

John 10:19-42

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[0:00] Amen. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 10. Our text for today is John chapter 10 verses 19 through 42. We will finish out the chapter today.

I'll tell you though, and I already intended to keep my comments relatively brief this morning, because you may have noted I walked up here as fast as I possibly could this morning.

That was not a serene pace. That was a my lower back is killing me pace. So you'll see me a little uncomfortable this morning, and I don't know how long I can stand here and do this. So I already intended to keep my comments brief. But also it's hot in here. You're not imagining that it would seem that one of the two units that cools this room is not currently cooling anything. So it is warm in here, and I recognize that. Kids were up late last night, I'm quite sure, and now they're hot.

So this will be perhaps a challenge. We'll pray for God's favor here in just a moment for our time in the Word. These final verses of John 10 conclude John's record of Jesus's public ministry. As we have noted repeatedly, John does not leave us wondering what the driving purpose of his gospel account is.

He tells us in John 20, verse 30 and 31. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, the signs that we have, these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name. So this text, as well as many that have preceded it, press the question, what will you do with Jesus? Who do you think that he is? How do you handle the claims that he made?

[2:09] C.S. Lewis once said, I've shared this with you previously, quote, a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse, end quote.

We have to deal with the historic Jesus. He said things about himself that must be carefully considered.

In the last half of chapter 10, we find two groups of people. John continues to do this to present to us two groups of people, those who reject Jesus as the Christ and those who receive him. We plead with you this morning, if you've yet to receive him as the Christ, that you carefully consider his claims.

Let's pray before we read the text. Father, we ask humbly this morning as we take up your word that you would help us. We never accomplish anything of any value apart from your work in our lives, certainly not the study of your word. And fathers, we are likely tired and weak, frail in some way, and hot this morning. I pray that you'd make us attentive, help our minds to take in the things that your word would teach us this day. We want to believe its promises and obey its commands. We want to have affection for you, its author. So we pray to this end. Amen. John 10, beginning in verse 19.

There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said he has a demon and is insane. Why listen to him? Others said, these are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon.

[4:18] Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? At that time, the feast of dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade of Solomon. 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.

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, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 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. I and the father are one. The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the father for which of them are you going to stone me? The Jews answered him, that is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy because you being a man make yourself God. Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law? I said you are gods. If he called them gods to whom the word of God came and scripture cannot be broken. 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. If I'm not doing the works of my father, then do not believe me. 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. Again, they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first and there he remained. And many came to him and they said, John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true and many believed in him there. So our text begins with another division. It's a lot of arguing amongst the Jews and John uses this term to speak of those religious elite. This is most likely the Pharisees could have been made up of another bit of scribes, but those who are in some religious power because of what Jesus has said. In the case that you are just joining us in our study of John's gospel and welcome guests. We're very glad to have you or that you like me just easily forget details. I'll remind you of where we find ourselves in the narrative of Jesus's life. In chapter nine, Jesus heals a man who was born blind. This sets off this whole narrative that goes through chapter 10. This healing causes confusion and commotion. And so this man is brought before the Pharisees and he goes through a series of little miniature trials at the conclusion of this process. The man says to the Jews, John 9 33, if this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

This is his estimation. Clearly this Jesus is from God. And then they answer him. You were born in utter sin. And would you teach us? And they cast him out. They throw him out of the synagogue. They make him unwelcome amongst God's people. Verse 35 says, Jesus heard that they had cast him out and having found him, he said, do you believe in the son of man? This is a reference to the Christ found in the book of Daniel. He answered. And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him, you have seen him and it is he who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him. Then Jesus says in verse 39 for judgment, I came into this world that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind. Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, are we also blind?

Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say we see, your guilt remains. So Jesus, having healed a blind man of his physical disability, and then, and more importantly, of his spiritual disability, uses this sight language to expose the pridefulness of the Pharisees. It's that they believe that they see and therefore do not need a physician.

[9:08] He speaks here with great irony. It's the men who think they see who are truly the blind ones. And it's into that context that Jesus goes on in chapter 10. He's speaking to the Pharisees, right? He's indicting them blind men who have thrown out of the synagogue, a seeing man, and he switches from sight language to hearing language. And then this really rich shepherding metaphor. So notice verse six, this figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

