

Jesus' Sheep
John 10: 22-30

We started on this fascinating passage last time we were together. And it all revolves around verses 19-21, and the divisions that arose from those who were the rulers of Israel as far as who Jesus is. One thing we find from this passage of Scripture is that they were not divided on their rejection of Christ. So they find Jesus in the Temple and they ask him a question and also make a demand of him in verse 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.’”** When it says they “gather around” the word usage here is like an army encircling the enemy. This is not a friendly chat. And they want Jesus to explicitly tell them whether he is the Messiah. Stop using metaphors and just speak in plain language. And the reason why is that they thought of the Messiah as a political or military leader, and they could bring some accusation against him before the Roman authorities. They are definitely not wanting to submit to his Lordship, but seeking to destroy him.

And Jesus responds that he has made it so plain to them through the words that he has spoken and also the works that he has done, that no further verification needs to be made because the message has been so clear. But he even goes further and explains their unbelief. Look at verse 26, **“but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.”** This is such a fascinating verse because we expect the clauses to be reversed. Many explain this verse is that you are not my sheep because you do not believe. So the reason why they are not sheep is they simply refuse to believe. The instrumental cause of causing one to be one of God’s sheep is found in man. Believe and through your belief you cause yourself to become. But Jesus looks at the nature of the individual and the reason why they do not believe is because they are not sheep. In other words, it is not their nature to believe in Christ. They are spiritually dead in their transgressions and sins, and freely and willfully choose to reject Jesus. Why? Because they are not his sheep. It is not the nature of goats to follow the shepherd. That is not my explanation but Jesus’.

I have been asked in the past if I am a Calvinist. And the question in and of itself is simple enough. The answer would be in one sense - yes. But often I have to ask what people mean as far as Calvinist. So often what they think Calvinism is - is not what I am. Many think that Calvinism is fatalism. That people are not responsible for the things that they do. And Jesus has engaged these individuals, testified that he is the Light of the World, the Door to eternal life. He has called on them to believe. And God has made them responsible moral agents. Calvinism does not teach that people are not responsible. It does not teach that there are people who want to come to Christ but they cannot come because they are not elect or chosen. I mean, isn’t that what Jesus taught here? Jesus says the reason you do not believe is that you are not my sheep. There are none here that want to believe. They freely and volitionally and responsibly are asking these questions to condemn Jesus.

And what follows after this is what makes a sheep a sheep. What follows is none other than the sovereign work of God. Once we see spiritual inability we realize the necessity of God’s sovereign work. And there are a couple of things that are the fruit or

the outcome when we believe in God's sovereign salvation. One is that there is a greater delight and trust in Christ. It is amazing how grand and glorious the God of sovereign grace is. He is greater and grandeur, and our delight and thankfulness just increases. Many individuals think that if God is sovereign in salvation then people would be drawn away from, but it is quite the opposite. We are drawn toward him, convinced of his eternal love and his eternal promises. The other thing that God's sovereign grace in salvation produces is a heart for evangelism. This is one of the surprising element that the ones that have been the most zealous to tell others of Christ have been those who are Calvinist. You can see that throughout history. But it would be quite depressing to look and perceive how hard and how dead people are, and why witness. But if God will do what we cannot do through the preaching of his Word, and has promised to open hearts of those whom he has chosen then we have a gospel that cannot fail, but bring forth the fruit that he has planned. So I want us to increase our love and joy in this bog God tonight, and increase our passion in making known Christ.

1. I want us to see that God can create sheep. V. 27.

What we mean that God can create sheep is that he can cause and create someone to be what they have never been? It is not just some philosophy of being a better you, but the power of recreating the sinner is that it is a brand new you - a brand new creation. And that brand new creation is seen through the brand new actions and responses that were not present and could not be present before.

We realize that in the gospel there is a call to believe on Christ. But the question is: what comes first- belief in Christ or new life in Christ? In other words, do we become born again because we have believed, or does God give us new life and therefore that new life believes? What precedes; what comes first? And according to Jesus the reason why they have not believed in verse 26 is that they are not sheep, so in order for them to believe they need to be made something that they are not. They need to be remade - recreated from being goats to sheep. It is just like we will see in John 11:43 where Jesus will give a command to dead Lazarus in the grave. He says, "**Lazarus come out.**" Now think about it because the command is given. What does Lazarus need to be given in order to obey that command from Jesus? What do we need if we are dead in trespasses and sins to obey the command to trust in Jesus? Lazarus needs - we need - life.

