

John 10:22-41 – The Shepherd & the Sheep

Intro

- As I mentioned last week, people in our society often use the word *sheep* as an insult.
 - o It is basically an accusation that you are part of a group that unquestioningly believes someone and follows their lead rather than forging your own path.
 - o Jesus calls certain people *sheep* with very similar implications, but he is not using it as an insult.
 - He is referring to people who wholeheartedly follow him.
 - When Jesus is the one we unquestioningly follow, being a sheep is a good thing.
- In the first part of John 10, Jesus used several shepherd & sheep-related illustrations to describe his relationship with his followers.
 - o The second half of the chapter jumps to a later occasion on which Jesus uses similar imagery.
 - o (22-23) We've jumped forward from the feast of *Sukkot* (in the fall) to *Hannukah* (in the winter) and Jesus is now teaching in the more sheltered Colonnade/Porch of Solomon rather than the completely open temple courtyards.

(24-26) Jesus' Sheep Believe Him

- The topic that starts this discussion: the crowd want a clear answer as to whether Jesus is the Christ/Messiah.
 - o *Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) mean *The Anointed One*.
 - o This title refers to the long-awaited Savior, chosen and sent by God to set all things right (e.g. Isaiah 11:1-6 describes the Messiah anointed with the Holy Spirit).
- Jesus' response to the crowd asking for a clear answer is that his public teachings and actions *are* a clear answer.
 - o Throughout Jesus' life and ministry he very seldom directly claimed the title of *Messiah/Christ* because people tended to misunderstand that title.
 - o His teachings and actions make it clear that he *is* the Messiah and promised Savior – but not the kind of Messiah that most people were expecting.
- The Jewish expectations for the Messiah among 1st century Jews weren't completely wrong, but they were incomplete.
 - o His Nature:
 - They expected him to be a human empowered by God (Isaiah 11:1).
 - Jesus makes it clear that he is also God himself (Isaiah 9:6).
 - o His Role:

- They expected a conquering hero (Isaiah 11:11-16)
 - Jesus makes it clear that first he has come as a suffering servant (Isaiah 53).
- His Purpose:
 - They expected him to immediately establish his kingdom (Isaiah 9:7).
 - Jesus makes it clear that he came to reestablish a right relationship between God and human beings (Isaiah 53:4-6).
 - He will accomplish this through his death and resurrection.
 - This has to happen first because you cannot be part of God's kingdom under the Messiah's rule if you are not right with God.
- Their rejection of Jesus (their failure to recognize him as the Messiah, their Savior, by his words and deeds) shows that they do not belong to him ("not my sheep").
 - They find the real Messiah offensive compared to what they want him to be.
 - What they want is someone who will give them military & political dominance with a problem-free life of blessing right now.
 - They think it is impossible & blasphemous that a human being could also be God.
 - It is inconceivable to them that the national Savior could be a poor & humble teacher who seems disinterested in politics or military power.
 - It is insulting to them that he would assume they are not already in a right relationship with God. After all, *Israel is God's chosen people*.
 - Many people think of Jesus in similar terms today.
 - Some see him as merely a great human thinker & teacher in the same category as Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, etc.
 - Some see him only as a means to get the earthly benefits they want right now. They claim his name for what they can get out of it.
 - The immediate health and wealth of "Word of Faith" – Jesus as the cosmic vending machine, a way to manipulate God.
 - Influence, legitimacy, and votes for their political cause (courting the "Evangelical voting bloc").
 - Many continue to be offended by the idea that without faith in Jesus they are not in a right relationship with God & headed for heaven.
 - Jesus insists on being accepted on his own terms. If you do not believe what he says about himself as revealed by his words & deeds you are not his sheep.

(27) Jesus' Sheep Follow Him

- Those who truly belong to Jesus listen to what he says and follow his guidance & example.
 - Obedience to Jesus' principles and commands and following his example show that we truly know, love, and trust him (1 John 2:3-6).
 - A person claiming to be a follower of Jesus but living in constant unrepentant disobedience shows themselves to be a liar.

- Jesus' sheep follow him because he knows them.
 - When the Bible talks about God knowing someone, it means a close, caring relationship (e.g. Psalm 1:6, Matthew 7:23, 1 Corinthians 13:12).
 - We can willingly follow and obey him because we trust that his principles and commands to us flow from his knowing and desiring what is best for us.
 - ...like when a shepherd moves his sheep to a better pasture or keeps his sheep away from a cliff, a dangerously swift stream, or a poisonous plant.
 - We trust our shepherds loving care, so we obey his voice.
- Once we have trusted in Jesus as our Savior, obedience and holy living become a part of who we are.
 - Salvation is not the result of good works, but salvation transforms our life in a way that produces good works (Ephesians 2:8-10).
 - We have a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).
 - We have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, producing the right motivations for obedience (Galatians 5:22-23a).
 - Following Jesus means showing self-control & self-discipline to live according to that new nature and not "grieve the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 4:22-24...30).
 - Later this afternoon you can read the verses I jumped over (25-29) for specific examples of putting off the old and putting on the new.
 - At the next Ask-the-pastor Bible study I'll be answering the question of what it means to grieve the Holy Spirit and how we avoid it.
- Jesus follows up the assurance that he knows his sheep with an explanation of just how safe and secure his sheep are.

