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# Why Don't Some People Believe?

John 10:22-42

*Russ Kennedy*

Most cultures and countries have holidays that celebrate great victories. We celebrate Independence Day and V-Day. These are wonderful holidays commemorating great events in our history.

In our text this morning, 2 months have passed since the paragraph before it.. It is now winter. We are now at a man-made celebration, not a Biblical feast as given by Moses. But it is an important marker. Around 175 BC, a Syrian leader named Antiochus Epiphanes had sacked Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple. His horrific acts of offering pigs blood on the altar were the first fulfillments of Daniel 7 & 9. He was defeated in a great rebellion led by Judas Maccabeus. The Temple was reclaimed, restored and rededicated. This feast commemorated that great day in Jewish history.

So, John takes us to the Temple on that feast day. Jesus is here on a cold winter day walking and teaching in the warmth of the enclosed colonnade. And the Jews gather around...

## **The Exposure of their Unbelief**

**(v. 22-30)**

<sup>22</sup> At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."

## **What Unbelievers Demand**

**(v. 24)**

Wonder how you would cast this caustic question? Hands on hips. Frowns. Chins forward. Eyes flashing. They are plainly irritated. Enough of these metaphors and indirect speech. Speak plainly. Stop yanking our chains. If you really are the Messiah, just say so. Never mind that on several occasions they have taken up rocks to stone Him. So this is not a question from hearts inclined to believe. These folks are looking for definitive proof to have Him executed.

Jesus responds by connecting His words with His works. His works, his miracles, have attested to His words. He has made a claim of being God and being the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises and prophesies (this in the idea of Messiah). He has backed that claim up with both a holy life and also with a series of miraculous deeds. But they continue to disbelieve. When they are not satisfied with his words, they demand signs, miracles. When they are dissatisfied with his works, they demand more words.

**Why Unbelievers Don't****(v. 25-26)**

Jesus responds by declaring the reason they don't believe. He has spoken plainly. He has done the works to back it up. His message then has been plain and proven. It ought to be powerfully persuading. But it hasn't. They simply do not believe in a saving way.

Why? Are you ready for the answer? Are you ready not to twist and turn and try to make Jesus say something different than He does? Here it is:

They do not believe because they are not of His flock.

Now he doesn't say, "They are not part of the flock because they don't believe." This is what Jesus is commonly represented as saying here. Except, it won't wash. It is backwards. It reverses the cause and effect.

He does say, "Because they are not of His flock, they do not believe." He states it plainly and clearly. This... because of that... This - not believe - because of that - not part of the flock.

We might be more comfortable with this if Jesus were talking in private to His disciples or to committed followers. But He doesn't. He is facing lost people. He is facing people who don't believe. He is telling them the reason they don't. Later in a similar situation, He will say then they "can't".

**What Makes Sheep, Sheep****(v. 27-30)**

Jesus goes on immediately to say what marks real sheep.

**There is a genuine relationship between Christ and His sheep (v. 27-28).**

THEY HEAR JESUS' VOICE. Because they are of Jesus' flock, they know the Shepherd's voice. This is drawn from the common fact of shepherding. Even when large flocks of different shepherds are mixed, the flock of one shepherd will only follow the voice of their true shepherd.

THEY ARE KNOWN BY JESUS. The New Testament is much more concerned that we are known by God than that He is known by us. The emphasis in the relationship is on God who knows us intimately and moves toward those He knows in love. In this triplet of statements, this is the center one and therefore the most important one. They hear, they follow, but most important, they are known...

THEY FOLLOW JESUS. It is a simple word but a submissive act. The sheep follow their true shepherd. This is a discipleship word; this is a convicting word.

Christ's true sheep believe; that is, they hear, are known and follow Jesus - not to become sheep but because they are part of Jesus' flock. Sheep hear and heed the Shepherd's voice.

### **There is a mutual giving between Christ and His Father (v. 29-30).**

JESUS GIVES THEM ETERNAL LIFE. The effect is that they will never perish. The life He gives is eternal. It is the life of God. It is not just enduring. It is the grant of God's kind of life. It is an inflow from eternity of the life of God into the soul of a person.

THE FATHER GAVE THEM TO JESUS. You see it? God the Father chose who was to be in the flock and then has given them to Jesus as the Shepherd.

THEY ARE SECURE IN CHRIST. This is the result of that mutual giving. Since we are given to Jesus and since He has given us eternal life, we cannot be taken away from God not even through death; we will never perish.

All this grounded in the Trinity. What an amazing thing. Our identity is tied up in who God is. Jesus and His Father are One. Jesus is deity. All that Jesus says makes sheep, sheep is because Jesus is God and God's Son.

So are you a true sheep? Have you come to believe? Have you heard Jesus' voice in the Word? Have you followed Him? Does He know you? May God make it so today.

### **The Truth they must Believe**

**(v. 31-39)**

So what is the truth that they must believe and yet they have rejected?

