should want a God who is not constrained by the natural laws.

And at this, the Jews sought to arrest Him and put an end to what they consider blasphemous teaching. At a minimum, they could put Him behind bars to shut Him up and to stop His mouth so

that He would refrain or could not continue to teach.

[30 : 59] And as the hands of the authorities sought to seize Him, the hands of His Father grabbed Him and delivered Him and on He left. Jesus escaped as if to show us that the same Father that holds you and I is the same Father that holds the Son and they wanted the Jesus saga to end.

And they were vehemently trying to stifle Him. But little do they know, they're trying to withstand the unstoppable force of the salvation of God at work in Christ.

And so you have this dramatic ending while Jesus is calling out and summoning His sheep. The Jews are out to stone and stifle the Son.

And this is the incredible irony, isn't it? The one who came to save and deliver them, they are trying to stone and stifle.

And I can't help but wonder if that's the case for some of us this morning. The Lord Jesus is calling you, summoning you, seizing you, and you bend over and pick up a rock ready to hurl it.

[32 : 24] And you will do everything in your power to stifle it. today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.

Today, if you hear His voice, may it be the day of salvation for you. Do you believe it is the great question posed by our text this morning?

It is the great divide that will separate all of humanity according to the Bible. In the end will be the distinguishing mark before God. Some He will welcome to everlasting joy.

Others He will separate to enduring wrath. may you be, may we be, all who hear the voice of God, believe, follow, follow, and continue.

Father, Father, oh, Father, would you speak in ways that you call us by name?

[33 : 57] Would you speak in ways that we could hear? Would we hear and believe and see ourselves as sheep under your pasture and care?

And because we are, know that you will preserve and carry us forward. That you don't promise deliverance from all that befalls in this life, but you do promise that we will make it through this life.

keep us, guard us, save us, look to us with great mercy. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen.