

You have to Respond!  
John 10:19-21

We have been going through chapter 10 of John's amazing gospel. And we have heard the words of Jesus, and they are an explanation of who he is and what he has come to do. And Jesus uses a very common metaphor to teach the significance of his personhood and his purpose for coming, and that is the shepherd metaphor. We see in this teaching monologue of Jesus that he presents himself as the great "I AM," in other words he is none other than God. He is the door into the sheepfold. No one can come in except through the merits of Jesus Christ. He is also the good shepherd, and unlike false prophets and false shepherds who do not care for the sheep but really want to line their pockets and take advantage of the sheep, and not care for the sheep Jesus is the exact opposite.

Jesus is the good shepherd, who cares for the sheep. We see that extraordinary care and love in that he willingly and voluntarily lays down his life for the sheep. And the meaning here is that he sacrifices his life in order to give life to the sheep. And he knows his sheep and the his sheep know him and follow him. And he will even gather other sheep that are not part of his flock from outside of Israel, which was an amazing truth. But these are his sheep already given.

And I think many times we hear these truths, but sometimes we do not hear them, maybe because we have heard them so often we do not see the height and glory of what is being taught. We fail to place ourselves in the narrative and wonder how we would respond to the words of Jesus Christ. Because this is the thing about the words of Christ - they call for a response, and may I say a strong response - one way or another. You have to whole-heartily believe and trust him and just like sheep - hear his voice, trust him, and follow him. Or, you have to in the strongest sense reject him. And that is what we have in verses 19-21 - the response to this shepherd discourse of the Lord Jesus. After he teaches the truths that he taught, you just cannot sit idly by. You just cannot say that was interesting and walk away without any response. It calls for a response. And it calls for a strong response.

And I think as believers in Jesus Christ, we often forget that this is one of the functions of Christ through his Word in our own lives. The truths of Scripture are not fluffy, but meant to change how we think and respond to life. And there is always that struggle to downplay the call that we have in Scripture to come and follow Jesus, whatever the struggles in our lives. It might be we hear a message on purity or ungodly anger or a message on how we use our wealth, and we might not like that message, and we respond to it in one way or another. And we might not even realize how often we respond just like those who heard the Good Shepherd discourse more than we think. We often try to stifle our consciences and ignore or make excuses or argue against the text. Yet, if Jesus is who he says he is, then his sheep hear his voice, and they need to come follow him. His will and words are non-negotiable. His words are authoritative. They are the standard. They are truth. If we argue against his word then we are arguing against truth, against light, against none other than God himself. Another way individuals downplay the words of Christ and do not hear his voice is through the rise of mysticism. It teaches rather than respond to Jesus' words you have to listen for the prompting of the Spirit. It causes us to actually look away from the

instrument the Spirit has chosen to cause us to look to Christ, and that I the sure and efficient and sufficient word of God. We hear Christ through his Word.

So as we look at this passage, we find ourselves having to respond. We find that we are forced to respond somehow and in a very strong way to the words and the statements of Jesus of who he is and what he has come to do. The problem is not whether this is true or not. It is truth. Jesus has proven who he is. The problem and the question is: how will we respond? And that is what I want us to look at tonight. I hope this passage helps us understand what is going on in our own hearts as we struggle to listen and accept the words of Christ, and help us to understand and help others as they respond to Jesus.

#### 1. The madness of the gospel response. V. 19-20.

Why would any respond madness to the gospel presentation by says it is madness and insane? The problem that people have with Jesus is not that he did miracles. People loved the miracles of Christ. After the feeding of the five thousand, huge crowds rushed to Christ and pressed in on him. And may I say the problem is not even the virgin birth - that Jesus is completely God and completely man. The problem that people have is not even the resurrection of Jesus. The reason why so many liberal scholars have been bent on disproving the miracles or the virgin birth of Christ or even the resurrection is because they all point to the truth that they hate the most and that is the truth that Jesus articulated in verse 11, **“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”** It is the truth of the willing and voluntary sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of his people. All the other truths by themselves say that life can go on as normal, and there is nothing wrong with me. The truth of the substitutionary death of Christ is either the most loved doctrine or the most hated. There is no in between here. This is the crux of the matter.

