

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Third Sunday after Easter, May 15, 2011**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 426, 415:3, 648, 368, 523:7.

Lessons: Psalm 23, 1 Peter 1:1-9,  
John 10:1-18.

Sermon Text: John 10:22-30.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltreter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This Sunday in the church year is sometimes called "Good Shepherd Sunday". Jesus Christ is your Good Shepherd. Your shepherd looks after you and takes care of you because he is true God.

If any person living today were to claim to be true God, we should immediately recognize him as a false Christ, as an impostor. Christ makes it clear that he will come on the last day to judge the living and the dead and will appear in the heavens. We read in Matthew 25:31-32 *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."*

Before Jesus comes, he preserves and keeps his sheep safe, that is, all who believe in him. Because Jesus and the Father are one, one God, Jesus can plainly say that he is the shepherd of the sheep. He is the shepherd of HIS sheep. Today, we hear again about the comfort of being Jesus' sheep.

**JESUS, TRUE GOD, IS A GOOD SHEPHERD**

1. **Jesus and the Father in heaven are one God.**
2. **Many do not believe because they are not Jesus' sheep.**
3. **The comfort of being Jesus' sheep.**

When Jesus was in the temple area in Jerusalem, the Jews came up around him and wanted to know immediately who he really was. They demanded to know *"How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."* They demanded a plain, clear statement. But they had not been paying attention to everything Jesus had said, or they just wanted him to publicly tell everyone within hearing so that they would have a reason to publicly accuse him of blaspheming God so they could take care of it right then and there. In fact, in the words immediately after our sermon text, we read *"Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?'"* John 10:31-32

In our text Jesus plainly tells them that he and his Father in heaven are one. One thing that set Israel, God's chosen people, the descendants of Abraham separate from all the tribes of the world is what is called monotheism, the idea of one god, not 'many gods'. Many unbelieving people even today worship a multitude of gods. The idea of monotheism is made especially clear by God immediately after he gives what we call the ten commandments through Moses: *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* Deuteronomy 6:4-5

But we know from God's Holy Word that this one God is three persons, as we learn from Matthew 28:18-20: *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"*

Is this idea of three persons in the one true God only a New Testament idea? No, for we first read about the three persons of the one true God in Genesis 1:1-3: ***"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."*** Scripture speaks further of God the Father as the Creator. Think of the First Article of the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds. And of course, we recognize the ***"Spirit of God"*** as the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost. At first reading, it may be difficult to identify the Son, Jesus Christ in this verse, until we put John 1 together with Genesis 1. ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."*** John 1:1-5 And if this weren't plain enough, we read in John 1:14: ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."***

Today in our sermon text, Jesus reminded the Jews of the fact that He had given them the truth concerning himself, that not only his words, but also his actions, his miracles, bore testimony of Him. All these things should have convinced them long before this that He was the Christ, the anointed of God, the Messiah. Many others of the Jews had come to believe in him by the work of the Holy Spirit, including his closest disciples. But for those who on this day demanded this of him, it was their unbelief that stood in their way, and this unbelief, in turn, proved that they did not belong to his sheep. Their unbelief in the face of such overwhelming testimony was their own fault. For Jesus tells us of his sheep, ***"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."***

Jesus' answer to those who challenged him is plain: ***"Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.'"*** However, many do not believe because they are not Jesus' sheep. Sad to say, those Jews didn't really want to know the truth. What Jesus had already told them, what he had done, and the way he had lived in his Father's name were clear evidence that he was the Christ. But they did not believe.

Similarly today, many people claim to want to know exactly who Jesus was, yet they ignore his own words and ways: ***"but you do not believe because you are not my sheep."*** Those who are not among God's chosen flock turn deaf ears and blinded eyes to Jesus. It is not our calling to judge who believes and who does not believe. It is part of our calling to join in fellowship with those who confess, teach, and claim to believe all that we confess, teach, and confess to believe. We are to judge when someone is plainly or manifestly an unbeliever, and we are to judge when someone is plainly or manifestly impenitent, and such people are not to be admitted to the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, although they are welcome to come and hear the Word of God, which is the only thing that can change hearts.

