



April 21, 2019 John 10: 22-30 Acts 13: 14, 43-52

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

We all long for the day when we don't need faith anymore, because someone or something proves to us that what Jesus preached is really true. Like the people in this story, we want Jesus to "speak plainly". Yes or no, are you the Christ? Jesus responds in a way that throws the question back to the questioner. He in effect says, if you really have heard what I have been trying to tell you, nothing will be able to rob you of your truth. But, if you just want me to tell you what you want to hear, anyone or anything can snatch your "truth" from you. It's up to you to decide. He leaves us free. Do you like this freedom or would you like the illusion of apparent knowing?

John 10: 22-30

10: ²² At that time the **festival of the Dedication** took place in Jerusalem. It was **winter**, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the **portico 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 **Messiah**, tell us **plainly**." ²⁵

Jesus answered, "**I have told you**, and you do not believe. The **works** that I do in my **Father's name** testify to me; ²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not **belong** to my **sheep**. ²⁷ My **sheep** hear my **voice**. **I know** them, and they **follow me**. ²⁸ I give them **eternal life**, and they will **never perish**. No one will **snatch** them out of my hand. ²⁹ What my **Father** has **given me** is greater than all else, and no one can **snatch** it out of the **Father's** hand. ³⁰ The **Father** and I are one."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Who or what helps you to truly "know" Jesus' voice?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, the more I reflect on the people's struggle to believe Jesus' words and deeds in the gospels, the more compassion I have for them. Even now, with the benefit of the Resurrection I still have trouble believing at times. When I experience being loved by you and others, I know down deep that this is the only reality that truly matters. When I accept that this reality I am beyond being snatched out of the Father's hand. Help me to trust what I know. Amen

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

FESTIVAL OF THE DEDICATION: Jesus is often in Jerusalem and around the temple for the feast days. This feast commemorated the re-consecration of the temple in 164 BCE after being desecrated by the Syrians. Otherwise known as the Feast of Lights, it is celebrated December 25th for eight days during which gifts are exchanged. Each night a candle on the Menorah is lit. *What does this tell us about Jesus? Why is it that the people around the temple and in Jerusalem are the last to see who Jesus really is?*

WINTER: Winter in Jerusalem has snow on the mountains, and it is windy and stormy. It is also the time when the parched desert and plains receive the rain needed to become green again.

What makes this time of the year and place a good scene for this teaching of Jesus?

SOLOMON'S PORTICO: This area that Jesus was walking around in was on the east side of the temple area and would offer protection from the cold winds sweeping in from the desert.

What does this tell us about the people and the reason they were?

HOW LONG: Jesus had been talking about when he would leave (8:21) and struggling with the people's unbelief. Nothing he said or did could penetrate their stubborn minds and hearts. Instead the people accuse him of withholding what they wanted.

What is it about unbelief that repels the very thing that it is seeking after?

SUSPENSE / PLAINLY: Because Jesus and the people were on different wave lengths, he was perceived as not saying plainly with what the people hoped he would say.

When was the last time I was in 'suspense' because I was filtering out everything that did not conform to my expectations? What did it take before I could see what was really there plainly?

MESSIAH: Messiah means 'the anointed one' or the 'Christ'.

Why would the people use this word about Jesus when he resolutely refused to conform to their expectations?

I HAVE TOLD YOU: If the people had been open to hearing what Jesus was saying all along, they would have heard him. Instead, they were only listening for what they wanted to hear and therefore Jesus has to repeat himself.

Have I ever been in the same position of Jesus? Was I able to get through to those I were trying to influence? If not, why not?

WORKS: John's gospel is full of signs that the people should have keyed in on and been able to recognize that Jesus was doing the works of God all along.

What was getting in the way of their seeing?

FATHER'S NAME: Jesus points to the Father as the source of all that he is and all that he can do.

Do I recognize the Father in Jesus? Am I looking for a different kind of a Father than Jesus revealed?

BELONG: To belong to someone is to recognize a deep relationship with that person.

Could someone know I belonged to Jesus by my life witness?

SHEEP: Sheep were pastured together, but separated out at the sound of their shepherd's voice.

How do I know when to separate out from all the other "sheep"?

VOICE: Our voice is an aural 'fingerprint' that often remains the same however many changes our physical form takes in a lifetime.

In the multitude of voices out there today, how can I separate out my shepherd's voice from all the other voices?

KNOW: The kind of knowing here involves a very intimate relationship.