So look at verse 27, "**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**" Now think of what he has just said. He said that you do not believe because you are not my sheep. And here is the response of sheep that is different from the religious leaders - "**My sheep hear my voice.**" The reason why they hear and recognize the voice of Christ is because they are sheep. If they were not sheep then they would not respond to the voice of Christ through the preaching of the gospel. Paul says something similar to Jesus over in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, "**For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**" The gospel goes out to all, some respond that this is foolish, some see the gospel as a stumbling block - how can an

accursed man ever pay for sin? But there is a third group that see this message as none other than the power of God. What is the difference? Listen to what Paul says again, **“to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”** What comes first is the calling. The calling produces the response. God cause us to become sheep so that we will hear his voice.

But not only do the sheep hear and respond in faith to the Saviour and great shepherd of our souls, but the verse says of them, **“and I know them and they follow me.”** Notice this is something polar opposite of the religious leaders. The sheep follow Christ. Christ knows them and they know Christ. And you see this new life through the sheep following Jesus Christ. Notice that there is a submissiveness to the Shepherd here. There is the recognition that He is the shepherd and we are the sheep. And the outcome is true sheep - true believers in Christ - follow him. Listen to 1 John 2:3-4, **“And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”** What do those who know Christ do? What is the evidence that we know the shepherd? It is that we keep his commandments. This is none other than my Lord and Saviour. How can I not do anything but obey. Those who do not keep his commandments are like the religious leaders in this passage of Scripture. This is not some sort of having Christ as Saviour and not as Lord, but when we trust in him, he is our Lord. There is a radical change of allegiance that happens when a dead sinner comes to life. There really is a new master and new Lord, and he is Jesus Christ.

But again why is there belief and following of Christ? It is because of God’s active and prior and effective grace in the heart of the individual. And so the reason why I believed is because of God and his power and grace. Do you see that in the text? So the challenge is two-fold. One is: does this describe your salvation? Are you one of Christ’s sheep? If you say yes - do you believe on him? And if the answer is yes, then do you follow him? Is your life marked by a recognition of him as your shepherd, authority and king? Or is your life marked by you being the authority and shepherd of your soul? Do you follow your own drum beat or the words and the voice of Christ through the Scriptures?

That is the first challenge, the second is: does the effective grace of God in your life humble your heart and at the same time cause you to revel that God is really this gracious? Effectual grace is so humbling. The reason why I am a believer and see these truths and respond to Christ is not because I am wiser or smarter or whatever. God chose the weak and the foolish of this world to confound the wise. Let the grace of God really amaze you that God would chose you and me not by merit or anything else but simply because he is gracious. God in his grace creates sheep.

2. We see the certainty of our salvation in this passage. Vv. 28-30.

It is amazing to see the promise here of eternal life given to us by Jesus, but equally amazing how many in Christian circles still teach that you can lose you’re salvation. Eternal or everlasting life by its very nature is eternal. You cannot lose it. If you could lose it then it would not be eternal in nature, but it is. That is the glory and security of those who are believers in Jesus Christ. In this dangerous world we want

securities. We buy insurance for that reason so that if something happens we have this policy that will protect us and our loved ones. But we have all heard stories that when something happens that there is some sort of escape clause in the policy that gets the insurance company out of paying for damages or whatever.

And this is why believers love this passage is because all loopholes are eliminated. Let's walk through this verse. Jesus first says, "**I give them eternal life.**" Notice here that the one giving eternal life to the sheep is none other than Jesus Christ. And notice that it is not earned or merited but given freely by Jesus Christ. And that is the nature of a gift is that it is given. And the gift here does not come with any conditions or strings attached. If it came with conditions then it would not be truly a gift. It is freely given by Jesus Christ. And again, the gift is not momentary life, or maybe might last forever but eternal life. And Jesus knows what that gift is based on, and that is his paying the debt of sin. And the debt was paid in full. Therefore he is able to gift or grant eternal life to those whom he wills. And he wills to give it to his sheep.