<sup>31</sup> The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. <sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" <sup>33</sup> The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?" <sup>35</sup> If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— <sup>36</sup> do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" <sup>37</sup> If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; <sup>38</sup> but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." <sup>39</sup> Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

### **The Misguided Charge**

**(v. 31-33)**

It gets tense. They are moving from hurling words to looking for stones. Jesus' calm just boggles the mind. Look at how He moves the question now to His works. "For which of the many miracles and works and signs are you going to stone me?" They quiver in anger and exasperation. "We are going to stone you for what you do but for the blasphemy of your claim to be God." Not for His works but for His words.

See, they would be right in stoning Him if His claim were false. If He were merely a man and claimed to be God, then under their religious law, he should be put to death. But that is the point. Jesus' claim is not false. It is true. He is God.

**The Unanswerable Question****(v. 34-36)**

Jesus responds to them by quoting Psalm 82:6. Listen to the stanza before and after what He quotes – it is stunning how He is saying so much more than it appears at first.

<sup>5</sup> They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

<sup>6</sup> I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; <sup>7</sup> nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.”

<sup>8</sup> Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

If they know the text around this, then Jesus is letting the silence say as much as His satire says.

If these dying men can be addressed as gods, then how much more should He, the eternal sent one from God be called the Son of God? Did God blaspheme when He called these men gods? No, God is speaking satirically. These small men, who are doomed to die, think themselves to be so much. Yet, here is the humble shepherd, the fulfillment of all the Old Testament, who is truly the Son of God. It is no blasphemy to say so.

Without saying it directly Jesus invokes the condemnation of verse 5. These Jews with hatred in their hearts and stones in their hands and the Law in the mouths are benighted. They “have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness.” He invokes the call of verse 8. God will arise and judge these Jews for He will inherit all the people groups.

**The Unchanging Claim****(v. 37-39)**

Jesus reasserts His unchanging claim. He does so because it is true. It is what they must believe. They can believe His words and they can believe His works. But at the end of the day, to believe one requires that you believe the other. To believe because of Jesus’ miracles and powerful works require that you believe that He is God; that He is in the Father and the Father in Him.

That phrase is loaded with theological content with the heart of it being Jesus’ claim to be God. So here is the question in front of you today, “Do you believe what Jesus said about Himself?” Do you believe that Jesus is God, the Son of God and the fulfillment of all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament? You are not allowed to simply say, “He was a good man, a good teacher, a great prophet, an amazing miracle worker.” As C.S Lewis has pointed out, He did not leave that as open option. He made a clear claim to being God. So, He is either a liar, a lunatic or He is Lord.

That Jesus is Lord, the divine Son of God and fulfiller of the Old Testament is what those who are of His flock believe. Do you?

## The Proof in those who do Believe

(v. 40-42)

So Jesus moves out and having spoken, His flock hear His voice and follow Him.

<sup>40</sup> He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. <sup>41</sup> And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." <sup>42</sup> And many believed in him there.

### They Follow Him

We are now come full circle. We back to where Jesus' ministry began. It was there He was baptized and publicly acknowledged by the Father. Many followed and came to Him there. Don't miss what John is doing here. In contrast to many others who have professed belief, here we have true believers. "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." These people follow Jesus.

### They Understand the Issue

John did not do signs. He did not have to attest to who he was. Yet, Jesus does signs. He does attest to what He says. In John 2 and with Nicodemus we were shown people who believed in Jesus because of the signs He did. We found them not to be true believers. This has happened over and over again in the book of John.

They what John said is true even if he did no signs. In other words, they simply believe the witness about Jesus. I wonder if this one of the places where John the Apostle is merging himself with John the Baptist. He is in essence asking anyone reading or hearing this book, "Do you believe what the John's are saying even if there are no miraculous works?" Do you believe the Bible's words?

### They Believe in a Saving Way

Simple statement, "Many believed in Him there." Here are true believers. They have heard Jesus' voice. They are known by Jesus. They have followed Him here. They have received eternal life. They are the Father's gift to the Son. They cannot be taken away. They will never perish. They believe His words.

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## Reflect and Respond

What is the answer to the title of the message this morning? Why don't some people believe? Because they are not of Jesus' flock. Do we know who is not in Jesus' flock? Yes, they die in unbelief. Do we know who is in Jesus' flock? Yes, they die in belief. This is quite simply what Jesus is saying.

Some of you are thinking, "What about man's responsibility? Haven't you just removed the choice to believe and therefore man's responsibility?" Well this text does not answer that question except through a simple observation. Do you think that the men, the Jews, not some unnamed group, but real men with names and families, with killing stones in their hands and religious hatred in their hearts, are they responsible? Does Jesus treat the very people He is confronting as being responsible and condemned? Clearly, Jesus does.

But don't deflect from the central issue: are you of those who believe? That is what matters. That is why this book was written, this text given and this sermon preached. *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."* [John 3:18].

May God grant that His sheep will hear His voice and follow Him. May you believe, today.