

# I Told You; Do You Believe?

4ofEaster

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John 10:22-30

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In John chapter ten, Jesus is asked to tell the Jews plainly whether He is the Christ. Keep in mind that John chapter ten is halfway through the Gospel account. Jesus began His ministry in chapter one, following His baptism by John the Baptist. He conducted His early ministry from chapter two to four. Beginning in chapter five, there was opposition against Him. And here we find Him asked to speak plainly about who He is.

To further put this into context, we'll look at what comes next. In chapters eleven and twelve, Lazarus will be raised—a feat which will cause the disbelieving ones to desire to put Lazarus to death a second time—and continued disbelief. After that, chapter thirteen begins Passover, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection.

So, again, we are in the middle of John's Gospel—the climax so to speak. Tensions are high. And in our text, we find Jesus surrounded by the Jews. Just after our text, we'll learn that they were surrounding Him so that, depending on how He answered, they might stone Him.

In our text, like elsewhere, God's greatest means for working is His Word. As Jesus made clear in His teaching about Lazarus and the rich man, even if one were to rise from the dead, it would not create faith. Remember, Lazarus was raised, and then some wanted to kill him to, as it were, put the cat back into the bag. The cat is out—they want to put it back in. Sounds like abortion—the truth is known that it is not just some clump of cells but a child, and yet the proponents of abortion keep wanting to put the cat back into the bag.

The Jews who surround Jesus in our text have already been told who He is, yet they demand for Him to make Himself clear. His response is that He had told them, but they did not believe. In His Word, God makes it clear who Jesus is; He asks us, do we—you and I—believe?

## Verse 1

Our text begins “At the Feast of Dedication...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, and 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 part of my flock.’”

The Jews ask what seems like a logical and harmless question: is Jesus the Christ? In other words, tell us plainly. But remember, we are halfway through John's Gospel account. Jesus has been preaching and teaching and doing works among them for nearly His entire earthly ministry at this point. Jesus has already asked His disciples, “‘Do you want to go away as well?’” to which Peter rightly responds by God's Holy Spirit, “‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’”

Jesus' disciples have been with Him long enough and seen enough to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Holy One of God. Others have, too. So where have these Jews been? Have they been absent from Jesus' ministry all this time? To a bystander, that might be a valid thought. But for us, who have all the details from God, we know that Jesus is correct in saying “‘you do not believe.’” More than that, “‘you do not believe, because you are not part of my flock.’”

Jesus is the Good Shepherd: He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him and listen to His voice. So when Jesus states that these Jews are not part of His flock, He knows they are not. He is not a human shepherd

who could suffer some tragic accident and lose His memory and forget His sheep. Jesus is the God-man, the Son of God. He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him and listen to His voice.

Hearing the Word of God does one of two things: it either creates and sustains faith, or it hardens hearts away from faith. For Peter and the disciples—except Judas—and for us, God’s Holy Spirit works faith into our hearts through hearing His Word. But for these Jews, it only hardens their hearts further away from Him.

#### Verse 2

“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.”

Jesus would be going to the cross to pay the price for sin for all of humanity of all time. Yet when He speaks of His sheep, He is not referring to all humanity; He is referring to God’s elect. God already knows who are His—those who would, who have, and who will come to true faith in His Son.

They are the ones who will follow Jesus as their Shepherd, listening to voice and following Him, no matter what following Him may lead to. Jesus promised that He would send His Holy Spirit, who would speak what He heard to us. It is the work of the Spirit to keep us in the true faith. But again, when Jesus refers to His sheep, He is referring to the elect—those who are in the faith, not those who will ultimately refuse or fall away from it. As we hear in the Formula of Concord: “‘God’s eternal election does not just foresee and foreknow the salvation of the elect. From God’s gracious will and pleasure in Christ Jesus, election is a cause that gains, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what belongs to it’ (FC SD XI 8).”

This is what we believe according to the Third Article: “the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”

Hearing God’s Word either hardens hearts, or, for us who believe, it works and keeps true faith in us. As Jesus said, we His sheep “hear [His] voice...and [we] follow [Him].” So we believe that His Holy Spirit speaks to us what we need to hear to believe as we hear the Gospel. We also believe that the Holy Spirit is one with God, just as we believe what Jesus says next about His relationship to the Father.

#### Verse 3

“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. I and the Father are one.”

Jesus said that He is one with the Father. Jesus, the Son of God, is one with the Father, and the Holy Spirit is one with both of them. The three are one. They are one in being, and one in purpose. Their purpose is our salvation.

God the Father sent His Son into this world to be our Savior. But who needs a Savior if they haven’t sinned? The Jews who were encircling Jesus in our text would shortly begin picking up stones to stone Him. They would believe that they were in the right—that this was no sin—even though our very best works are sin if we try to be saved by them. Those Jews did not believe Jesus—that He was one with the Father, and that He was God in flesh come to save them and all of humanity.

But again, it is only with the open hands of faith that anyone receives Jesus' forgiveness. Jesus has told us that we are sinners. He has gone to the cross to pay for our sin. And about those who believe in Him for their salvation He has declared that "no one will snatch them out of my hand." In Jesus' Name. Amen.