And then verse seven begins. So Jesus again said to them, and he continues his indictment using the shepherding metaphor. And it is here that there is once again, a division among the Jews. Verse 20 of chapter 10, many of them said, he has a demon and is insane. Why listen to him? And others said, these are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? And the implication is perhaps we should listen to him. Once again, this controversy set off between them. And then we get into verse 22 and 23 and beyond. Now at this point, I think it's worth mentioning. You may have some subtitling in your Bible and you may think, why are we including verses 19 through 21? Doesn't that make sense at the end of the text we were in last week? You can think that and you're welcome to. The translators here thought it was good to put in a subtitle, but we've been following John's gospel through its literary structure. And I'm not

going to talk a lot about chiasms this morning, but it is built around these literary structures called chiasms. And verse 19 through 21 is part of the chiasmic structure of the last half of John 10. And I'll tell you where the center is here in just a moment. So it would seem that John wants us to link that together with the rest of the chapter. Now take it either way. I don't think it matters terribly, but I want to point out to you what I think John tends to want to pull our attention to at the center of this chiasmic structure of the last half. Now, perhaps you go, well, wait a second though. It doesn't make sense there together with 22 because clearly something else is going on, right? Some time has passed. The feast of dedication is now at place, but we don't really know how much time has gone on between one thing and another. John gives us no real indicators of that. But the last indicator that he gave us was for the feast of booths. We read about that in chapter seven and I argued into chapter eight and two or three months have gone by since then. And we don't know exactly when all of this shepherding, blind healing things have happened in between. And so at this point, I just think it's good to say, to remind you that not only is this a record of things that happened truly and really happened, it's also a piece of literature. It's being written and written brilliantly under the inspiration of the spirit to help us come to conclusions. So let's make sure when we take up a text, we also read it as a piece of literature.

So therefore, I think 19 and 21 belong with the rest of the chapter. And I digress. At that time, the feast of dedication took place at Jerusalem. This was the celebration of the dedication of the second temple. This is modern Hanukkah for those who are interested. As I mentioned, two or three months since the feast of booths. And we find Jesus walking in the covered area east of the temple. This is a very common place for people to gather, to teach. Rabbis would gather together, students, and teach. People would stroll in it and meditate. It was an especially important place during inclement weather. And this would have been the rainy season in Israel. We see this little detail that it was winter. And perhaps the reason that John includes that detail is to help us to understand why it is that Jesus is walking in the colony. Who's gathered around him. And this word sounds like maybe he's there teaching and they're milling over. But the word carries a little more weight. It means surrounded or encircled. And I'm imagining a little bit at this point, but it doesn't sound to me like they have come around because they're curious. They want to demand something of him. Right? It said to him, how long will you keep us in suspense? Like they're, they're ganging up and they want to know this answer to this question. If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. And that's, that's the stage for the rest of what Jesus will say in this shepherding metaphor. Jesus answered them. I told you, and you do not believe. I've already said it to you plainly. I am the Christ.

[15:05] What he says, the works that I do in my father's name, bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not many places that the Bible places divine election and human responsibility right next to each other with no apology or nuanced explanation. It just says it right there together.

Jesus does not minimize the guilt of their unbelief. This whole chapter is a judgment of their unbelief. He's indicting them all along. You should believe. And yet you don't, but here he just simply explains it. How is it? These men don't believe Jesus just states because you are not among my sheep. This does not let them off the hook. He's not sympathetic to them because of this. They are entirely guilty of their unbelief. He just says it's because you're not mine.

Beloved, I encourage you to take up God's word and read it plainly. Not all of its tensions are resolved. In God's infinite wisdom, he decided not to resolve every tension. My best guess as to why is because our finite minds just couldn't handle it. To really understand how it is that God's sovereign work and man's responsibility function together, it's a mystery to me. And so I just want to deal with the text plainly. I want to be careful not to import my logic into the text. I want to let God speak for himself and to have the final word. You do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

Which brings us to the chiasmic center of the text. The thrust of it being drawn here to verses 27 through 30. He says, my sheep hear my voice. He's repeated this in the metaphor throughout chapter 10.

I give them eternal life. Life now and life forevermore and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. If you are Christ, you are Christ forever and no one including yourself can change that reality.

[17:52] My father who has given them to me. 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. I and the father are one. Jesus clearly

declares his deity in this text, declares that he has been sent to accomplish a task, the salvation of his people, and nothing will thwart his good purpose for his people. This is the thing that we ought to revel in if we are in Christ. This is the thing if we are not in Christ that we ought to ask him to show us that we're not and then repent and believe that we might belong to him. This is a reality that should drive evangelism and missions to the very ends of the earth. Jesus is calling together. He's using the church as the means and the ends to draw together his flock. Do not be like the Jews in verse 31. You don't like the things that Jesus says.

Yes, they're infuriated by what he has said. They pick up stones again to stone him. The again there is this is not the first time back in chapter five they sought to stone him there as well and for the same reason. Jesus says, I've shown you many good works in the father for which of them are you going to stone me? And they answer it is not for a good work that we're going to stone you but for blasphemy because you being a man make yourself God which would be a form of blasphemy if it were untrue that he is in fact himself God. And so Jesus responds with a bit of a mysterious response. Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law? I said you are gods. This is Psalm 82 and verse six. If you call them gods to whom the word of God came and scripture cannot be broken. 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.