And some might argue, yes the gift is given, but you have to keep yourself saved. And so look how he continues, "**and they will never perish.**" "Perish" has the meaning here of eternal damnation. There is real peril, but Jesus Christ saves his sheep from that peril. This is the joy of our salvation. Once you are in you can never be put out. Certainly we talk about those who apostatize the faith and walk away from Christ, but the reason they do is that they never were sheep to begin with. Sheep cannot stop being sheep. God created that eternal life in us, and no matter what we do, we can never extinguish that life. We might falter and fall, and slide this way or that way, but we will never perish. This is not my promise but Christ's promise to his people.

Still some might argue, that even though Jesus has given us this promise, and there is nothing I can do to cause me to perish, there is still those around me. There are wicked people that want to influence me away from Christ, and there are spiritual realities that are greater than us. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness in this present age. We have the evil one who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour believers. Certainly this has to be a threat to the security of believers. But look at what Jesus says next, "**and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**" Now here is the question: what does no one mean? Who does it include? It includes everyone. It also indicating to us that there are going to be threats. There are going to be obstacles and trials and temptations. This world is not safe. But there is one that is strong enough to keep us.

And let me say, that is such a comfort, because so often we think it is just a matter of time before I really mess up, and walk away from Christ. We all know our foolish hearts, and how easily we can be ensnared by sin. We all know of some who have walked away from Christ. And so often we measure our security as believers by the ability to keep our grasped on the Saviour. But here Jesus says the security of our salvation is his grasp on us. He is none other than Lord of lords, and the eternal God, who has all power and ability. And his sheep are held in his hands. And no entity whether spiritual or whatever is able to take them out of the Saviours grasp. Are you starting to see the glory of our security in Jesus? The reason why we endure and we are here tonight is not your keeping you in the faith but Jesus keeping you and holding you. Remember Romans 8:38-39, "**For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor**

angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Remember, nothing is nothing. Nothing can separate us from Christ’s love for his own. In this dangerous world we have absolute security.

Now look how he even gives greater security and doubles down on it if that is possible, **“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.”** There are a few things we need to note here. One is that notice that it is the Father that gives the sheep to the Son. Again, this is the divine gift of the Father to the Son. Jesus does not die for potential sheep but actual sheep that have already been given by the Son. In other words, the one who is sovereign over all of salvation is God. We are eternally chosen in Christ. And notice who the Father is: **“is greater than all.”** And there are two thoughts in that phrase. One is that this is the one who has all authority, and he has given all authority or all rule to the Son. And therefore if all power and authority has been granted to the Son then no one can take them out of the care of the Son’s hand. The other thought is that the Father’s will - will be accomplished. There is none greater. His will is all powerful and what he desires will come to pass. And his desire is that all that have been given to the Son will not perish. And notice how he relates to the sheep. He relates to us as our Father. His hands that hold us and secure us are the hands of our Father. There is no greater security.

And it is amazing because the greatest argument that is against what I have just presented from this text, is not from this text. It is basically: if you teach eternal security it will lead to people living to anyway they want. They will sin and not care because they are eternally secure. But the opposite is true. Those who realize how secure they are approach God and love God and have great joy in Him. In a way, we live anyway we want, but we want to serve and follow him, not to get but because of who he is and what he has given. If we were afraid of what we could lose, then we are only serving out of dread and trying to earn or keep what we could never earn or keep in the first place. We serve because we love him. Remember, his sheep hear his voice and follow the Good Shepherd of our souls.

He ends in verse 30 with a statement that would have infuriated the religious leaders, **“I and the Father are one.”** The statement has a couple of significant things. One is that Jesus and the Father are one is essence. They are one is being. It is the same truth that is taught in John 1:1, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** Different in person, but the same in essence and being. This is none other than a statement once again of deity by Jesus Christ. They have asked: who are you Jesus? And he has answered once again! But the other thing here is that you cannot divide the purposes of Father and Son. It is not that the Father wants to judge, but the Son came to save. They are united in not only calling and creating sheep that will hear the voice of the shepherd, but securing them forevermore in Christ.

Yes, I love Calvinistic theology, not because it stimulates my mind, but because it is taught by my Saviour Himself. And it indicates how great, bountiful and securing the love of Jesus Christ is for his sheep.