Is my relationship with Jesus and Jesus' Father deepening, enabling me to know God's voice in my life? What is helping me to become more intimate with God?

FOLLOW ME: A good shepherd leads the sheep to lush pastures and safe resting-places.

Have I learned to trust that Jesus will lead me to all that I need?

ETERNAL LIFE / NEVER PERISH: The reason people were attracted to Jesus is that he seemed to have the words of 'eternal life' that promised that they would 'never perish'.

In what ways do I think about 'eternal life'? Do I experience a taste of this in my faith that loved ones await me with God?

SNATCH: To snatch is to grab something when someone is not looking or is too weak to hold on to something.

Are I confident that God is strong enough and attentive enough to hold on to me?

GIVEN THEM TO ME: Jesus sees his role as the one who takes care of the people sent to him by the Father.

Do I feel that I have been given to Jesus in order to remain in God?

ONE: To be one is to be undivided. Jesus was one with the Father and revealed the Father to humanity.

Am I attracted to Jesus' understanding of God to unite me totally with God?

PARALLEL TEXTS: **Jn. 10:22** // 1 Macc. 4:54, 59; **Jn. 10:24** // Lk. 22:67; **Jn. 10:25** // Jn. 5:36;

Jn. 10:26 // Jn. 8:47; **Jn. 10:28** // Dt. 32:39; **Jn. 10:29** // Wis. 3:1; Is. 43:13; **Jn. 10:30** // Jn. 1:1, 12:45; 14:9;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 13: 14, 43-52; [Ps. 100: 1-5](#); Rev. 7:9, 14-17; Jn. 10: 27-30;

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 9:36-43; [Ps. 23](#); Rev. 7:9-17; Jn. 10:22-30

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Many voices ask for our attention. There is a voice that says, "Prove that you are a good person." Another voice says, "You'd better be ashamed of yourself." There also is a voice that says, "Nobody really cares about you," and one that says, "Be sure to become successful, popular, and powerful." But underneath all these often very noisy voices is a still, small voice that says, "You are my Beloved, my favor rests on you." That's the voice we need most of all to hear. To hear that voice, however, requires special effort; it requires solitude, silence, and a strong determination to listen. That's what prayer is. It is listening to the voice that calls us "my Beloved." Henri Nouwen

Jn. 10:22: Festival of the Dedication, Hanukkah (beginning on 25 Chislev, a date that falls in December), commemorating the rededication of the Temple (164 bce), after it had been desecrated by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (1 Macc 4.52–59). It is unclear how this feast was observed in the first century. 30: Jesus reiterates his unity with God, which the Jews see as blasphemy (v. 33). Pg. 179. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

When Jesus identified himself as the “good” shepherd it was perhaps more than coincidental that some said “He has a demon and is out of his mind” (Jn. 10:19). The Mediterranean cultural association of goats with the devil, the prominence of belief in spirit aggression among societies that depend on sheep and goats for their livelihood and the shepherd’s reputation for violence came together in some people’s minds to the detriment of Jesus. While the beneficiaries of his healing abilities applauded and revered Jesus, unaffected onlookers, particularly those in authority, saw rather political threat. Pg. 163.

Pilch, Jon J. *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*

It was unheard of for anyone to call God, “My Father.” But Jesus calls God “My Father,” or “The Father” 156 times in the Gospel of John. Jesus says, “The Father loves the Son,” and “those who love me will be loved by my Father and I will love them and reveal myself to them” (Jn 14:21). The Son of God had no brothers or sisters, but Jesus changed all that. Now all who love him are his brothers and sisters, and God is our Father, because in Jesus we have become sharers in divinity, equal to God.

[Fr. Stephen Verbest 4/3/19](#)

You cannot ever become worthy by yourself; you can only reconnect to your Infinite Source. The biblical revelation is about awakening, not accomplishing. It is about realization, not performance. You cannot get there, you can only be there. Richard Rohr

Knowledge without experience is philosophy, and experience without any knowledge is ignorance. The interplay between the two produces *wisdom*. Dispenza, Joe. *Evolve Your Brain* Pg. 24.

