

The Shepherd God and His Sheep John 10:22-42

Last week Jeff took us through the first half of John chapter 10, and we saw that Jesus is our Great Shepherd, Who gave His own life to save His own sheep and welcome us into eternal life with Him. Years ago when I lived in West Texas, a wise old sheep rancher told me that there are only two kinds of sheep in this world: dead sheep, and sheep looking for a place to die. Sheep are helpless, stupid creatures. Jesus knows this, and He knows us. That's why He so often describes us as sheep! We're the same way! Because ***there are also only two kinds of people in this world: God's sheep who have found life in Him, and the rest of humanity given over to their own sin, on the road to eternal destruction, who need to hear the gospel and put their trust in Christ alone. This is the reality of our world.*** That's the bad news. But there is good news! Remember our context: John is writing this record, this gospel of John, so that we might ***know Jesus***, put our ***trust*** in Jesus, and that by ***believing and trusting*** in Him we might have an ***abundant life*** with Him now and forever.

Today we'll see Jesus continue this analogy in the midst of an ongoing confrontation with religious leaders blinded by spiritual pride and their own efforts to save themselves. ***We'll also see four things in this passage that point us to the Lord Jesus as God Almighty in the flesh, and what that means for us:***

Let's look together at John 10, picking up in V22:

²² *At that time the Feast of Dedication [or as we know it, Hanukkuh] took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,* ²³ *and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.* 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."* ²⁵ *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,* ²⁶ *but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.* ²⁷ *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* ²⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *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.* ³⁰ *I and the Father are one."*

³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" ³³ 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." ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?" ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" ³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ 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." ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. ⁴¹ And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." ⁴² And many believed in him there.

Matthew 25:31-46 is the famous passage where Jesus describes separating humanity like a shepherd separates sheep and goats. There, as in our passage today, we are reminded that ***there are only two kinds of people in the world: those that belong to Jesus by faith, and those who live in rebellion against Him. Sheep and goats.***

We've seen that all the way through this series on John's Gospel. And we see these two different groups of people clearly in our passage today too. We see ***some people listening to Him, trusting in Him, and following Him.*** Look at V41-42 again: ⁴¹ And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man [Jesus] was true." ⁴² And many believed in him there.

But we see ***other people continuing to hate Jesus, trying to trap Him, arrest Him, and even stone Him:***

V24 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."

V39 ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

V31 ³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.

Two very different responses to Jesus; following Him, or fighting against Him. What we see here is that ***you can't encounter Jesus and remain neutral.*** You can't just shrug the Lord of all Creation off.

No one on earth has ***ever been*** a neutral, two-legged Spiritual Switzerland.

Any true encounter with Jesus demands a personal response to Jesus.

Why is that? In V30 Jesus says: *"I and the Father are one."*

As we've seen throughout this series, once again Jesus makes a clear and undeniable statement. He ***IS*** God Almighty. The Nicene Creed captures this idea by describing our Lord Jesus as ***"Very God of very God, same in substance, equal in power and glory"*** with the Father.

Paul says it this way in **Colossians 1:15-20**:

*"¹⁵ He [Jesus] is **the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For **in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell**, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."*

And **Hebrews 1:3** says: *"He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power."*

The Lord Jesus clearly claims to BE God Almighty.

And yet we still see **two very different responses** to Jesus ***in this passage***: Surrender and rebellion. Trust and hatred. And we still see these two different responses ***by people today***. Because ***you can't encounter the living Lord Jesus, God in the flesh, and remain the same.*** So, why the different responses? What makes the difference? What makes the difference? I'm so glad you asked!

The difference is the God-given **gift** of a **personal relationship with Jesus**. We see that gift in V28 when Jesus says of His people: “**I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**” **How can we say that eternal life is a personal relationship with Jesus?** We have to keep reading in John and see Jesus’ High Priestly prayer to the Father in John 17. Listen to how Jesus defines eternal life in **John 17:3**: “**And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**” **Eternal life is the gift of knowing the Eternal God personally. Eternal life is God’s gift of living every moment of your life, now and forever, in the Presence of Almighty God in a personal relationship with Him.** And the **foundation** for that personal relationship with Jesus is **belief. Faith. Trust.** John 20:31 summarizes the message of John’s Gospel and the theme of our sermon series: “**that by *believing* you may have *life* in his name.**”

We see four things in this passage that point us to the Lord Jesus as God in the flesh, that by trusting Him we might find life in and with Him:

1. God’s Word points to Jesus as God in the flesh. The whole Bible points to Jesus. Here, and in the midst of so many other recorded conversations, Jesus **responded to others using Scripture.** In V34 Jesus answered them, “**Is it not written in your Law...**” A question here, but throughout the gospel accounts Jesus often repeats: “**It is written...**” Jesus knew His Bible well, and He knew that it all points to Him. The key phrase in this passage is in the back half of V35: “**and Scripture cannot be broken.**” The very words Jesus’ opponents thought they knew, and were trying to use against Him were the Words Jesus used to remind them of who He IS. **God’s Word cannot be broken or changed, and it will never fail.** What God says, goes. What God commands, stands. God’s Word is eternally unchanging, and it all points to the Lord Jesus as God in the flesh. We also see that

2. Jesus’ actions point to Him as God in the flesh. V25 “**I told you, and you do not believe. The *works* that I do in my Father’s name **bear witness about me,****” v32 “**I have *shown you many good works* from the Father;** V37-38 “³⁷ **If I am not *doing the works* of my Father, then do not believe me;** ³⁸ **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.”

