

WHAT WE BELIEVE – God Gathers, Protects, & Preserves **John 10**

Friday was Halloween... We probably encountered many people dressed up as someone they were not... some with masks on... Scary ones at that... How did we know whether a person we didn't recognize was safe or not?

- We knew their voice!
- We considered their actions!
- We observed where they were going, and who was following!

In Jesus' day, many people did not know Jesus' true identity... Was he a prophet of God or possessed by a demon? Was he the Messiah or the devil? Should they follow him or stone him?

In John 10, Jesus uses the analogy of sheep & a shepherd to reveal his true identity. And he uses the same 3 criteria to establish His credibility!

Jesus said that there are thieves & robbers... and then there is the shepherd! But how can you tell the difference? One enters the sheepfold by the door and the others try to climb in another way! Trick or Treating...

Jesus was not trying to deceive, or trick people into believing He was someone/something He wasn't (this was not Halloween)... The things he taught, the things he did, his followers... they all spoke for themselves!

He goes on to say that the gatekeeper, God Himself, opens the sheep pen to the one who meets the criteria of being the one true shepherd of the sheep!

Jesus didn't use trickery or coercion; He simply called & His sheep heard His voice! Jesus didn't use force to drive His sheep in or out, He went before them & led them! The sheep recognized His voice and they followed Him!

Is that true of us today? How well do we recognize the voice of Jesus? How quickly do we respond to His voice? Is He "our" shepherd... and do we know Him well enough that we immediately follow Him wherever He leads us?

Many who heard Jesus speak these words on that day were still confused & did not know His true identity (vs. 6)... so Jesus tweaks the analogy a bit!

Vs. 7-10 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep... If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture... I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Jesus is saying here that He is the only way to God... Agree/Disagree?
Jesus is the only way to have a place in God's fold... Agree/Disagree?
Jesus is the only way to be saved... be safe... be satisfied... Agree/Disagree?

We often think that Jesus is a door that only swings one way... But His words here in John 10 tell us differently. He is more than just the way in... This shepherd, and His sheep, have places to go and things to do!

But isn't it dangerous outside the pen? It's dangerous inside too! There are dangers all around, but the Good Shepherd protects His sheep!

But isn't entering the fold the goal... No, it's only the beginning! There are more sheep to be brought in... More sheep that need to encounter the Shepherd!

How are we, as sheep already in the fold, helping or hindering this process? How effective can a shepherd be in bringing in new sheep, if he is stuck babysitting the sheep that are already in the pen?

Yes, He will leave the 99 to go and find that one lost sheep, but there are many lost sheep that don't know they are lost and they need found... How can we not only not be a hindrance, but actually join in with this work?

There is good pasture (good things) to be discovered as we follow in the footsteps of the Shepherd & join with Him in His redemptive work! Our job is not to be sheep pen dwellers, but to be active herdsman with the Shepherd!

I don't know if sheep can speak to each other, but I know humans can, so let's speak the name of Jesus & introduce others to the "Good Shepherd" so that they might hear His voice when He calls and respond to Him as well!

Let's better familiarize ourselves with the voice of the Shepherd so that our response to Him might set an example for other sheep to follow!

Let's not be problematic sheep, but listen and obey His voice! He laid down His life for us... how can we not but respond to Him with obedience!

Let's rest in the gospel truth that our God/Good Shepherd gathers, protects & preserves for Himself sheep for all of eternity!

GOD GATHERS, PROTECTS, & PRESERVES... We believe God is building His Church, from the dawn of creation until the end of time. This Church is more than a building, it is people united in true faith. We rejoice that in Christ we are among those whom God Himself gathers, protects, and preserves unto eternal life! (Ephesians 1:3-14, John 10:27-28, 1 Peter 1:3-5)

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