

John 10:22-30.

Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴ The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Know that You are Secure in His Care.

- 1. Listen to your Shepherd's Voice.**
- 2. Live under the Shelter of His Love.**

This past week an image of a mother and her daughter caught the attention of many. As we arrive at Mother's Day today, there are certainly a lot of pictures being taken of daughters and sons with their mother. This particular picture, however, gained so much attention for this mother was photographed sheltering her 2-year old daughter as rockets fell from the sky in southern Israel. That instinct and trained reaction to protect and shelter her child was communicated powerfully in the image that was shared and reshared by many this past week.

Today as we give thanks for mothers for the care and love that they provide, we give thanks for the eternal and enduring shelter, protection, care and love that our Savior Jesus provides for his people. Jesus once described himself as a mother hen who had a great desire to gather her chicks under protecting wings. Today, our Lord gives us another familiar illustration of his protecting care: Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He wants you to **Know that You are Secure in His Care.**

Listen to your Shepherd's Voice. Live under the Shelter of His Love. In the cooler rainy season, Jesus was walking amongst the pillars and shelter of a section of the temple known as Solomon's Colonnade. It was here that the Jewish leaders pounced and suddenly surrounded him like a pack of hungry wolves that had emerged from the trees of the forest. They wanted to get rid of Jesus. They wanted the adoration and the attention of the crowds. They were coming in to surround and corner Jesus and take the people from him. *Tell us plainly! Or are you afraid, Jesus! Are you afraid that*

*the people will see you as a fraud, and a phony, and a fake! **How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.***

What a strange and empty request they make! *Tell us plainly!* No matter how he told them, with clear testimony along with the aid of word pictures, metaphors, and parables, many would not hear and listen to his message. Even with the powerful testimony of his miracles – this undeniable evidence of his divine power - they would deny, deny, deny this truth that was presented before them at various times and in various ways. In their jealousy and rage, they continued on blind and deaf in their unbelief. Jesus would call them to account for closing their eyes and turning a deaf ear to his saving message over and over again. ²⁵*Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.* They would not listen. They would not follow. They had their minds made up.

In sharp contrast to the unbelieving leaders, his disciples believed. In sharp contrast to a world that often rejects Jesus we believe. What a blessed gift that comes through the power of his Word. And with that gift of faith, our Lord creates a bond, a fellowship, a connection with our Savior that deepens as we listen to his Word. ²⁷*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* His Word makes it clear, and by faith, we believe, that he is the Christ. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Good Shepherd and as his sheep, we are secure and safe in his care. Listen to Your Shepherd’s Voice and be comforted and strengthened in your faith.

There are plenty of enemies still today that would prey on the church of Christ. The leading thinkers of the day, the leading philosophies and philosophers, they try to pry us away from God and pick us off one by one so that they may drag us into following where they lead. They surround us on every side. In the shows that we watch, in the opinions that have grown popular, in the music that fills the soundwaves, in the news of the day, the items that scroll past our eyes. Suddenly we look up and we are surrounded as these enemies of Christ growl with oppositions to our faith. We are surrounded and it feels like we are cornered and have no chance to survive. We are surrounded and it seems like our friends, neighbors, family, and co-workers are leaving for - or at least leaning toward - the other side.

The enemies of Christ snarl like vicious wolves, they grunt, they bark and howl with words that are meant to shake us from his hand. *Don’t listen to Jesus! His words are too hard to understand! His teaching is too archaic! He didn’t really mean what he said! He wasn’t really from God! He certainly wasn’t God! His Words have no authority! His church will be gone from this community soon and wiped out from the world. Just look at what is going on in the world today.*

These wolves come at us from every side, they are quick to surround Christ’s flock, and to terrify and devour his sheep. In our fear we tremble. We listen to their objections and our ears are filled with this terrible noise. We listen to the reports of

fewer and fewer calling themselves Christians, we see the signs of church dying and closing and we waver between the instinct of fight or flight. Should we listen to Jesus or just leave it all behind? Is he really who he claims to be? Why should I resist the crowds that surround and threaten? Why should I fight against the leading thinkers of the day pressing me to question him, to forget him? Why should I listen to *His* voice and not another? We know in the back of our minds our kids will probably be pressured even worse than we are. Why should they have to suffer and be excluded from things, or think differently than the majority? Things aren't going to get any better, maybe it would be best to surrender.