If Jesus just says that He is the Christ, and does miracles and proclaims that you are alright, then there is no hatred and no offence taken, and maybe a greater encouragement to follow him. If we say Jesus came and died because you are so special and he has wonderful plan for you life people will flock to him. But it is this teaching that causes extreme hatred or extreme love. And you start to get a taste of that in this passage.

Look first of all in verse 19, **“There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.”** Look at the word “divisions.” We realize divisions means that there is a strong separation in between parts of a whole. There should be unity between parts but they are divided. And notice who is divided here is “the Jews,” and we have said as we have gone through this study that the Jews are the religious leaders. These are the one who were trained in the Scripture but also led the people, and were to be God’s representative. And look at what they are separated over **“because of these words.”** These are the words that have been just spoken by Jesus Christ. They are divided over them again. In other words this is not the first time. It does not mean that there are many that have trusted Jesus, but there were some that were wondering about all that was said and done. We see this division play out in John 7:50-52, **“Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ‘Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning**

**what he does?’ They replied, ‘Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.’”**

And here we have that division again. It is amazing as you think of the strong divisions of Jesus because of his words. Paul explains it this way in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, **“For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?”** He is either life or death. He is either the Saviour of the world or the greatest fraud that has ever existed. There, again, is no middle ground, and thus the strong division.

So look at the response of some, **“Many of them said, ‘He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?’”** Many of them would be the vast majority of the religious leaders. And it just did not make any sense to them. And they really did not try and make sense of the message. A shepherd that would lay down his life for filthy and unworthy sheep? This is madness. A shepherd, no matter how much he loves his sheep is of far more value than the sheep. And they did not realize that was the whole point of the illustration - no one ever loved unworthy and unlovable people like you and I, like Jesus has. They missed the glory of that love. The glory of that love is not how loveable the sheep but how gloriously loving the shepherd. But they also missed how they were to care for the sheep as the under-shepherds of God. But they come to the conclusion that Jesus has a demon and lost his mind. They look at people who have mental problems as people who were possessed by the devil. It is also interesting that the word “demon” only appears in this gospel from the lips of the religious leaders as an accusation against the Lord. And this of course is not polite conversation when you disagree with someone. The reason why Jesus says what he says is that he is inspired of the devil and want to lead people away from the truth, from hope and from life.

So look at the question they ask and challenge others with, **“why listen to him?”** We often say that about false doctrine and false prophets - don’t listen to their message. We need to separate ourselves from them. We even say that their message is inspired by the devil himself. So the religious leaders are saying - don’t listen to him. And isn’t it amazing because the true sheep of the Lord hear his voice, and they respond to Jesus. Look at verse 16, **“And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”** The sheep listen to the voice of Christ. Look even further back at verse 3, **“To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”** Christ’s true sheep not only hear his voice but they respond to that voice.

And again, it is easy to shake our heads in disgust at those who would seek to lead others away from Jesus, and tell others not to listen to him. But are we listening to the voice of Christ in Scripture. It is amazing again how often we argue against the text. Do you mean to tell me that Jesus wants me in this unhappy marriage for the rest of my life? Do you mean to tell me that he wants me to be pure in the midst of such an impure society? Do you mean that he wants me to forgive that person? Maybe you do not recognize what they have done. And we respond in like kind to these religious leaders. it would be madness to believe Jesus in this way, to follow him in this way, to trust him that he really knows best in this way. The question becomes: where are we

arguing against Jesus? Where are we saying it is mad or foolish to follow him in this area of our life. His sheep here his voice and follow him.

2. We see the positive response to Jesus. Vv. 21.

It is amazing to look at this response because we realize that it is in contrast with the response of the “many” in the last verse who rejected Jesus outright, and never even took the opportunity to weigh the evidence, but rejected him outright. And there is so much to commend in this response to the words and work of Jesus Christ. But there is also much here not to commend. And I wonder if we see both halves. Because it is not enough just to have a positive response of Jesus, but what kind of positive response are you having? Or what are you believing about Jesus. I have heard it too often, and that is: that person is in heaven today because they believed in Jesus. But here is the question: what do they believe about Jesus. Roman Catholicism teaches that Jesus is God in human flesh. They teach in some sense that he is the Saviour of the world. But they also teach that what he did is not enough. It has more in common with the Judaizer controversy in Galatians where many were adding to the work of Christ, activities such as circumcision. Paul says - that is another gospel and that gospel will damn you. There are still others that admire Jesus and all the good that he did. They admire him from a distance, and will even say that they believe in Jesus but have never truly trusted him or followed him. James says that kind of faith is good for nothing. And a positive response to Jesus is critical, but we have to ask in the end - what is this person believing about Jesus?

