

**The Sheep Hear His Voice ... And Follow**  
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC  
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.  
June 2, 2024

Text: Psalm 23, John 10:22-30

Purpose: To assure us of our relationship with the Lord, no matter what happens in life. Gods got us in the palm of His hands and NO ONE will be able to snatch us away. We are eternally secure in His care.

I have been watching the news this week and it appears there is a lot of unrest in the world. The ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. The shaking of Europe with the war between the Soviet Union and the Ukraine. There has been an influx of undocumented immigrants which has had several terrorists hiding among them. The collapse of Haiti, the suspicious death of the Iranian president, the ongoing mudslinging between our two primary political parties are occupying the news reports. The economic instability that is coming for our nation due to inflation and rampant national debt accumulation has yet to be seen fully. We read of murder, robbery, drug dealers, and wrong done daily – right here in our own community. The tragic death of another young teenager here in Kinston recently only highlight our need for the Lord to be with us and walk with us daily.



- If there ever was a time, we needed You before, Lord, we need You now.
- If there ever was a trial, I couldn't handle on my own, that's how this feels somehow.
- If there ever was a child who was crying out for help, that's what this songs about.
- If I've ever had a friend who's always kept His Word, Lord, I know it's You
- 'Cause there's never been a time that You've left me all alone or been untrue.
- 'Cause if I know anything, it's that You will meet my need, just like You always do
- So, I'm leaning on Your Love and counting on Your grace, just to see me through



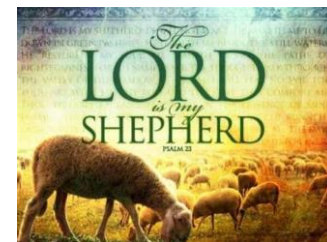
This song, *If There Was Ever a Time*, by the Crabb Family, helps us see how much we need to draw closer to the Lord during times of crisis. But our world is seeking so many other sources besides the Lord to help them cope and move forward.



We have just completed the sermon series on the Seven Churches of Revelation. I hope you caught one of the repeating themes mentioned at the conclusion of each letter to the

churches. *“He who has an ear to hear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* This theme continues throughout Jesus’ teaching and preaching – and is even highlighted in today’s sermon.

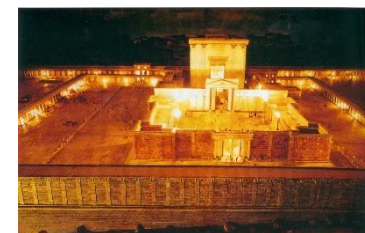
Over the past few weeks, I have been asked to include Psalm 23 in several funerals. For generations, people have found great comfort knowing the Lord is my Shepherd. I was also reminded how Jesus said in John 10:22-30 that He is the Good Shepherd. In thinking about these two passages of scripture I thought about naming the sermon *“The Eternal Security of the Believer”* OR *“The Keeping Power of the Shepherd”* OR *“No One Snatches Us Away.”* But the one I settled on was: *“The Sheep Hear His Voice ... and Follow”*



In John 10:22-30 we read how Jesus is comparing himself to a Shepherd and those that follow him know the voice of the shepherd and follow Him. This comparison came

about as Jesus entered into Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication.

This particular celebration came during the winter months. Just a few months prior to that the people gathered and celebrated the Feast of Lights. According to Wieselers calculations the Feast of Lights would have occurred during Jesus’ day on October 19<sup>th</sup> with the Feast of Dedication occurring on December 20<sup>th</sup>. The Feast of Dedication was the celebration of the re-consecration of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus after it had been desecrated by the cruel Roman Emperor, Antiochus Epiphanies.



Apparently, Jesus had not been near Jerusalem preaching or teaching for several months. As He entered the Temple Mount, walking along Solomon's porch, probably trying to



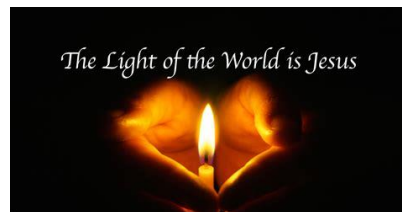
stay out of the winter's rain and weather, he was confronted by a group of religious leaders that were tired of what they perceived as Jesus' word games and vague answers.

