

Can't Be Pried from Jesus

John 10:22-30

The Fourth Sunday of Easter, April 17, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

You are the sheep of Jesus.

I can tell that you are the sheep of Jesus because you listen to His voice.

You do not dismiss the things that Jesus says. Even when Jesus says something that you do not like, you do not dismiss it. Even when Jesus says something with which You disagree, You do not dismiss it. You hearken to Jesus. You listen to Jesus.

When the lector says, "This is the Word of the Lord," you still say, "Thanks be to God," even when the reading had something in it that you did not like or with which you disagreed. You still acknowledged that it came from God. You still bow before the Word of God knowing that what He says is more important than what you say.

You still stand for the Holy Gospel readings. You still acclaim, "Glory to You, O Lord," and then after the reading, "Praise to You, O Christ." You sing these acclamations even when the Gospel of the Lord condemned you, even when Jesus pointed out your sins.

You honor the Word of the Lord. You honor it in Your Divine Service and many of you honor it in your homes by reading it to your children and with your spouses.

You listen to Jesus. You hearken to what Jesus has to say. You are better than the Jews in the temple at Jerusalem who gathered around Jesus and asked Him to tell them if He were the Christ. He had already told them, but they had not listened.

Jesus had told them that He was the Christ in the signs that He performed. The miracles of Jesus are not merely actions that He took that are supernatural. The miracles of Jesus tell us about Him and His identity. The miracles of Jesus tell us that He is the Christ.

In John's Gospel Jesus turned water into wine. He healed the son of an official. He fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. He walked on the water. He healed a paralyzed man in the temple. He gave sight to a blind man. These are His miraculous signs by which He had communicated to the Jews that He is the Christ. If they had read their own Scriptures and had believed in them, they would have believed in Him. The signs were all there. But they did not believe in Him. Therefore they did not believe His signs. They tried to come up with natural explanations for the miracles that He had performed. They had tried to claim that the man born blind was faking or that the man who could see was not the same man as the man who was blind. They tried their natural explanations which were lame because everyone was there to testify to the healing of the blind man. But they did not believe in Jesus which means that they did not believe their own Scriptures. Jesus had told them that He was the Christ in the signs that He performed, but they paid no attention. They did not listen.

But you have listened. You believe that Jesus performed those miracles. You do not dismiss them or try to come up with natural explanations for them. You believe the Old Testament is the Word of God. You believe these things, therefore You believe that Jesus is Christ.

You continue to confess that you are eating the body and drinking the blood of Jesus when you come to the Sacrament of the Altar. If that is your confession then you believe the words of Jesus when He says, "This is My body," and, "This cup is the New Testament in My blood." If you believe those words then you believe that Jesus is supernatural for only a supernatural Jesus could put His body and His blood in multiple places at the same time on Sunday morning and throughout time.

You believe the miracles and because you believe the miracles you believe that Jesus is the Christ. You listen not only to His words, but also to His actions. You are His sheep.

Because you are the sheep of Jesus, Jesus knows you. He knows you personally. He knows you intimately. He knows everything that there is to know about you. He knows more about you than you know about you. He knows about the things that try to pry you away from Him.

He knows about your sins. He knows about the sins that bother you. He knows about the sin or sins that you have never told anyone else. He knows your secrets. He knows that you would really like to talk to someone about it, but you have not yet done so.

He knows about the guilt that you feel because of your sins. He knows that you have regret. He knows that you have regret even when you tell other people that you are fine even when you are not. He knows that you are hoping that no one else will find out what you have done or what you are doing.

He knows that this divides your life. It divides your life into the life that you have when you are sinning and the life that you have when you are with other people. Or it divides you between the life that you have with the people with which you sin and the life that you have with everyone else.

He knows about these things. You are His sheep. He knows His sheep. And in spite of your sins, He gives you eternal life.

Because you are the sheep of Jesus, He knows your shame.

He knows about the sins that you have committed of which other people are aware. He is aware of what they think about you because you have committed the sin or sins of which they are aware. He is aware of the loss of joy and relationship that you have as a result of the sins that you have committed. He is aware of your public embarrassment regarding your sins. He is aware that there are some people that you have quit talking to because you are embarrassed of what you have done to them or to people that they love. He is aware that there are some places that you no longer go because of the sins that you have committed against the people who live there. He knows that there are some homes in which you are no longer welcome.

He knows about how you feel when you realize that other people are talking about the things that you have done. He knows how you feel when other people have used your sins against you in order to manipulate you into doing what they wanted you to do. He knows that you wish that you had never done what you did. He knows that if you could rewind the clock that you would have done things differently. He knows about your shame.

You are still His sheep. You will not perish in the age to come. You may perish in this age, but you will not perish in the age to come.

