

John 10.22-42 Sermon / COB / 09.28.14

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** Think of the most outrageous promise you ever heard. Just take a moment to think of something that was just totally unbelievable or an outrageous lie.
- Early Coca Cola ads said the drink could cure many diseases. Tobacco ads used to say that science had proven there were no negative health effects to smoking.
 - Colby, what if I promise you will grow up to be a famous ballerina? Jim, if you will buy the store brand lawn mower, you will be satisfied, I guarantee it. If I am elected, there will be a chicken in every pot, an end to war and poverty, and the lion will lie down with the lamb, right?
 - Presidential candidate GW Bush said, “Read my lips, no new taxes!” Presidential candidate Barak Obama said he would lower our health insurance costs.
- † What about promises you would like to believe; what would you like to hear as a promise?
- Steve, we can cure your migraines. Jenn, your children will all be safe, they will grow up walking with the Lord. Hilma and Jack, soon you will be up dancing with Colby; alright, maybe that’s for the outrageous category, but how about you will be able keep yourself safe and healthy for the next many years.
- † Promises are a tricky business. We promise something, and then we do our best to fulfill it, but sometimes we fail. In Old Testament Israel, if people made promises in God’s name and they didn’t come true, then God said they should be killed as false prophets.
- We want to receive promises today, we want to believe in them. I want to believe that LeeAnn loves me and will never leave me. I want to believe that Stoltzfus and Sons Builders will help me if something goes wrong with my new roof.
 - But we know how often promises are broken. Sometimes people are dishonest from the start, sometimes they just stop caring about keeping their word, and sometimes it is out of their control.
- † Today we are going to hear a promise from Jesus. I want you to believe it absolutely. Jesus is honest; he never changes, so he will not stop caring about his integrity or your wellbeing; and nothing is out of his control. Plus his promise, as we will see, is backed by the full authority of God the Father. So this is a promise we can take to the bank. Let’s pray and then see what it is.

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- † **[Slide 2: 10.22-23]** You can open your Bible to John 10.22. I will be reading from the New English Translation today; if you would like to follow along in that text, you can grab a Bible off the window sill; but you can use whatever Bible you brought just as well.
- We have something for everyone today: there is some deep study for those intellectual Bible students and there is some inspiring and encouraging application for those more of that persuasion. So let’s dive into the text and see what God wants to reveal to us today.

John 10.22-23 NET: Then came the feast of the Dedication in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple area in Solomon's Portico.

- † The Festival of the Tabernacles in John 7-8 would have occurred in late September or early October. Now we are in December, for the Feast of Dedication or Festival of Rededication. Today this is known as the Feast of Lights or, more commonly, Hanukkah.
 - This is not a feast that God commanded the Jews to observe. Rather, it commemorates something that happened between when the Old Testament ended and Jesus was born. During that period, the Persian empire fell to the Greek empire. One of the Greek rulers, Antiochus Epiphanes, set up a pagan altar in the Temple of God and outlawed possession of any part of the Old Testament scriptures.
 - In 165BC, Jewish rebels led by Judas Maccabaeus recaptured the Temple and rededicated it to Yahweh, the true God. They celebrated for eight days, and this became the tradition. The festival was not as grand as the ones prescribed by the Old Testament, because people were allowed to celebrate this one at home, instead of all coming to the Temple in Jerusalem.
- † Almost 200 years later, Jesus was in Jerusalem and at the Temple, but it was winter: the temperature probably was in the forties, maybe lower, and it often rains at that time of year. So Jesus was walking in Solomon's portico.
 - This was a covered walkway that went around the outside of the Temple mount. The side facing inward toward the Temple courts was open, with pillars supporting the roof. Jesus probably was walking there to stay out of the weather.

[Slide 3: 10.24] John 10.24: The Jewish leaders surrounded him [Jesus] and asked, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

- † The movie has common people talking with Jesus in this scene. The word in Greek is ambiguous, but I think probably there is a crowd, but Jesus is engaging with the Jewish religious leaders.
 - What they literally asked him according to the Greek text is, "How long will you take away our life?" This was an idiom which meant something like, "How long will you keep us from coming to a conclusion?"
 - They want Jesus to declare to them that he is the Messiah, the Christ. It is possible that they have one aspect of the Old Testament prophecies in mind. Maybe they are looking for deliverance from Roman control; maybe something else.
 - Now remember, Jesus has been teaching and doing miracles for a couple of years at this point and he has been hanging around Jerusalem for several months as we have seen in John 7, 8, 9, & 10. He has done many miracles during this time, some of which were clearly signs of his identity, relating back to Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. He also has taught about his identity over and over.

[Slide 4: 10.25-26] John 10.25-26: Jesus replied, "I told you and you do not believe. The deeds I do in my Father's name testify about me. But you refuse to believe because you are not my sheep."

