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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Fourth Sunday of Easter (Series C)

April 17, 2016

Text: John 10:22–30

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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

“If you are the Christ, tell us plainly” (vs. 24). That’s the request a group of Jews ask of Jesus while He was teaching during the winter festival, the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah as we call it now. “How long will you keep us in suspense?” If you are the Christ tell us plainly. We’ve got to know Jesus. Are you the long awaited Son of David who will deliver God’s people from their enemies? Are the anointed-one, the Christ?

Jesus responds with almost a sense of frustration. He says, “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” (vs. 25–26). It’s almost as if He’s saying, “I’ve already answered that question! How much clearer can I make it for you? My life and works testify to this fact. I am the Christ, the Son of the living God and yet you do not believe.”

He had just told them, I am the Good Shepherd. I suppose the only way Jesus could have been clearer would have been to take a scroll containing Psalm 23, point to it, and say, “When David writes, ‘The Lord is my shepherd’ He’s talking about me.” I am the Lord, the Christ, the Son of God, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life in love and devotion to His sheep. Is that not clear enough? Evidently not.

For these Jews, Jesus was an enigma, a curiosity that needed further study and evaluation. Jesus wasn’t their good shepherd. They neither heard His voice nor followed Him to the green pastures of eternal life. Had Jesus plainly said, “I am the Christ” in those exact words? No, He hadn’t. But He had told them that He gives eternal life and that He will raise the dead on the Last Day (John 5:24–29), that He’s the bread of life come down from God the Father in heaven (John 6), that’s He’s the light of the world (John 8:12). Those are claims only the Christ of God can make.

And to add substance to these claims, Jesus had performed a number of signs. He's healed an invalid (John 5), He's fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves of bread and two fish (John 6), and He's healed a man born blind (John 9). Jesus' teaching and miraculous signs were done in God the Father's name. What could be more obvious? Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!! But all the Jews want is more study, more evaluation, more wrangling. The truth is staring them right in the face and speaking in their ears. And so Jesus says, "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" (vs. 25–26). Words and deeds, signs and wonders are shouting out "I am the Christ." No wonder Jesus gets a bit frustrated.

But that's the way of stubborn unbelief, when a person is not a sheep of the Lord. "You do not believe," Jesus says, "because you are not part of my flock (vs. 26). You do not graze at the green pastures of faith and confidence. The still waters of salvation do not quench your thirst for you do not believe that I am the good shepherd that is one with the Father in strength and purpose. That's what Jesus is saying to these Jews, they are not His sheep. Those are very hard and fearful words indeed.

But for those who do hear the voice of Jesus are His sheep. They know Jesus, hear His words, and follow Him (vs. 27). Repeating what He had said earlier in John 10, Jesus gives to His sheep some of the most enduring promises spoken anywhere in the Holy Scripture, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (vs. 28). Eternal life, everlasting security, and the honor of dwelling in His joyous presence in peace and safety are the promises Jesus gives to each and every one of us here today. Hear that again, "No one will snatch them (snatch you) out of my hand."

Just wait. It gets even better. Wait to you hear determined our Lord is to save His beloved sheep. Jesus says, "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" (vs. 29–30). Jesus and God the Father are so united in strength and purpose that to defeat Jesus would mean to defeat God the Father, and vice versa. The miraculous signs mentioned earlier are proof that what Jesus does He does with the authority, power, and will of God the Father. "I and the Father are one" says our Lord Jesus. To get to you, sin, death, the devil, you name it must get through God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Nothing can snatch us from our Lord's hands. The devil may rage long and furious against Christ's Church but we are safe in the Good Shepherd's hands. The evil devices of the devil are futile against Jesus. The seductions of sin have no affect on our Lord. And death, well you know what Jesus did to death. He destroyed it by rising from the grave on the third day. So dear sheep of our Lord, you can confidently face the daily grind of life with its accompanying temptations, setbacks, and sins. Confidence, joy, and peace don't come from your own strength or in your own craftiness but solely in the strong hands of your Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. The uncertainty of the future is melted away in the enduring life of the good shepherd who lives to all eternity. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish." Those words Jesus says to you and about you, dear baptized saints of God.

When Jesus says, in vs. 30, "I and the Father are one" He is making at least two claims. The first, I've already mentioned. He and God the Father are united in power and will to save His people. There can be no division between the Father and the Son's purposes of redemption. God the Father and God the Son are one in their purpose to save you and all His believed people.

There is second claim Jesus is making, however. Jesus is claiming to be God. The Father and I share the same divine essence. As the Father is God. So am I. To claim that the Father is God, is to claim that Jesus is God. I and the Father are one. The Jews hear that claim and they understand it perfectly. Listen to how they respond in the next few verses (vs. 31–33):

<sup>31</sup>The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. <sup>32</sup>Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" <sup>33</sup>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."

These unbelieving Jews finally get the answer they were looking for. Jesus told them plainly that He is the Christ, the divine Son of God the Father, equal to Him in every respect. And that answer is met with murderous unbelief.

In these unbelieving Jews we get a picture of why Jesus had to come and be our savior. The Good Shepherd had to become like one of us, sharing in our human nature, so that He can save His hopelessly lost, condemned, and helpless sheep. The Shepherd dying on the cross for His sheep is the highest expression of love. God the

Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united together in their desire to save lost sheep. It's sheer amazement.

And so Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Today, those powerful words of promise are fulfilled yet again. Redeemed, beloved, and precious sheep are gathered together to hear the voice of Christ their shepherd. And what do we hear again from Jesus, "I give (you) eternal life, and (you) will never perish, and no one will snatch (you) out of my hand...I and the Father are one." One in purpose, desire, and power to save you and all His beloved sheep.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.