Verse 24 says, *"Then the Jews surrounded Him."* They demanded an answer – a plain answer – a clear answer. You would think they were searching for the truth, but they were not. They only wanted fodder for their cannon to shoot back at Jesus. I have found that people that demand the truth, rarely want the truth – they want justification for what they had already predetermined.

To put it in a more modern vocabulary, they asked Jesus, *"How long will you keep us in suspense? Tell us clearly – we want to hear it from your lips!"*

I am sure they had heard all of Jesus' parables and left baffled. I am sure they saw all of the miracles that Jesus had performed. I am sure they had done a thorough background check to determine if His family tree was such that it fit all of the prophecies of the Old Testament. But they didn't have a clear understanding.

During the Festival of Lights, Jesus declared He was *"the light of the world."*



Why would Jesus declare this during the Feast of Dedication? If you remember, Jesus went into the Temple area and cleared it out of money changers. Could that be part of making the Temple pure and rededicating it and making it ready for worship? This Feast of Dedication was a celebration of freedom. Could another word Jesus said point to this Feast? *"If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed."*

So Jesus answered them and said, *"I told you, and you do not believe."*

On several occasions Jesus revealed Himself to others declaring that He was the Messiah. He told the woman at the well in Samaria. He told the blind man. He told Peter and the Apostles. In many other ways He declared Himself to those that had ears to listen and eyes to see. Those Jews pressing in on Jesus there on the Temple Mount did not believe because they chose not to believe.

### Seven Signs of Jesus

Jesus Turns Water into Wine	John 2:1-11
Jesus Heals the Official's Son	John 4:43-54
Jesus Makes the Lame Walk	John 5:1-15
Jesus Feeds the Multitudes	John 6:1-15
Jesus Walks on Water	John 6:16-24
Jesus gives sight to the Blind	John 9:1-38
Jesus raises Lazarus from the Dead	John 11:1-44

Jesus continued to point out that if they did not believe the words He said, at least believe because of all the miracles done in their presence. In the Book of John there were seven key sign miracles presented and yet they refused to believe.

1. Jesus turned the water into wine. (2:1-11)
2. Jesus healed an official's son. (4:43-54).
3. He healed a lame man at the Pool of Bethesda. (5:1-9)
4. Jesus fed 5000 people with five small loaves of bread and two fish (6:1-5)

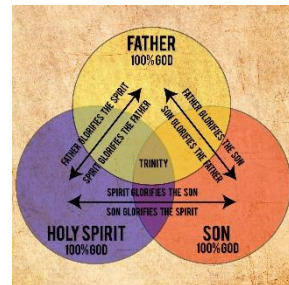


5. Jesus walked on water. (6:16-25)
6. He healed the man born blind (9:1-41)
7. And He even brought a dead man (Lazarus) back to life (11:1-44)

This was not a list of all of Jesus' miracles, but they were signs given in the Book of John all pointing to the power of Jesus over all areas of life. Yet those gathered there did not believe.

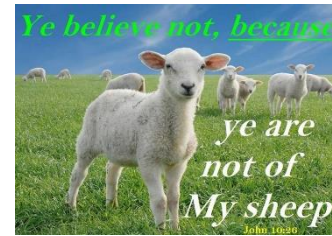
We may be tempted to say to ourselves, "If I were there and saw all that, I would believe." Once you decide not to believe, it doesn't matter what you see or hear, your heart will not be open to respond. Several saw Lazarus raised from the dead and still didn't believe!

Jesus went a little further and said, "*The works I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.*" For those Jews that rejected Jesus as the Messiah, this only infuriated them. How could this man compare Himself to doing the work of God?



The heart of the matter was they rejected Jesus because they never yielded their heart and life to the call of the Master. They rejected Jesus because they chose to do that. Because they rejected Jesus, they did not have the capacity nor understanding to understand who Jesus was or what Jesus was saying and doing.

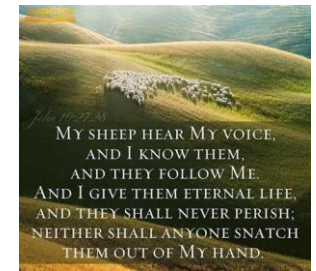
Jesus goes on in verse 26 and says, "*But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I have said to you.*"



Jesus hits the nail on the head – they were not believers – because they did not have the spiritual ears to hear or spiritual eyes to see what was standing right in front of them. Because they were not of the fold of

God, they would not believe, nor could they follow Jesus. Only those that listen to the voice of the Shepherd will follow the Shepherd. Only those that pause long enough to hear the Shepherds voice and respond by faith – only those will be saved.