Everything Jesus did while on earth, from before He was born through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension **all** point Him as God Almighty. All the conversations. All the healings. All the other miracles. All the suffering. His death on the cross. His resurrection from the grave. His ascension. All of these actions prove that Jesus is who He says He is: God Almighty in the flesh. His Word proves His Divinity. Jesus’ actions speak even louder than His words. And

3. Faithful witnesses point to Jesus as God in the flesh. As we saw earlier, V41-42 remind us that ⁴¹ *And many came to him. And they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.”* ⁴² *And many believed in him there.* ” The power of our changed and changing lives show evidence to the world that Jesus is God Almighty. A few short years later in Greece we see non-believers proclaim: *“These men [these followers of Jesus], who have turned the world upside down, have come here also” (Acts 17:6).* That was true then, it has been true throughout history, and it is true today. Our lives show the world what we actually believe about Jesus, and how we actually trust that Jesus is God in the flesh. Faithful witnesses point others to Jesus. Finally,

4. Jesus’ Voice calls to His own through all of the above. V26-27 ²⁶ *but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.* ²⁷ **My** *sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*” Whose sheep? MY SHEEP! Jesus **pursues** His own, **calls to** His own, **speaks to** His own, and **leads** His own. Those of us who belong TO Jesus learn to recognize His voice **because He knows us first and gives us the gift of eternal life together with Him.** We grow through a process of learning to recognize His Voice and follow Him in our everyday lives, and our obedient responses to His leading help clarify the sound of His Voice for us. ***For all that by faith belong to Jesus, the response to the gift of personally knowing Jesus is growing everyday in intentionally following Jesus.***

So what? (so what does it mean to have life in his name?)

How we live in response to Jesus matters. It matters today, and for eternity.

How are you responding to Jesus today? What role does His Word, His actions, His people and His Voice play in your life? Allow me to use the same categories that Jesus uses with a few more practical thoughts:

Believer, embracing and practicing these same four disciplines by faith is ***the way*** you learn to recognize Jesus' Voice in Your life and intentionally follow Him. Consistent time in **God's Word** points you back to Jesus. Frequently reflecting on **God's actions** in your life and the world around you point you back to Jesus. Time with **Other believers**—those gone or far away through reading, and those living in community with you, point you back to Jesus. **Jesus' own voice** through the Holy Spirit working through all these means draws you closer to Him and leads you to follow Him. ***How are you taking advantage of Jesus' Words, actions, and other believers to personally grow in God's grace and knowledge and draw near to Jesus?*** Maybe you're going through a hard season right now. I promise you that Jesus is right here with you in the middle of it. He hasn't given up on you. Don't give up on Him! ***Persevere in drawing near*** to Him through time with Him in His Word and through frequent fellowship with other believers. Lean into a community group. Jesus desires to draw you closer to Him that you might trust Him, recognize His Voice, and follow Him. I might also add that ***pointing others to Jesus follows the same pattern***: we share God's Word with others. God's actions with others. Other believers with others. And through these means, those that ***don't yet*** know Jesus begin hearing His Voice calling to them too.

For those who might be seeking or not believe yet...

What we've seen today is ***clear evidence*** that the Lord Jesus is ***exactly*** who He claimed to be: God Almighty living in the flesh. What are you going to do with this reality? Will you continue living in rebellious denial, or humble yourself and come to the Great Shepherd who loves you best? Will you continue living as a goat doomed to destruction, or find life as one of Jesus' sheep? Don't let religious dogma or proud self-reliance get in your way—that's what the guys who wanted to stone Him had. Stop sitting on an emotional or intellectual

fence. ***Examine all the evidence*** clearly displayed in Jesus' Word. Examine all the evidence clearly displayed in Jesus' sacrificial life, death, and resurrection. Even examine the evidence less clearly displayed in the people around you in this room living as personal witnesses. Listen for the Voice of reality calling you into a new flock—a new family of people who have found life. Jesus is the only One who ever lived who claimed to be God in the flesh and backed it up from rising from the dead. Today if you hear His Voice calling to you, do not harden your heart. Surrender, that by trusting Christ, you might find life in His Name. Abundant life can be yours today, and for all your tomorrows!

Let's pray