

FEELING INSECURE?

John 10:1-30

What do we think about when you hear the numbers 9-11? What comes to our minds when you hear the name Katrina or Hurricane Sandy or Sandy Hook Elementary School? Do we get the “warm fuzzies” or the “cold chills” when we hear the words Islamic Extremists? What kind of associations do we make when hear of such things as drive-by shootings, earthquakes, tsunamis, and tornados? We can add to this identity theft, computer hacking, government monitoring of emails and phone calls, long waiting times to get an appointment with a physician. Feeling insecure, yet?

In Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the first need is that of basic survival or staying alive (air, water, food, sleep). Second on the list is “safety” which would include protection, security, stability, as well as law and order. The way most people function is that we have difficulty moving from one “need level” to another until we have addressed the lowest level needs. It just makes sense that we will not be very concerned about relationships, team loyalties, status, achievements, and reputation if we are starving or sense that our safety is threatened.

If we are caught up in the survival and security needs level, then we will not be making a lot of progress as a society or nation until the threats are eliminated. As bad as the loss of life and property have been in the many tragedies that we can recall during the past few decades, we have additional loss in that we have been diverted from dealing with issues that can enhance the quality of life and things that have lasting and eternal values.

Speaking of things of eternal value, the main needs that we have are that of spiritual life and the issue of eternal security. We need to settle these questions before moving on to more esoteric concerns. What can we learn from what Jesus taught about such issues?

Jesus Guides Us – 10:1-6

¹“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.” ²“But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.” ³“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” ⁴“When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.” ⁵“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. John 10:1-6 (NASB95)

This passage is an introductory statement for the points Jesus wanted to get across to the people and was a not-so-subtle rebuke of the Jewish leaders who had just dealt harshly with the man who was healed by banning him from places of worship because he spoke favorably of the One who had healed him. The allegory Jesus used was related to the common practice for protecting flocks in the winter season. Several flocks would be gathered together in one place for protection. The place had an attendant so that just anybody could not come in and steal or kill the sheep. Those who would try to get to the sheep other than by the proper route would obviously be robbers. It is important to note that Jesus was talking about the route that those who would be leaders would enter. Later on, He would speak about the way the sheep would enter.

Jesus made an interesting observation. The sheep will not willingly follow a false shepherd; however, the legitimate shepherd only needs to call. The common people of that day did not follow the religious leaders of their day. As in the case of the blind man whom Jesus healed, the leaders did not care for the man at all. In fact, they excommunicated him. This passage, coming directly after the incident of his being cast out of the temple, could have been referring somewhat to that incident in addition to setting the stage for His teaching on the theme that He (Jesus) is the Good Shepherd.

Some have used this allegory to connect the sheep fold to heaven but it is most probably a reference to Israel. Numerous references to Israel being sheep and various leaders being their shepherds are found throughout the Old Testament. True spiritual leadership for the nation could be recognized by the legitimacy (compliance with Scripture prophecies) of how they came into

positions of leadership. There are many references in the Scripture regarding the coming of the Messiah and Jesus met every criterion. The door in this reference to the way a legitimate shepherd was to enter the sheep fold was the word of God. An argument can be made that in that time and place, the “door keeper” was John the Baptist who called for the people to prepare the way for the coming Messiah Who is the Good Shepherd.

What is the life lesson for us today? We can look at this question from a secular and a sacred point of view. Let’s start with the sacred or church-related issues of leadership. If the Holy Scriptures were the criteria for choosing legitimate leadership for Israel, then we would be safe in using this same basis for determine whose voice we will listen to with regard to spiritual issues that we encounter today. There are entire groups of religious organizations that basically ignore the fundamental teachings of the Word of God. Some of these have blatant conflicts with Biblical principle and the gospel message. Many of these have errors related to the person of Jesus and whether He is or is not God. Others are somewhat more subtle in that they distort the truth of the gospel by linking God’s plan of salvation to something that we earn by performing certain rites and rituals. Even more subtle errors come from false leadership that would promote an “anything goes” lifestyle for those who are Christians. This might be termed “sloppy agape” since it ignores the basic principles of “repent and believe” and “trust and obey.” These false leaders overlook the fact that Jesus shows us mercy by not executing instantaneous judgment on our sinfulness; but, at the same time, He commands us to “go and sin no more.” As responsible born-again believers, we must exercise good judgment in deciding who we will follow. In this case the Scripture is the door and we are the doorkeepers.