- † A short time ago, as we saw last week, Jesus had taught the parables about himself being God's shepherd, the Good Shepherd, and the gate for the sheep. He plays off that teaching here, by telling his doubters that he has given them ample evidence of his identity, but they have not believed because they are not his sheep.

[Slide 5: 10.27-30] John 10.27-30: [Jesus speaking] “My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them from my Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

† Those who belong to Jesus hear his voice and follow him as their shepherd. This reiterates previous teaching by Jesus: those whom God gives to Jesus receive grace and thus have their eyes opened to see clearly and come to true saving faith in Jesus, believing in who he is as the divine Son of God and human Messiah-savior, and believing in what he accomplished in his death and resurrection, paying the penalty for their sins so they could be forgiven, reconciled with God, and given eternal life.

† **[Slide 6: eternal life]** Jesus mentions eternal life here, and then he defines it. Those who respond in faith to Jesus and thus follow him, receive the gift of new spiritual life which is eternal, that is, they will never perish. The Greek is emphatic: “I give eternal life to them and they *certainly* will *not* perish *into eternity!*” This is Jesus’ promise.

- Jesus also says nobody will snatch them from his hand. Our salvation is based on the righteousness of Jesus, not our own, so nothing and nobody can take that away from us.
- Jesus again offers assurance by reminding us that God the Father is the mightiest individual, the mightiest force, in the universe. He is powerful enough to create the universe simply by speaking. He is powerful enough to know and understand every thought of every person all at once, to know what will happen every moment and to intervene in history, even by going against nature to act supernaturally whenever he so chooses. This God Almighty is the one who gives individual people to Jesus, so we need never fear that someone can tear us away.
- The point Jesus is emphatically making is that while his doubting contemporaries cannot know him, those who do know him and believe in him and thus follow him have their salvation *guaranteed*. If you are saved by grace through faith in Christ, then you *will* go to Heaven when you die and you *will* be resurrected to new physical life on a new Earth when Jesus comes back. Jesus and God the Father *guarantee* it. As we have seen previously, they sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us as a sign of that guarantee.
- In the past year, we have discussed assurance of salvation and perseverance of the saints in both sermons and classes. If you want to study that topic in more detail in your quiet time, let me know and I will give you some study materials.

† **[Slide 7: One]** Jesus also emphasizes again here that he and God the Father are one. The NET and some other translations make this into proper English, but the Greek text makes obvious that Jesus is emphasizing something about *himself*: he says, “I and the Father are one.”

- From the beginning of this gospel, the author John has been explaining who Jesus is, and emphasizing that he is the divine Son of God who came to earth as a man to be the sinless human Messiah-savior.
- We believe God is triune: God the Father, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, are each unique and distinct from the other two in identity and personality, yet so unified in will and essence that they are one God.

- This is emphasized by the way Jesus said this too. In the Greek text, he says that he and God the Father are one *thing*, not one *person*. In other words, they each have their own personal identity as Father and Son, but they have unity in essence and will as one God.
- Jesus has said this before, and it has upset everyone. Let's see how they react this time...

[Slide 8: 10.31-33] John 10.31-33: The Jewish leaders picked up rocks again to stone him to death. Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good deeds from the Father. For which one of them are you going to stone me?" The Jewish leaders replied, "We are not going to stone you for a good deed but for blasphemy, because you, a man, are claiming to be God."

- † Ah ha. Just like before, when they hear this they want to kill Jesus. One has to wonder what all these loose rocks are doing in Solomon's Portico; was this a construction zone? maybe, since they had been building the Temple for decades; were children piling up rocks for a game? perhaps the religious leaders had stacked them there just in case they needed to stone the Messiah.
- † They had asked for identification, but Jesus has gone too far. They might be willing to believe in a human Messiah, but not in one that is both divine and human. They did not believe God was triune. They believed in God the Father. They believed the Holy Spirit was just part of God, not a unique individual who was all of God yet one of three that were the one God together. They did not understand the Old Testament prophecies about the savior being both human and divine.
 - Jesus is being ironic here. He again reminds them of the miraculous evidence he has provided them and then asks, for which miracle are they going to kill him?
 - They say it is not about his works, it is about his words: they believe he is merely a man, but he claims to be God; or as the Greek literally says, he makes himself out to be divine. They take offense at this, seeing it as an insulting false teaching about the nature of God himself, and the penalty for that in the Old Testament was death. Under Roman law, they should take it through the courts first, but just like today sometimes tempers flared and people took the law into their own hands.