(28-30) Jesus' Sheep Are Secure

- At this point, the illustration stops sounding much like a merely human shepherd taking care of sheep because Jesus can provide what no one else can: eternal life.
 - Imagine a day free from any sort of temptation, sadness, pain, frustration, or loneliness.
 - Not a day of sitting around contemplatively or constantly singing in a choir, but of doing things you truly enjoy doing without anything bad interfering and with Jesus himself visibly, physically present to spend time with.
 - It is hard to imagine even a single day like that, and Jesus offers an endless succession of them!
- Once we belong to Jesus, that future is secure.
 - By definition, *eternal life* means *life without end* – and that is what Jesus gives us. It has already been accomplished ("It is finished").

- The Almighty Creator of the universe is holding us secure in his hand which is within the hand of the Father.
 - It is God's will to keep you secure and nothing can thwart his will.
 - Father and Son are in perfect accord on this as only they can be.
 - They are not only one in purpose but also one in being...the Son does things that only God can do.
 - As Father and Son hold you securely, nothing in creation can change God's love & care for you (Romans 8:38-39).
- Even you cannot do anything to change it.
 - If you have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ, you are kept that way by the power of God, not by your own effort to be good or summon up the right feelings (1 Peter 1:3-5).
 - God has promised that what he starts in a person's life he will bring to completion (Philippians 1:6) having given the Holy Spirit as the seal and guarantee/downpayment of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- Unconfessed sin in our life hinders our prayers and may bring the discipline of God, but even this is an indication of his love.
 - He is working with us to get us back on the right track (Hebrews 12:9-11).
 - He is always ready to restore that broken fellowship, and the eternal consequences of that sin have already been taken care of (1 John 1:9-2:2).
- Jesus' sheep will *never* perish
 - The original language carries the idea it is eternally impossible for this to happen.
 - If you have trusted Jesus to forgive your sins and transform your life, you are forever safe in him ("your life is hidden with Christ in God" – Colossians 3:3).
 - If you have never trusted Jesus to save you, the invitation is always open – listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and enter his loving care.
- At this point, the crowd reacts strongly against Jesus identifying himself this closely with God the Father...largely a rehash of previous objections because they do not truly know and believe God's Word.

(31-42) Jesus' Sheep Believe God's Word

- (31-33) The crowd again decides to execute Jesus for claiming to be God.
 - They didn't miss the point he was making; they are not his sheep so they reject it.
 - There is deep irony here as they accuse Jesus of being a "man making himself God" when we know that he is actually God who has made himself a man (John 1:1-14).
 - Even today, one of the most frequently rejected beliefs about Jesus is that he is God.
 - People try to claim that this was a later invention by his followers.
 - If you trust the Bible to be God's Word, there is no getting around that claim as a necessary part of who Jesus is.

- (34-36) Jesus argues from the Scriptures that they cannot execute him for claiming to be the Son of God.
 - o He quotes Psalm 82:6-7 to show that the Old Testament at least once refers to humans as *gods* (privileged/transcendent beings) and *sons of God*.
 - o If the rebellious people in that verse can be called *gods*, how much more does he, the unique Son of God, deserve the title?
- (37-39) Jesus again describes his unique relationship with the Father.
 - o The things he does (both his miracles and his teaching) prove that he is doing the will of the Father.
 - o He is able to do the Father's will perfectly because even though they are separate persons, they are one being ("The Father is in me, and I am in the Father").
 - o At the next Ask-the-pastor Bible study (June 18, 7PM), I'll be answering a couple questions related to the Trinity.
 - o At this point, Jesus is again forced to flee, but the chapter ends with some people believing in him.
- (40-42) Jesus returns to the area of John the Baptist's preaching and baptizing ministry, and many people there believe in him.
 - o Unlike most of the very "iffy" professions of faith we have seen so far, these people believe on the basis of God's Word spoken by John the Baptist.
 - o Their faith is not just excitement over amazing miracles.
 - o They consider what they heard from John about Jesus (John 1:29-34) and accept it.
- Ending with these examples of unbelief and belief implies the question: which group are you part of? Those who reject Jesus as God & Savior or those who believe on the basis of God's Word?

Applications

- Trust the Good Shepherd.
 - o Trust him to give you eternal life that includes the forgiveness of sin, a new nature than enables you to follow in his steps, and an eternal home with him.
 - o Trust him to care for you.
 - When you are worried, troubled, or suffering, talk with him (pray, read some Psalms, ask for his help, thank him for his care).
 - Remember that because Jesus loves you and gave himself for you, you have eternal life and nothing in creation can change that.
- Follow the Good Shepherd.
 - o Your top priority should be living according to your new nature, guided by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

- Jesus isn't your fire insurance salesman; he is your shepherd who guides and protects.
- Some instructions for following in his steps:
 - Galatians 5:22-26 – The Fruit of the Spirit
 - Ephesians 4:22-32 – Put Off / Put On
 - Romans 12:1-8 – Spiritual Gifts
 - Romans 12:9-21 – Love in Action
 - Matthew 5-7 – The Sermon on the Mount