

John 10:22-30 “Safe in the Hands of Jesus” May 12, 2019
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John 10:22-30

²²Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade.²⁴The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” ²⁵Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

Introduction

If your parents need to leave your children with someone when you go to work or have to go someplace, with whom would you most likely leave your children? With someone whom you can trust, right? If you have money and you want to invest it for growth and safekeeping, where would you put it? Some place safe and dependable, right? You want your children and your money in safe hands.

Likewise, when it comes to our faith and our eternity, don’t we want them in safe hands? Today, on this Mothers’ Day and Good Shepherd Weekend we hear Jesus, the Good Shepherd saying that our faith and eternity are **“Safe in the Hands of Jesus...” ...a Good Shepherd with a unique identity ...and ... a Good Shepherd with unique relationships.**

... a Good Shepherd with a unique identity

A) As we pick up on Jesus he is in the temple in Jerusalem. The time is winter. The occasion is the Festival of Dedication (Hanukah) remembering the dedication of the restored temple after it had been desecrated in the 160’s B.C. Jesus is on Solomon’s Porch surrounded by some Jews who are trying to trap him in false teaching.

They ask, **“How long will you keep us in suspense. If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”** Christ, as you probably know, means “the anointed.” It’s the New Testament version of Messiah. It was a reference to the one anointed to be the Savior of the world and King of God’s eternal kingdom - true God and true man.

“Who are you?” is a question many have asked concerning Jesus down through time. News magazines and TV documentaries have raised the question concerning Jesus. A 2015 Barna survey indicates that many who profess to be Christians are asking this. The survey indicated that half of adults in America professing to be Christian believe that Jesus sinned. If this were true, then we wouldn’t have a sinless substitute or a perfect sacrifice who saved us from sin, death and hell. This thinking that Jesus sinned goes hand-in-hand with the belief that they don’t need a sinless substitute who made the perfect sacrifice for our sins. They are good enough to get to heaven on their own. How sad!

B) Jesus responded to the Jews, **“I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.”** So, Jesus pointed out to the Jews their problem. It wasn’t a lack of truth or testimony on Jesus’ part, but the lack of faith on their part. Jesus taught the truth and backed up his teachings with the miracles of God. Because they did not believe in Jesus, they were not his sheep and part of God’s flock. As God points out about anyone who

does not believe in Jesus, **“They stand condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son (Jn3).”**

C) Jesus made very clear his unique identity. He called God his Father ... **“The works I do in my Father’s name speak for me...My Father has given them to me ...I and the Father are one.”** By this last statement Jesus isn’t saying that God the Father and he are the same person but that they are of the same essence or being. As the Athanasian Creed teaches, **“We speak of perfect unity of substance, but we distinguish between the distinct persons of the Godhead.”** As Paul wrote to the Colossians, **“In Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.”**

To be our Substitute and our Savior, Jesus had to be not only true man, but also true God. So according to God’s plan Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is true man to take our place and be able to die but also true God to be holy in our place and have the value necessary to be the Savior of all. Jesus is saying he is the Son of God, the Christ.

D) But he also testified to his unique identity as the Good Shepherd which two months before this he had emphasized to his enemies in his Good Shepherd Statements – **“I am the Good Shepherd”** With these words he equated himself with the Good Shepherd – Jehovah – of the 23rd Psalm. He said that he would lay down his life for the sheep pointing to his role as the Christ or Savior of the world. He emphasized that he was not a hired hand but the Good Shepherd in whose hands we sheep would be safe – because of his unique identity and ...because of his unique relationships.

...a Good Shepherd with unique relationships.

A) One of those relationships is with us, his sheep. We are his sheep through faith in him. Jesus said, **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”**

1) Jesus talks about knowing his sheep. Keep in mind that there is knowing and there is knowing. I know of Donald Trump, but I’ve never met him and am not at all close to him. I know people with whom I have become acquainted but don’t know them well and am not close to them. And then I know my wife. We have been married almost 43 years. We raised a family together. We share thoughts and feelings with one another. We are committed for life to each other. Our knowing each other is deeper than the other “knowings” in our lives.

But Jesus knowing us even goes deeper. He has known us as he took our place under the law and carried our sins to the cross. He has known us by coming into our hearts and lives as our Lord and Savior through faith. He knows our feelings and our needs better than we do because he is an all-knowing God. He lives with us and watches over us. He provides and protects us. This puts him into a unique relationship with us and makes him our Good Shepherd.

2) Therefore, Jesus says, **“My sheep listen to my voice...”** Jesus speaks to us through his Word and sacraments. Since, by God’s grace, we believe in him, we listen to what Jesus says because we know it’s true, that he cares about us, and that he wants nothing but the best for us. So, we trust him.

But not perfectly. Our sinful nature may rise up in selective hearing when it comes to Jesus and doubts concerning the truths he speaks to us. But then he calls to us through his law to turn from our distractions and doubts and listen to him. He assures of his love in the gospel and reminds us he died for and delivered us from damnation, death, and the devil. So, we listen, trust, and follow him.

3) **“My sheep... they follow me.”** We follow Jesus experiencing his love and then loving him. We follow Jesus enjoying his love and then reflecting that love to him and others by the godly things we think, do and say – the worship we offer God, the love we show our families, the help we give to those in need, the self-control we show in not giving into sin, and much more.

4) In this unique relationship there are blessings the Good Shepherd gives his sheep. He said, **“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”** Here Jesus is speaking of the life that begins when we come to faith. It’s life with God enjoying his blessings in us and around us – peace, joy, hope and love. It’s knowing God is with us and love us. We will enjoy this life and relationship to the fullest when we are in heavenly glory – both body and soul. As a result, we are saved through Jesus from the eternal damnation and punishment.

5) What’s more, Jesus is taking care of and protecting us – **“No one can snatch them out of my hand.”** Jesus’ unfailing love and unlimited power keeps us safe from our enemies. Though Satan may tempt us, Jesus will be with us to help us withstand those temptations. Though forces of evil may try to overtake us, Jesus will be our fortress and our shield. We are safe in Jesus.

B) If we are safe in Jesus, as Jesus emphasized, we are also safe in God the Father. **“²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”** Jesus gives us this great comfort: The Son and the Father (the Holy Spirit too) are equally concerned about us sheep. Both are equally active with unlimited power in caring for us sheep. They are keeping us safe forever.”

Some early Native Americans had a practice that on the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, after learning hunting, scouting, and fishing skills, he was put to one final test. He was placed in a dense forest to spend the night alone. On this night, he was blindfolded and taken several miles away. When he took off the blindfold, he was in the middle of a thick woods and he was usually terrified! Every time a twig snapped, he visualized a wild animal ready to pounce. After what seemed like an eternity, dawn broke and the first rays of sunlight entered the forest. Looking around, the boy saw flowers, trees, and the outline of the path. Then, to his astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow. It was his father. He had been there all night long. While the boy sat in darkness and sensed danger, in reality he was safe in the hands of his father all along.

Sometimes we may feel like we are in living in darkness and/or danger, but in reality we are safe in the hands of Jesus ... and his/our Father. Trust and take comfort that that you are safe in the hands of Jesus. Amen.