[Slide 9: 10.34-36] John 10.34-36: Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If those people to whom the word of God came were called 'gods' (and the scripture cannot be broken), do you say about the one whom the Father set apart and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

- † **[Slide 10: law]** Jesus quoted Psalm 82.6. Usually when someone spoke of the law, they meant the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, which did not include any psalms. But sometimes people would use the term "the law" to refer to the entire Jewish scriptures, which we call the Old Testament.
- † **[Slide 11: gods/sons]** In Psalm 82.6, the language is a little more emphatic than it comes across in English. God says, "I myself said, 'You are gods, and all sons of the Most High.'" So Jesus is contending that if God himself referred to others as gods and sons, then how can they object to him – the unique one whom God the Father consecrated and sent into the world – calling himself the Son of God?
 - Now we might wonder at God referring to anyone else as gods! This is a difficult psalm to interpret, but I invested a few hours into study of this psalm last week, and I think we can make

sense of this. Yahweh, the true God, calls them gods in the sense of their being sons of the Most High God, the true God, himself; and they are sons of God in the sense of representing God, reflecting his character, being his image. So God referred to them as gods in that they were supposed to be acting in God's authority, representing God to the world. God used similar language with Moses.

- So Jesus says if such terminology is not blasphemous, if in fact even God used it, how can they object to what he is saying?

† **[Slide 12: wrath]** But I think it is very interesting that Jesus chose to quote from this psalm when he could have made his point in other ways.

- In this psalm, God had called some others “sons” and “gods” because he had assigned them to administrate in his name, but now he was criticizing those sons, those gods, because they had failed him by not upholding justice, and thus they would be condemned and God himself would administrate over his people. Does that sound familiar from what we discussed in John 10 and Ezekiel 34 last week? It should.
- In other words, Jesus is implying that those who are now trying to kill him are the ones God the Father had called “gods” as his representatives, who have now failed God, and will themselves face judgment from God the Father!
- And Jesus said, the scripture cannot be “abolished” [or “broken”]. They will face judgment for letting God down. And in the previous teaching we heard last week, it is Jesus whom God the Father chooses as his shepherd to replace those thieves and robbers who represented him before.
- No doubt the psalm had some historical basis when it was written, but it also was prophetic, in that Jesus was invoking it now for his situation. That being the case, these religious leaders – the ones who just picked up rocks to kill Jesus – would face God's wrath.
- So there is irony here in that the religious leaders want to kill Jesus – God's ultimate representative – for being offensive to God, but Jesus says they are going to be condemned by God for failing God as his representatives. It also is ironic that they want to kill the man Jesus for proudly claiming to be divine, when the reality is that the divine Son of God condescended, humbled himself, to come as the human baby Jesus.

[Slide 13: 10.37-39] John 10.37-39: [Jesus speaking] **“If I do not perform the deeds of my Father, do not believe me. But if I do them, even if you do not believe me [believe my words], believe the deeds, so that you may come to know and understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”** Then they attempted again to seize him, but he escaped their clutches.

† Later, Jesus would say in John 14.10 [NET], “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father residing in me performs his miraculous deeds.”

- So again this is about the essential unity between the Father and the Son, which extends even while the Son is here on earth as a man. Jesus is speaking God the Father's words; God the Father is doing miracles through Jesus.

[Slide 14: 10.40-42] John 10.40-42: **Jesus went back across the Jordan River again to the place where John had been baptizing at an earlier time, and he stayed there. Many came to him and began to say,**

“John performed no miraculous sign, but everything John said about this man was true!” And many believed in Jesus there.

- † Jesus left the city, traveling down out of the hill country to the Jordan River valley and then across the river. He went somewhere that John the Baptist had been baptizing earlier. As we will see in John 11, this was about a four days journey away.
 - The people there looked at Jesus and thought about what John the Baptist had said about Jesus being the Messiah, the Savior, and the Son of God, and they realized that John’s words were true and so they believed in Jesus.

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 15: Truth 1]** There are two theological truths I want to emphasize today from Jesus’ teaching. First, I would like you to understand the cause and result of salvation.
 - God the Father chooses to give you to Jesus, so he extends his grace – unmerited favor – to you.
 - This heals your spiritual blindness and allows you to see, and thus you choose to believe in the identity and promise of Jesus.
 - In human terms, this results in you following Jesus and starting to grow to be more like him.
 - In divine terms, this means you are granted eternal life, true spiritual life that starts now and lasts forever.
- † **[Slide 16: Truth 2]** Second, I want you to believe that you have eternal life that cannot be lost or taken away.
 - It is God the Father who chooses to save you, and there is no force in the universe strong enough to change that.
 - This salvation is a gift, not something you earned, not something you can unearn. And it is based on the righteousness of Christ being applied to you, not on you being righteous yourself, so again you cannot unearn it.
 - If you are followers of Jesus, he promised “I give eternal life to you and you *certainly* will *not* perish *into eternity*! No one will snatch you from my hand.” This is his promise. You can believe it, trust in it, and rest easy in it.
- † In response to this gift, this promise, let’s rejoice every day that we know we have something better coming, that we know we belong to Jesus even now and are safe with him. Let’s praise his name, in church, at home, and even in public! And let’s truly follow him, learning to be like him and to do his ministry work. Right now, let’s pray...