The crux of this passage of scripture is found in verses 27 to 30. Like many passages of scripture, this passage provides symmetry as it conveys great spiritual truths. This passage of scripture is even richer when you see how carefully the thoughts are organized.



The first set of triplets give us a **description of the sheep.**<sup>1</sup>

1. *My sheep hear My voice* – This lets us know His sheep are receptive and listening. Their heart and mind are open to listen and obey what Jesus is teaching them.
2. *I know them* – This tells us of the Lord's response when faith is put into practice. The Lord knows us and knows our circumstances. Jesus identifies with us in our troubled lives and troubled world.
3. *And they follow Me* – We see His sheep are involved in active obedience. If we truly are the sheep of His pasture, we will be following as He leads.

The second set of triplets gives us a **description of the Shepherd.**

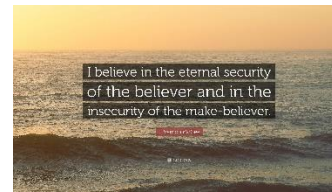
1. *I give them eternal life* – We have freedom from eternal separation from God. That is the reward of the believer. We have healing for our sin sick soul. We have the reward of forgiveness and eternity with God.
2. *They shall not perish forever* – The sheep may die physically, but not eternally. All of us here, will eventually die physically (unless the Lord returns first). We have a home eternally prepared for us, not made of this world. It is there we will live eternally. Jesus has prepared a place for us. (John 14:1-6)
3. Then there is the last promise – *No one* (not man nor devil, not wolf or hireling) *shall pluck them out of my hand.* – This is the assurance of eternal security. God himself holds us in His hands. He is the one that offers salvation and He is the one that keeps it.



There is another way this passage of scripture can be rearranged pointing us to the **close relationship between the sheep and the Shepherd.** In many ways this arrangement is what the Lord was trying to convey to the Jews gathered there on the Temple Mount.

1. *My sheep hear my voice .... And I know them.*  
– This illustrates and point to *mutual recognition* between the sheep and the Shepherd. The implication is that there are many who do not hear his voice and do not follow Him. They may have ears but do not hear. They may have eyes to see, but do not see. He who has ears to hear, and eyes to see, comprehend who the Shephard is and respond to Him.

2. *They follow me .... And I give them eternal life*  
– This points to the give and take between the sheep and the Shepherd – He leads – We follow – He gives everlasting life. Those that do not follow will not receive eternal life.
3. *They shall not perish forever ... And no one shall pluck them out of my hand.*  
This gives us the reassurance of Jesus’ authority and His pledge of forgiveness and our justification through Jesus Christ. Our salvation comes from the hand of Jesus Christ – based upon the authority given to Him by the Father. The hand of God is behind the hand of Jesus – fully able to offer pardon as well as eternal security in Jesus Christ.



Of all the promises made to the children of God relating to our salvation, the most precious one is related to the fact that those who are saved, are saved forever. J. Vernon McGee once said, “I believe in the eternal security of the believer and in the insecurity of the make-believer.”

Theologically, this refers to the doctrine of eternal security for the believer. I am aware that our Free Will Baptist brothers and sisters believe based upon a few scriptures that they may lose their salvation. They believe that one day they can be saved and the next day they can be lost.

We don’t need to live our lives in a constant state of fear that we may die and end up in hell because of one sin, one word, or one action. If you have placed your faith in Christ, then you are saved. If you are genuinely saved, you will live in such a way that it honors the Lord. You will not take

this salvation lightly and treat it like a license to sin and satisfy the lusts of the flesh. God forbid! We will seek to please the Lord with our life and actions.



There are other scriptures that remind us of our eternal security in Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 says, *“that whosoever believeth in Jesus SHALL be saved.”*

John 5:24 says, *“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me HAS everlasting life, and SHALL NOT come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*

John 6:47 says, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me HAS everlasting life.”*

John 10:28 says, *“And I give to them eternal life, and they shall NEVER perish; neither shall ANYONE snatch them out of My hand.”*

When we place our lives in the hand of Jesus Christ – we are actually placing our lives into the hands of God. God is the one that created us and is the one that can sustain us. He has the power to keep us eternally.