Deep within we long for unity because, at the most fundamental level, we are already one. We belong to one another because we have the same source of love; the love that flows through the trees is the same love that flows through my being. . . . We are deeply connected in this flow of love, beginning on the level of nature where we are the closest of kin because the earth is our mother. Ilia Delio

Jesus was truly free. His freedom was rooted in his spiritual awareness that he was the Beloved Child of God. He knew in the depth of his being that he belonged to God before he was born, that he was sent into the world to proclaim God’s love, and that he would return to God after his mission was fulfilled. This knowledge gave him the freedom to speak and act without having to please the world and the power to respond to people’s pains with the healing love of God Henri Nouwen

Ignorance does not result from what we don’t know! Ignorance results from what we think we do know—but don’t! Most ignorant people are, in fact, quite certain. Fr. Richard Rohr:

He who searches for Divine Reality with all his heart and soul and finds it, becomes aware that, before he began to seek God, God was seeking him, in order to draw him into the joy of fellowship with Him, into the peace of His Presence; even as a child who has strayed, when he is safely back in his mother’s arms, realizes that she had been searching for him, with deep maternal love, before he had begun to think about her. - Sadhu Sundar Singh

Creation is first and foremost the proper work of the Father, in which he associates the Son and the Spirit. So the whole Trinity shares in creation and is mirrored in it. All that is mystery in creatures, however transparent, is the Father making himself present; all that is reason, logic, wisdom in creatures is the Son revealing himself in them; all that is love, giving, integrating in creatures is the Holy Spirit acting in them. The whole of creation is a majestic sacrament of the Trinity.

Boff, Leonardo. *Trinity and Society*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY. 1988. Page 223.

How are Jesus and the Father “one”? In power and activity, a perfectly intelligible conclusion that can be logically drawn from the ideal relationship they share as Father and son from a Mediterranean cultural perspective. Jesus does what the Father empowers him to do. Jesus can do what the Father does: safeguard the sheep of the flock.

As an honorable Mediterranean man carefully looks after his friends, and as an honorable Mediterranean shepherd tends the sheep of the flock, so Jesus and his Father look after those who hear their voice and follow them.

Pilch, John J. *The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle C*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1997. Pages, 76, 78.

The struggle over how to understand Jesus who became the Christ raged on for centuries. People, bishops included often fought to their deaths over the meaning of words and concepts. An engaging effort by a Jewish author, Richard Rubenstein examines this period in great detail. On pages 99-100 he says:

“Eustathius (Mid 4th Century Bishop of Antioch) tried to defend himself against the charge of Sabellianism (denial of Jesus’ humanity) by arguing that Christ had a human nature, too, but he insisted passionately (and confusingly) that the two natures were entirely separate and different. God Himself, he argued, could not have suffered on the Cross. Therefore, when Jesus declared, “the Father is greater than I,” when he maintained that “the Father only” and “not the Son” knows

the date of the Last Judgment, and when he said, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone” (all Arian “proof texts”), it was Jesus the man talking, not Jesus the Son of God.’ This was a brave attempt to formulate a doctrine of Christ’s dual nature, but the result was to turn Jesus into a kind of schizoid creature: a fallible, vulnerable human personality attached (but how?) to an omniscient, omnipotent, timeless God personality. This doctrine would not provide much protection against a determined Arian (denial of Jesus’ divinity) assault.”

Rubenstein, Richard E. When Jesus Became God. NY. Harcourt Brace & Co. 1999. Pages 99-100.

The Epistle of the Apostles (an anti-Gnostic mid-second century work composed in Greek) is a document unknown until the end of the 19th Century, when a Coptic version of it was uncovered in Cairo. It claims to be a dialogue with the Apostles after the Resurrection. 17 “And we said to him, “O Lord, how years yet?” And he said to us, “When the hundred and fiftieth year is completed, between Pentecost and Passover will the coming of my father take place.” And we said to him, “O Lord now you said to us, ‘I will come,’ and then you said, ‘he who sent me will come.’ And he to us, “I am wholly in the Father and he in me.’ Then we said to him, “Will you leave us until your coming? Where will we find a teacher?” And he answered and said to us, “Do you not know that until now I am both here and there with him who sent me?” And we said to him, “O Lord, is it possible that you should be both here and there?” And he said to us, “I am both wholly in the Father and the Father in me after his image and after his likeness and after his power and after his perfection and after his light, and I am his perfect word.

Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Page262.

Cyprian: On the Unity of the Catholic Church

It was early in his bishopric that the empire-wide persecution under Decius broke out. Cyprian fled Carthage to rule his church in exile. Upon returning in 251, he found his Christian community split over what to do with those who had “lapsed” during the persecution—that is, those who, under pressure from the persecuting authorities, had sacrificed to the pagan deities or bribed their way into securing a certificate to indicate they had done so. In Cyprian’s absence and against his own better judgment, some of his presbyters were urging that such people were to be allowed back into the good graces of the church without a long period of public penance. Moreover, it soon became known that a schism had occurred in Rome over just this issue, as a popular leader named Novatian insisted, in opposition to the Roman bishop, Cornelius, that the lapsed undergo a long and rigorous course of repentance. Novatian’s followers soon elected him to be a rival pope.