So look the response here: **“Others said, ‘These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’”** The “others” here are not only weighing the words that Jesus said, but also the works that Jesus has done. And it is incredible because all the way through the gospels when we are met with demons or those possessed by demons it brings physical suffering. Such as the demoniac of the Gadarenes. He was out of his mind, lived in a cave and went about as a naked man. Or the boy who was possessed who kept trying to throw himself in the fire. People are not in the right frame of mind, and they suffer. And the “others” here recognize the activity of demons and the activity of Jesus. In the last chapter Jesus heals a man who was born blind. He heals him of his affliction. Well, that is not what demons do. They do the opposite. They afflict people. Jesus does good and not evil to this man, which would indicate that he is at least sent from God. Demons do not open blind eyes, only God can do that.

So his words, which are really the most important aspect - not the miracle - the miracle just points to the authenticity of his words, are the most important part. His words define the miracles. They come to this conclusion - he is not oppressed or possessed by a demon. You have to throw that possibility out. Praise God - this is an honest assessment of the personhood and work of Jesus Christ. We praise God that they have made the connection that he cannot be from the great enemy of our souls. But here is the question: what is wrong with this response? Certainly most of the religious leaders in the end as they debate who Jesus is will come to the conclusion that he must be silenced and killed, and killed in such a way to make plain that he is no Messiah or Christ. These are proud men debating the nature of the man who just spoke.

So what would be wrong with what they have said? Certainly the signs and wonders that Jesus did validated that he was not a false prophet or messenger. The thing that is wrong is what they didn't say. In other words, their words do not go far enough. They rightly say that he is not from Satan or demon possessed but they do not say anything about the claims that he has just made. This could be no more than an academic exercise to somehow come up with the right answer that in the end still rejects him. It could be that they are afraid of the majority and how they will respond if they give any inkling that Jesus might be the Christ. And think of it, because Jesus just claimed to be I AM, and just said that he would lay his life down for his sheep. Is this really the response or the complete response of the sheep to the shepherd? They say what Jesus is not but they do not say who he is. We need to be clear not only who Jesus is not, but clear about who he is. He is the Lord. He is our Saviour from sin, and the only hope of sinful humanity.

And maybe you are here this evening. You have heard the claims of Christ. You have seen the works of God. You have even seen changed lives in the church through Jesus Christ. And you might say something like this: Jesus is not a fraud. Jesus is not a pretender. Jesus is not a deceiver. And that is great. You are telling me who he is not, but who do you say that he is? Do you confess what Jesus says about himself? Do you confess that he is the Lord on high that has come to take away the sins of all those who follow him? Do you see any need in your life to come follow him? It is easy to say who Jesus is not, but for those who are true believers, his true sheep of his fold - we glory in who the good shepherd truly is. It is not enough to say that I believe in Jesus - after all that Jesus says in this discourse - we need to say - what we believe about Jesus. We need to profess the same thing Jesus says about himself. He is the great I AM. He is the Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

And for believers in Jesus Christ, this helps us so much. We get so involved in apologetical arguments about how old the earth is, evolution versus creation, evidence of the resurrection, or why there has to be a God, but we never many times tell people who Jesus is, why he came. We many times eliminate the negations, but we have to realize that no one comes to Christ without a realization of who he is and what he has done.

The other thing is - this is our Jesus. Jesus is not primarily a miracle worker. Jesus is Lord and Saviour, and how he has chosen to relate to us is as the Good Shepherd of our souls. He knows us, and he knows what is necessary in our lives. Through all of the pitfalls and trials of our lives we must constantly remind ourselves that we are being shepherded by none other than the chief shepherd. Glory in who he is, and trust in him and his character. Not all responses to the gospel and the person of Christ are equal. Realize who he is and trust in him. That is the only right response.