Can we apply this same logic in determining who we will follow in the “secular” arena of life. Absolutely! If we fail to apply this same reasoning and basic truth criteria in the secular world then we will find ourselves (as a nation) in an absolute mess.

Jesus Gives Us Life – 10:7-10

⁷ So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ “All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly. John 10:7-10 (NASB95)

The way into the Kingdom is through Jesus. Jesus presented another allegory picture that is representative of the summer sheep folds used for protection at night. The previous allegory was related to Israel and the door by which the shepherd entered was the Scripture. In these present verses, the picture is that of the sheep that have been called out and led out of the first enclosure (Israel) to go out to where they could be fed. This is likely a reference to the church – called out and led by Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit. The summer enclosures had an entry way but no door that could be closed. After the sheep were in the enclosure the shepherd would lie down across the entry way so that nothing could come in or go out without his knowing it. The shepherd literally became the door to the corral.

Through the ages many philosophies of life have attracted people. Some of these we recognize as false religions and cults or just plain paganism. Many voices today encourage man to be his own god. Jesus called these thieves and robbers. They have no legitimate claim on people.

Some may wonder what harm it does to be involved with false religions and cults? Some people claim these provide good fellowship and do good service. However, Jesus said that all others have a different agenda than His purpose. Just because an organization does good works, we must not be deceived into thinking there is any salvation in it.

Anything that is not of God will ultimately do us harm! Sometimes we have trouble seeing the truth of that statement. Many times we cannot see the dangers that are in a particular situation and before we know it, we may find ourselves involved in something we can’t get out of. There is deliverance from such situations provided we put our trust in God and step out in faith.

Jesus Gave His Life for Us – 10:11-18

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ¹² “He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*. ¹³ “*He flees* because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. ¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵ even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd. ¹⁷ “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” John 10:11-18 (NASB95)

At this point in the interaction Jesus was having with various groups of people, He had set the stage for another of the seven I AM proclamations recorded by John.

Jesus said I AM the Good Shepherd. In the teaching of contrasts between good and bad shepherds, we see foundation truths of the gospel. He told us He came that we might have life and have it abundantly. He would substitute His life for ours. He paid the penalty of the Law of Sin and Death that we might have life in Him and live according to the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

The contrast Jesus presented between a hired hand and the owner of the sheep showed the radical difference of love and care for people that Jesus had (and has) as compared to the religious leaders of that day. The once blind man who had been excommunicated from the temple was a good example of how little they really cared.

Jesus returned to the I AM statement and repeated the criteria of a good shepherd as being one who would give his life for the sheep. The absence of selfishness is a characteristic of Kingdom living. We also are given insight into the depth of knowledge shared between the sheep of Christ (born again believers) and Christ Himself (the Good Shepherd). Jesus said that it is comparable to that depth of knowledge between God the Father and God the Son. How well do they know each other? Jesus said, I and My Father are One. That fact should prompt us to ask an introspective question of “to what extent am I at one with Christ in my daily walk?”

How does the truth of verse 14 that “He knows us” and we “know Christ” impact our security and the confidence we have in that security? The truth that Christ “knows us” means that He is aware of the special circumstances that are unique to us as an individual. He is aware of our aches and pain, our weakness and strengths, our priorities and even our intentions. He is never surprised by any situation that comes up. There is a song that has been popular for several years that expresses this idea very well: “He Knows My Name.” The conclusion that we come to is that we are as secure as He desires us to be. This would bring us to the second part of the couplet that “we know Christ.” This knowledge impacts the confidence that we have in the security that He provides. How secure does Christ want us to be? The best description I can think of is the word “ultimately.” As the writer to the Hebrews stated in 7:25, “He saves to the uttermost.”

