

Safe at the Shepherd's Hand

John 10:22–42

The security isn't in the sheep's grip on the Shepherd. It's in the Shepherd's grip on the sheep.

Recap from last sermon:

John 10:1–18 discussed the good shepherd, which is Jesus. He gave us a parable in which he is the good shepherd, we are his sheep, and he will protect his sheep all the time. Thieves will come to try to damage the sheep, but won't succeed. Wolves will come to damage the flock, but won't succeed.

Jesus said, "I am the door," which means he is salvation. He also said, "I am the good shepherd," which means he is the Saviour.

Last sermon's main contrast was between the good shepherd and thieves or mercenaries. Today's sermon's biggest question is this: Who's Jesus?

1. The Shepherd's Identity:

They demand: "Are you the Christ?"

Jesus replies: "Yes, but..."

John is very detailed about the geography where this conversation takes place: the Temple, during Hanukkah. Why is that important? Because of the history that it carries.

Hanukkah celebrates the cleansing and rededication of the Temple after a pagan ruler desecrated it. The revolt was led by Judas Maccabeus. Now, in that very Temple, another ruler is being revealed — not a warrior like Judas Maccabeus, but the true Shepherd-King.

In that context, Jesus is asked:

"Are you the Messiah?"

Jesus responds: "I am the shepherd, I am the door, and my works speak louder than my words."

Jesus is saying that he is the Christ, but his definition is completely different from theirs. They think about the sword; Jesus is thinking about the cross. And just as Christ previously taught about the sheep that listens to his voice, he will now teach about those who refuse to hear his voice.

2. The Tension Between the Sheep and the Goat

The issue is not lack of information, but how people respond to revelation.

Last week we talked about the “mystery” surrounding this passage. Just as we are assured by Scripture that the Shepherd chooses the sheep, we are also told by the same Scripture that the sheep recognize the Shepherd’s voice.

Here we have a “twist” into this mystery, because Jesus is not talking about the ones who listen to his voice, but actually about the ones who can’t listen to his voice.

And some of you might read this as:

“Aha! That all-loving God is not that loving after all, because he is intentionally preventing people from coming to Jesus.”

But that’s obviously not what Jesus is saying.

Jesus’ point was not to show that he was preventing people from coming to him. He was actually pointing out that their fruits prove that they were not inclined toward Jesus to begin with.

Relationship is our key word here.

Illustration #1

In the first year of leadership, people only obey the boss — if they ever do! — because he is the boss. He hasn’t earned people’s respect or credibility. He hasn’t built a *relationship*. Thus, people can only obey him on a superficial level.

But once he has experience, trust, and credibility — once a *relationship* has been built — now people obey him because they trust him.

The Pharisees are saying: “If you just tell us plainly that you are the boss — the Christ — we will obey you.” No, they wouldn’t.

Illustration #2

It’s just like a boy who’s been pursuing a girl for years. He buys chocolate, flowers, texts, calls... And the girl says: “I am praying about us...”

Then the guy calls me for advice: “Do you think we will end up together?!” My answer is simple: “No!”

No matter what she says, her actions evidence that she doesn’t like you — at all! There’s only one side giving, the other is just taking; there’s no *relationship* in this.

The Pharisees are challenging Jesus: “If you were only to give us a sign, or openly speak that you are the Christ, we would believe you.” No, they wouldn’t. Because they

never showed any appreciation for his miracles and teachings — only hate and opposition.

Illustration #3

I remember when I had a call with my pastor because I had a ministry decision to make — Brazil or Canada — and I wanted my pastor, with more experience than I, to give me a word to direct my life. To my surprise, my pastor didn't direct me. He only asked me questions, and I answered them. Once the conversation was finished, I said to myself: "Oh well, I already know the answer!"

My pastor didn't tell me what to do, nor did he give me advice. The answer was already inside of me the whole time!

--

In sum, Jesus isn't trying to make unbelief intellectually inevitable. He's confronting people with revelation and calling them to respond: "My friends, if after all this time, my miracles, teachings, and power didn't spark anything at all in you, there's a serious hardness and incredulity that you guys are dealing with."

On the opposite side, many have seen the same works and heard the same preaching, and they believed!

3. The Privileges of the Sheep:

(A) Hear His Voice.

"Like Peter in the boat, who said: 'Master, we have tried the whole night to catch fish, and we ended up empty-handed; but at your word, we will cast the net.'"

The sheep hear the Shepherd's voice.

(B) Are Fully Known and Fully Loved.

He who knows us best is the one who loves us the most.

- Had the thief known us fully, he would say: "It's right that I rob this sheep; it deserves it."
- Had the mercenary known us fully, he would say: "It's right that I deliver this sheep to the wolves; it deserves it."

But our loving Shepherd knows us fully — and forgives, loves, and protects us.

(C) Follow the Shepherd.

With David we can say: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”

The sheep follow the Shepherd because they know his voice.

(D) Receive Eternal Life.

Remember that, according to verse 10, “life in abundance” — eternal life — is not limited to Heaven. It’s not merely a destination; eternal life has a name, and his name is Jesus Christ. Being at his hand, in his sheep pen, is already the beginning of everlasting life!

(E) Assurance of Salvation.

“No one will snatch them out of my hands...”

The good shepherd never loses a sheep! As you know very well: “He leaves the ninety-nine to rescue the one that goes astray.”

Our assurance isn’t that sheep are particularly good at holding on.

Our assurance is that the Shepherd is particularly good at holding on to his sheep.

“His grace is better than life!”

4. The Shepherd Loves Even the Adversaries:

They’re holding stones while Jesus is offering life.

The Pharisees picked up stones to kill Jesus, and yet he is still inviting them to believe. See verse 37: “Believe in me, at least, by the works I have been doing.”

This verse is key because it shows that Jesus isn’t preventing them from coming to him. He is actually the one insisting that they drop the stones and open their hearts. Unfortunately, they won’t do it.

Why did they pick up stones or try to arrest Jesus? Because according to them, he is blasphemous. When Jesus says: “I and the Father are one,” he clothes himself with divinity. His accusers don’t believe his claim.

To back up his claim, Jesus points to Scripture — more precisely, to Psalm 82:

If Scripture calls mortal men “gods” because they received and carried God’s revelation, how much more should the statement “I am the Son of God” be accepted from the King of Israel?

As Psalm 2:7 says: “I will proclaim the Lord’s decree: He said to me, ‘You are my Son’...”

- If you look at Scripture, it describes Jesus' person and ministry very well.
- If you look at Jesus' ministry, it describes Scripture very well.

No matter which one you look at first, you will always end up with both in sight.

This depicts Jewish wisdom: We Westerners like numbers. Greeks like concepts and logic. But to the Jewish mind, wisdom is practical; it is always translated into deeds and actions.

Jesus' ministry speaks for itself!

Conclusion:

John concludes with this beautiful note: "Many believed in him."

The invitation is open: Jesus stands by the door, and he calls those who are close, those who are far; those who are friends, those who are adversaries — into his sheep pen. He wants to save and give eternal life to all who believe!

The controversy of this chapter is not ultimately about sheep versus goats — the ones who believe and the ones who don't. When you give too much thought to what the Bible is not giving you to think about, you miss the point of the chapter.

The controversy is fundamentally Christological:

Who has the authority to give eternal life?

Who possesses the sheep?

Who can guarantee their security?

Who works the works of the Father?

Who is the Shepherd?

There is only one answer: Jesus. And in him, is where our security rests:

The security isn't in the sheep's grip on the Shepherd. It's in the Shepherd's grip on the sheep.