***"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."*** In contrast to the unbelieving Jews, Jesus' sheep hear his voice. He knows them and they follow him, just as he illustrated earlier in this chapter, as you heard in our Gospel lesson. ***"When [the true, good, shepherd] has brought out all his own [sheep], he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice."*** John 10:4

The relationship between Jesus and his followers is intimate, personal. They know his voice. They listen to him. And because he is the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the relationship is eternal. He gives his sheep eternal life. They will not perish forever. No one will snatch them out of his hand. Who else can offer that promise? No human. Nor can Satan, although he might try to deceive us into thinking that he can. What words of comfort these are for Christians! We are secure forever with Christ Jesus. In him we believe and live. Our security is locked up with the Father in heaven. No one can take us from Jesus' hands because that would mean seizing us from God the Father's hands. And no one can do that. What is true of the Son also is true of the Father.

What a marvelous comfort it is to be Jesus sheep! With his believers Jesus has entered into a close communion, an intimate relationship. He even gives them his body and his blood to eat and to drink in the Lord's Supper. They become one with him, and he with them. He responds to their every need. And above all, He is God, the Savior, the Christ, the Messiah who has saved them. As the Savior and powerful God, he gives to them the everlasting life which He has earned for them by his atoning sacrifice. No enemy in the world or elsewhere can steal them, can tear them away from Christ by any force. He has them firmly by the hand, He holds them safely in his hand, and therefore they shall never be lost.

One Christian wrote that The Lord here gives us a guarantee against ourselves, against our own weakness and doubt. There are so many factors which tend to stifle and choke faith in our hearts, to make us doubt the sincerity of God's promises toward us, but this word of Christ must overcome all doubt. Unless believers maliciously and willfully reject their Savior and trample upon the salvation earned for them, there can be no doubt of his holding them in his hand. If we but trust in his loving mercy and kindness, nothing shall harm us or tear us away from his side. And this fact He emphasizes still more strongly by stating that the believers are given to Him by his Father, who is greater and mightier than all. He states that no enemy, no one, will tear them out of his Father's hands. God has given these sheep, these believers, to his Son, in order that they should be saved, and so they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, as you heard in our Epistle lesson. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ***"has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*** 1 Peter 1:3

Jesus' words were clear. He is from God. He is the Son of God, He is God. He is the Christ. ***"I and the Father are one."*** It is not simply that he and the Father thought alike or had a harmonious relationship or treated his sheep alike. Jesus was speaking of being one essence with the Father, of being God. And that's exactly how the Jews understood him. Jesus and his Father are one. There are two different persons, but only one essence. The will of the Son will never oppose the will of the Father. The Son is God just like the Father, and is true God in the same degree as the Father. And from this it follows that the Father and the Son work together in this great work of carrying out God's eternal plan of saving mankind. They work together in keeping the believers safe until the end.

Although the Jews who did not believe seek to seize him and stone him to death, he escapes. ***"Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp."*** John 10:39 This is the second time they tried to stone him to death without a legal trial. But his time to redeem mankind had not yet come.

He came once to redeem mankind. He will come again in the clouds on the last day to judge the living and the dead, and he will take all his sheep with him. We read in Matthew 25:33-34: ***"He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"*** We who are Jesus' sheep and lambs, can rejoice with the hymn writer:

1. I am Jesus' little lamb,  
Ever glad at heart I am;  
For my Shepherd gently guides me,  
Knows my need, and well provides me,  
Loves me every day the same,  
Even calls me by my name.

3. Who so happy as I am,  
Even now the Shepherd's lamb?  
And when my short life is ended,  
By His angel host attended,  
He shall fold me to His breast,  
There within His arms to rest.  
Amen

(The Lutheran Hymnal 648:1 & 3)