Jesus’ reference to other sheep looks ahead to the time when the Gospel would be taken to the Gentiles and they too would come into the Kingdom of God. The sheep of God’s pasture are those who have the faith of Abraham – those who believe God. Paul wrote of the unity of the flock of those who believe in Jesus in his letter to the church at Galatia: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (See Galatians 3:28)

The means by which this security and unity of all who have the faith of Abraham would be accomplished was the death and resurrection of Jesus. The very purpose of God the Son coming to live among us was to pay our penalty for sin and to provide us with power to avoid sinning. This way of satisfying the requirement of a righteous God is from God the Father and it was to be carried out voluntarily by God the Son because of the great love God has for man.

In verse 17, we need to avoid concluding that God’s love for the Son is conditional. The word translated “loves” is the Greek word “agapa” and is normally translated into the English word “love.” However, in the Greek usage the word also carries with it the context of “being well

pleased.” A better rendering of this verse would be that the Father is “well pleased” to have the Son lay down His life and take it up again so that His plan of salvation would be accomplished.

Jesus Gives Evidence that Provokes Questions – 10:19-24

¹⁹ A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” ²¹ Others were saying, “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?” ²² At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; ²³ it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” John 10:19-24 (NASB95)

Which is more dangerous, “unbelief “ or a strong belief in something that is not accurate? That may be a faulty question in that we might classify atheists as nonbelievers, even they have a strong conviction (belief) that God does not exist. Whatever we believe strongly will influence how we interpret what we see and how we process the information we encounter every day. Most of the Jewish leaders had strong beliefs and were totally convinced they were right and this certainty in their ability to always come to the right conclusion created a blind spot with regard to what they witnessed in the things that Jesus said and did. Just as the Jews could not agree on their response to Jesus, He remains today the watershed issue for all mankind. Most are reluctant to say Jesus was raving mad, they just claim He was a good and wise man and that is all. Many will not, however, accept His claim to be God.

If Jesus had done no miracles and then claimed to be God, the Jews would have truly written Him off as a madman and would have ignored Him. If Jesus had done many miracles and had not claimed to be God, then the Jews would have taken notice of Him but would not have seen Him as a threat and would have then simply ignored Him. The combination of the two, the works of God and the testimony proved to be such a powerful combination the Jews could not ignore it. His claim to be God (I and My Father are One) interpreted the miracles and the miracles confirmed the words of His testimony.

The application for us as Christians today is that we may do good works and help many people but we will not have a lasting impact for the Kingdom of God unless we give testimony as to Who is working in us. On the other hand, if we only give our testimony and do not do the works of God, then the world will not listen.

At a later time (thought to be the Feast of Lights) Jesus again taught using reference to His role as Shepherd and His relationship to God the Father. The Jews asked for more proof that Jesus was the Messiah and wanted to hear the words directly from Him.

Jesus Gives Us a Guarantee – 10:25-30

²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. ²⁶ “But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. ²⁷ “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ “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. ³⁰ “I and the Father are one.” John 10:25-30 (NASB95)

People today refuse to surrender their wills to God’s way in spite of the evidence all around them. Most in our culture have rejected the general revelation of God given to us in the creation (natural world) in which we live. If we cannot accept the general revelation, then we will not accept the specific revelation of God in Jesus. We will never see the proof we seek without first coming by faith. God has granted to each person a measure of faith and if we refuse to exercise the faith we have, then we can never get beyond that point.

The security of the believer is predicated on the nature, ability and power of God. It is a sure thing. Our salvation is inexorably tied to the new birth in which we have been made spiritually alive with the uncreated life of God. Since that life is eternal, then the eternal life that we have can never die and is eternally secure.