Jesus’ great declaration answers the Jews question. Jesus said, *“I and the Father are one.”* He even goes further than that in verse 36 and says, *“I am the Son of God.”* You cannot get any plainer than that.

Because the Jews that came to question Jesus were not believers, they took up stone again, to kill Jesus. Apparently this was not the first time they tried to eliminate Jesus.

Let me remind you again ...

- Those that love the Lord, love the things of God.
- Those that love the Lord, love to hear the teaching of God’s word.
- Those that love the Lord, hear His voice, and follow Him. Jesus said, on more than one occasion, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”*
- Our outward obedience is exhibited by following.



## THE VOICE OF THE SHEPHERD<sup>2</sup>



There once was a shepherd that lived in the Scottish Highlands. This shepherd had a daughter and he would take her with him when he went out on the moors to take care of the sheep. The thing that the little girl liked best was to hear the call of the shepherd. His voice sounded so free and beautiful as it carried across the valleys of the moors.

As the years passed the little girl became a beautiful young woman and went off to one of Scotland's great cities--Edinburgh or Glasgow. It was there that she was determined to build a life. On her arrival, she would write back home to her parents every week. But as life began to





take her by the hand, her letters soon dropped off in their frequency and soon there were none.

Rumors begin to filter back home to the shepherd and his wife that their daughter had started hanging out with some unsavory characters and they were having a very negative influence on her life. One day one of the boys from back home ran into her in the city streets and she acted as if she did not even know him. When the old shepherd heard this, he gathered a few things together and dressed in his rough shepherd's clothes went to the city to find his daughter.

For days on end he looked for her. He looked everywhere; the slum, the rows of houses, the markets, the taverns, and everywhere in between to no avail. So after all of this searching he became very discouraged with the thought that he had lost his daughter to the evil city.



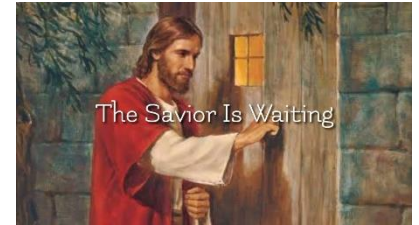
As he started the long trek back home, just as he was on the outskirts of the city, he remembered that his daughter had always loved to hear the voice of the shepherd calling out to the sheep.

So he turned around and, on this quest, motivated by his sorrow and his love, he began to stalk the streets. His voice rang out the shepherds call. The citizens of the city all looked at him as if he had lost his wits. It wasn't too long as he walked the streets of one of the degraded neighborhoods that inside of one of those houses, his daughter sitting among the vermin who had led her astray, heard his voice. With great astonishment on her face, she heard that call of the voice of the shepherd, the voice of her father calling out to her. She leaped up and rushed out to the street and ran

into the arms of that old shepherd, her father. It was then that he took her back home to the highlands of Scotland and brought her back to God and to decency and modesty.

What a moving example of what happens to those who can hear the voice of a shepherd.

I don't know where you are in your walk with the Lord. I want you to hear the words to this great hymn once again ...



The Savior is waiting to enter your heart,  
Why don't you let Him come in?  
There's nothing in this world to keep you apart,  
What is your answer today?  
Time after time, He has waited before,  
And now He is waiting again.  
To see if you are willing to open the door,  
Oh, how He wants to come in.

If you'll take one step towards the Savior my friend,  
You'll find arms open wide.  
Receive Him, and all of your darkness will end,  
Within your heart He'll abide.  
Time after time, He has waited before,  
And now He is waiting again.  
To see if you are willing to open the door,  
Oh, how He wants to come in.<sup>3</sup>

The decision is yours ... will you respond to the call of the Lord and come?

**LET US PRAY**

## **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Outline from the Pulpit Commentary, John X:22-30, page 48-50

<sup>2</sup>(From a sermon by Philip Harrelson, The Voice of the Shepherd, 8/6/2010)

– Accessed on SermonCentral.com April 17, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Hymn, The Savior is Waiting, by Ralph Carmichael, 1991 Baptist Hymnal, No. 321