Cyprian wrote his treatise, “On the Unity of the Church,” to address such problems of schism, urging the bishops of the various churches to become unified among themselves for the sake of the body of Christ. Because some of his readers understood him to embrace the rightly elected bishop of Rome as the sole and ultimate authority over the church universal (i.e., as the “pope” —a meaning that Cyprian evidently did not intend— he later revised his treatise. In the second edition we find;

“Whoever breaks the peace and harmony of Christ acts against Christ; whoever gathers elsewhere than in the church, scatters the church of Christ. Our Lord says: “I and the Father are One”; and again, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit it is written: “And the three are One.” Does anyone think then that this oneness, which derives from the stability of God and is welded together after the celestial pattern, can be sundered in the church and divided by the clash of discordant wills? If a person does not keep this unity, he is not keeping the law of God; he has lost his faith about Father and Son, he has lost his life and his soul.”

Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pages 340 and 342.

Dionysius of Rome: Letter to Dionysius of Alexandria

As an example of the way orthodox theological opinions, when pursued rigorously, could lead to views that themselves were deemed heretical, consider the following letter written by Dionysius of Rome to his namesake, Dionysius of Alexandria (ca. 260 C.E.). The latter had taken a strong stand against patripassianism (supported by a Christian named “Sabellius”), which maintained that Christ, the Son of God, was actually God the Father himself become human; but in voicing his opposition, Dionysius of Alexandria had gone too far in the other direction, in the opinion of his colleague in Rome. This letter warns that Dionysius should not differentiate *too* much between the Father and the son, since to do so could lead one (a) to maintain that the son was not eternal but had been created at some point in time, like other creatures, and/or (b) to think that there were three different Gods (Father, Son, and Spirit) instead of one God, as affirmed by orthodox Christians from time immemorial.

“But we must believe in God the Father all sovereign, and in Jesus Christ his Son and in the Holy Spirit, and hold that the Word is united to the God of the universe. For “I,” says he, “and the Father are one,” and “I in the Father and the Father in me.” For thus both the holy Triad and the holy preaching of the Monarchy will be preserved.”

Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pages 435-6.

Faith begins with a recognition that there exists uncertainty of any knowledge. Deciding that something is true always involves a certain level of uncertainty. ...Steven L. Peck

We can know God, but we can never think God. Page 176 Rolheiser, Ronald. Against an Infinite Horizon. NY. Crossroad Pub. 2001



“There is in us an instinct for newness, for renewal, for a liberation of creative power. We seek to awaken in ourselves a force which really changes our lives from within. And yet the same instinct tells us that this change is a recovery of that which is deepest, most original, most personal in ourselves. To be born again is not to become somebody else, *but to become ourselves.*” Thomas Merton

The deeper the cry, the more clear the choice.

Nepo, Mark. [The Book of Awakening](#). Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000. Page 125.

There comes a time when it is no longer important to prove one's point, but simply to live, to surrender to God and to love. Thomas Merton..

Phillip Keller, a shepherd, has written two books, *A Shepherd Looks at Ps. 23* and *Lessons from a Sheepdog*. In these books he looks at the relationship between the shepherd, his sheepdog and the sheep. These easy to read books really open up the metaphors of sheep and shepherd in the scriptures.

Keller, Phillip. [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23](#). Grand Rapids,MI. Zondervan Pub.. 1970.

Keller, Phillip. [Lessons From a Sheep Dog](#). Waco,TX. Word Books, 1983

The pain of self –discovery / is worth nothing / unless in finding / ourselves/ we also find each other.

Grana, Janice. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976. SELF REALIZATION: Page 12

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2013. Pgs. 87-93.

Belonging is a spiritual practice,
the spiritual practice of believing in myself
and belonging to myself so fully
that I find what's sacred
in not only being a part of something,
like my DNA calls me to be,
but also, I find sacred
the need, on occasion, to stand alone in my values,
in my beliefs,
when I'm called to do that, as well.

And so, to me, the idea of true belonging
is a type of belonging that never requires me to be inauthentic
or change who I am,
but a type of belonging that demands who I am,
that I be who I am,
even when I jeopardize a connection with other people,
even when I have to say,
I disagree.

Love, John

[John Chuchman](#) poetman@torchlake.com