Because you are the sheep of Jesus, He knows your grief.

He knows the people that you have lost. He knows about the graves that you visit. He knows about all of the little things of your daily life that are no longer there because the one you loved is dead. He knows how you wish that they were still alive. He knows how you wish that you were living your life with them.

One widower once reported that he missed his wife teasing him about how stupid he was. Of course, there were times when she was living when he was insulted by this and it hurt his feelings, but once she was dead there was no longer any one there to tease him about the lame things that he did and he missed that. One widow reported finding things in the newspaper that she wanted to share with her husband, but he was no longer there to share those things.

The Lord knows your loss. He knows about the sins that went unresolved between you and the person that you loved who is now dead. The Lord knows about the conversations that you wish you would have had, but did not have. He knows about the things that you wish you would have done, but did not do. He knows about the things that you wish you had not done, but did do and now they are dead and how does one apologize to them now? How can the dead grant forgiveness? We cannot hear them.

Whatever your specific grief may be, the Lord knows your grief. He is your shepherd. He forgives you of your sins and no one can snatch you out of His hand.

Jesus knows your death.

Jesus does not merely know the hour of your death. Jesus does not merely know the circumstances of your death. In other words He knows what it is that is going to kill you, disease or an accident or whatever. Jesus knows whether or not it is next year or many years away. Jesus knows your death.

Jesus does not merely know your death, He knows what your thinking is in regards to your death. He knows your fears. He knows that you fear death. Some people are very open about their fears regarding their death. They are upset that they have to die so soon. They are upset that they have not died yet. They are upset that everything that they are is coming to an end. They are upset that they are leaving their families behind. As one man who was dying of cancer put it regarding his ten year old granddaughter who was quite the pistol, "I just wanted to see her grow up."

Jesus knows that you are afraid of it. It is a great unknown. Our Lord has given us the necessary details regarding our death so that we know the important stuff. We know that once we die our life or soul will be with Him. We know that when He returns again in glory He will raise the dead thus returning our life or our souls to our bodies. We know that thence eternal life will commence in its consummation even as we have it now in promise.

But there are details that we would like to know. Our desire for details in spite of the fact that the Lord has told us that death will not harm us because He will raise us indicates that we have fears about death in spite of the fact that we believe that Jesus will take care of us. We fear what kind of pain and suffering may lead to our death. We fear how much advance warning we will have. Most of us seem not to want too much advance warning so that we do not have to wait for it to come knowing that it is coming. That is odd when you think about it because we know that our death is coming now. What would be any different with a specific medical diagnosis? You would have died then anyway with or without the diagnosis. Medicine and surgery are God's blessings that put off death and grant life, but in the end you are still going to need the One who rose from the dead to raise you from the dead.

Jesus knows your fears. He also knows that Satan will use your fear of death against you. He knows that the closer you get to death the more and more Satan will put your worst sins in your mind and memory and make you dwell on them. He will make you wonder whether or not God really is merciful whether or not He really will forgive the likes of you. And unless you talk about your sins and confess them that fear will consume you. Satan is trying to pry you away from Jesus.

But Jesus is risen from the dead. No one can snatch you out of His hand. No one can push you beyond His power. No one can take you beyond His mercy.

You see this is what sin and guilt and shame and grief or trying to do. They are trying to snatch you out of the hand of Jesus. They are trying to pry you away from Jesus. They are trying to drive a wedge between you and your Lord such that you quit listening to His words, such that you quit paying

attention to His signs. Guilt and shame and grief are things that Satan attempts to use against us. Guilt and shame and grief are also things that Jesus uses to drive you to Him.

Satan does not want you to listen to Jesus. He is the thief who comes to kill and to destroy. He wants to scatter the flock of Jesus. He knows that if you hearken to the words of Jesus that the words of Jesus will not return to Him vain. He knows that if you listen to Jesus you will wind up believing in Jesus. When you trust in Jesus, He gives you eternal life and you will never perish.

Satan wants you to feel so bad and so ashamed and so grief stricken that you become convinced that your shepherd has left you. But He has not left you. You are His sheep. We covered that before. He is therefore your shepherd. Nothing can snatch you out of the hand of Jesus.

We talked about this last Sunday. Jesus is the Lord of glory. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the Lord of the living and of the dead. He is the Lord over every principality, power, and authority in heaven and on earth. When He says that nothing can snatch you out of His hand He means that NOTHING can snatch you out of His hand. Your grief, your shame, your sins, your guilt, none of that can snatch you out of the hand of Jesus. He remains your good shepherd and He gives you eternal life. You shall not perish in the age to come.

The Father who gave us to Jesus is greater than all. No one can snatch us out of the hand of the Father. Jesus and the Father are one.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.