What exactly is he doing here? And I will tell you that explanations abound about this text as well as Psalm 82. Some very reasonable, some rather out there. Let's take just a moment and I'll tell you what I think he is doing. First and then undeniably everybody agrees he's making a lesser to greater argument. It goes something like your Bible, your law, he says, calls men gods. It cannot be wrong. So how can it be wrong for the son of God to be a son of God? However, I think something else is going on here. When Jesus cites the scripture to the Jewish religious leaders, he assumes they know the rest of the text from which he is citing. He references a portion of the text and these men would have known Psalm 82.

They spent their days memorizing what we call the Old Testament. So all kinds of things are coming into their mind as he cites this verse. So as he references Psalm 82, what else is it that he's communicating?

[21 : 43] Now, earlier in our scripture reading, Jake led a reading of Psalm 82 and it's there in your bulletin. If you'd like to look at it along with me, I'd like to read it and give you a little bit of notes. Psalm 82 says, God has taken his place in the divine counsel in the midst of the gods. He holds judgment. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute, rescue the weak and the needy, deliver them from the hand of the wicked. They have neither knowledge nor understanding. They walk about in darkness. All the foundation of the earth are shaken. I said, here it is. You are gods, sons of the most high, all of you. Nevertheless, like men, you shall die and fall like any prince.

Arise, oh God, judge the earth for you shall inherit all the nations. Do not forget that this is a piece of poetry. And Asaph, its author is picking up this picture. It's from pagan religion of a divine council of God's coming together to accomplish something. And he's stating that God is the one who comes into that and rules over those others. So what he's talking about are those who judge unjustly, right? The judges of Israel who judged unjustly, right? And that God will judge them. Verse eight says, oh God, judge the earth. God is the ruler over everyone and everything. And it's this context that's being brought to play in the minds of Jesus. And the minds of Jesus' listeners, those he's indicting. It's these Jewish religious leaders who have gathered around him, right? Pressed on him, make it plain that you're the Christ. And his response to them is, you're these judges.

I think this reference to Psalm 82 is piling up the indictment on these men. That Jesus means for them to see themselves as those who have judged unjustly and shown partiality to the wicked.

Those who have neglected justice, those who have neither knowledge nor understanding.

I think this is what Jesus gets swimming around in their minds as he cites Psalm 82 and verse six. Notice the way Psalm 82 ends. Arise, oh God, judge the earth for you shall inherit all the nations. Now, it's been a little while since we've been in John 10, but you may remember in the shepherding metaphor back in verse 16, Jesus says, and I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

[24 : 56] I must bring them also. And they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is one of the things that he has said that has caused some of these Jewish men to say he has a demon that he would suggest that his kingdom includes those who were not of Jewish

descent.

Oh God, judge the earth for you shall inherit all the nations. So this, I think, is what he's doing in this text, right?

First, lesser to greater, right? He's reasoning, he's logicking through, but something much more significant is happening here. He's pressing this judgment on these men for their unbelief. And then he proceeds.

Note what he says next. Verse 37, I'm not doing the works of my father. Then do not believe me. 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. You see what is pressing along here, right? This continuing indictment for those who will reject him as the Christ.

[26 : 14] If you reject Jesus as the Christ, you will be judged one day. And the point, the result, I should say, of that judgment will be eternal damnation.

The temperature will be hotter than it is in this room right now. Their response to that verse 39 again, they sought to arrest him.

They've tried to arrest him before again. They sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. And he goes away across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first. And there he remained. And many came to him and they said, John did no sign. But everything that John said about this man was true. Behold, the Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world. And many believed in him there. In the place, Solomon's Portico, the colonnade of Solomon, where the gospel should have been most readily believed.

[27 : 20] Like by the men who knew the Bible best, Jesus is rejected as the Christ. But in a desolate place along the Jordan, where John had been baptizing, a baptism of redemption.

Jesus there ministers and many believed in him there. In closing, I want to read a rather long quotation from the bulletin and hear it as a plea.

And then I'll pray to the same end. This is Charles Spurgeon. He once wrote of this text. Here is the matter in a nutshell.

Christ appears as a shepherd to his own sheep, not to others. As soon as he appears, his own sheep perceive him. They trust him. They're prepared to follow him.

He knows them and they know him. There is a mutual knowledge. There is a constant connection between them. And so the evidence, the infallible mark of regeneration and adoption, is a hearty faith in the appointed redeemer.

[28 : 31] Reader, are you in doubt? Are you uncertain about whether you are one of God's children? Then do not let an hour pass until you have said, search me, O God, and know my heart.

Do not linger here, I warn you. If you must linger anywhere, let it be about some secondary matter, your health if you wish, or the title deeds of your home. But about your soul, your never dying soul and its eternal destiny, I urge you to be in earnest.

Make certain of this eternal issue. Let's pray.