And soon enough we bend, maybe even break under the pressure. We forget to observe His day, we shut our ears to his word, we fail to train the next generation to listen to our Savior's voice as we stack other things on our priority list, and our Bibles get buried and the voice of Jesus muffled and silenced, because what's the point, what's the use?

Listen to the voice of your shepherd as he thunders his words of rebuke towards these wolves and in the same breath, breathes out words of incredible comfort for us, his sheep. Above the vicious growls and the snarls of the devil and his pack of allies, we hear the Savior's voice calling out with authority that speaks firmly to his enemies and brings a relieving calm to his people, to his sheep, his flock, and to you and me.

Gather together with fellow believers behind his protection and care. Find refuge and shelter in this place and in his Word. Listen to the Good Shepherd's voice as he speaks, as his words bounce off those pillars and echo with defiant brilliance and yet also provide unmatched security and comfort for those who do believe. Listen as he silences those wolves and puts them in their place. ²⁵***Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."***

The Shepherd stands between the flock and her enemies and the Shepherd suffers so we would not be harmed. The wolves would eventually have their way with him. They would rip at his flesh. They would press in and growl and attack until he was chewed up and spit out. But he would not be back down. He would not be silent. He would speak the word of truth. He would speak words of incredible comfort, words of eternal salvation. He is the Christ. The Son of God came to do the will of the Father. To bring us into the family, the flock of God, the Good Shepherd protected his sheep, even laid down his life for the sheep, so that we would not be consumed, so that we would not perish. And he takes up his life again to show that he forever holds power over his enemies. Our risen Savior assures us that whatever surrounds and

threatens his Church, is no match for his power, for it comes from the Creator himself. No one is greater than the Father and Jesus and the Father are one.

It is often said in the animal realm, the worst place to be is between a mother and her child. Stand between a mother goose and her goslings and she will come at you hissing and flapping her wings. Stand between a mother goat and her newborn kid and she might very well drop her head and ram into you with all her strength. As intense and powerful that natural bond is and the protection and the lengths that such mothers would go to protect their children, nothing can compare to the power and care of Christ our Lord, our Good Shepherd. He has the power of the Almighty. He makes this incredible link. ***I and the father are one.*** Not only are we assured that we are protected by Jesus, the Son, but we are held securely in the hand of the Heavenly Father! ***He is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand.*** Our God wraps both arms around all of us and keeps each one in his care. We are his sheep. He is our Good Shepherd. Live under the shelter of his power and love.

The Words that boomed and echoed and bounced off the pillars of Solomon's Colonnade, now echo through time and eternity. His words do have authority! He will protect his people! His church will endure! Steeples might fall, and buildings might crumble, churches might close in small towns and big cities alike, but believers will always listen to the voice of the good Shepherd. He will preserve his little flock with his unmatched power until the end of this age, and he will lead each one of his sheep to the green pastures of eternity. ***"No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand!"***

His power is unmatched, and his love is beyond compare. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep and takes it up again. He rescues us from death and he gives us eternal life. He even promises that he will be with us all our days, to guide and care for us. Therefore, we don't have to be afraid of those that would prey on God's people. Instead, listen to your Good Shepherd's voice. Find refuge in the shelter of this house of worship. As members of one flock encourage and support each other for there is strength in numbers. Give thanks for faithful undershepherds, pastors and teachers who properly share and explain God's Word to you. Listen to the voice of Jesus and train your children and the next generation to listen to his voice as well.

Yes, Jesus is our Good Shepherd. Despite the signs of opposition all around us, he wants you to know that you are secure in His care. Listen to your Shepherd's voice. Live in the unmatched security that He brings. ***27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. Amen.***