

Security

John 10:22-42

Key Verse: 29

“My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

What security do you have? Many years ago people would have told you, go to school and get a secure job in a good company, keep your head down and work hard and you will be able to retire enjoying the rest of your life. This was the American dream. So many people bought into this dream and came to this country in search of their own security. But if you ask people now, they have a very different view. No longer are you guaranteed a good job just by going to school. And if you are lucky enough to get a good job, there is no guarantee that the company will be around. Lehman Brothers was established in 1850 and grew to become the 4th largest investment banking company in America. If you worked for Lehman Brothers, you had a secure future, however that all changed with the financial meltdown of 2008. In a stunning turn of events, the once powerful world-wide company with 160 years of experience melted away. In September 2008, not only was Lehman Brothers completely destroyed, Merrill Lynch, the 3rd largest investment banking company, and its 93 year history were gone as well. The financial world was on edge. It was like a bunch of dominos beginning to fall, everyone was wondering who’s next. Not only were financial companies at risk, but even America’s future and possibly the world were now at risk. Nothing was secure. People were losing their jobs, their houses, long standing companies were disappearing and now even the futures of countries like Greece are shaky. What security do you have? About the only thing that is for sure in our time is dying and paying taxes. What are we to do? Through today’s passage Jesus shows us what security really is and where we can find it.

Although our passage today seems like it is part of last week’s passage, it actually occurs a couple of months later. It starts out with Jesus in the Temple. Take a look at verses 22-23. “Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon’s Colonnade.” It was winter, just as it is with us now only they didn’t get snow like we do. Unlike the 3 other major annual holidays which were only celebrated in Jerusalem, the Feast of Dedication – with its festive lights, was joyfully commemorated in Jewish homes as well as in the temple. The Feast of Dedication commemorated the dedication of the temple in 165 B.C. This was the last great deliverance the Jews had experienced as Judas Maccabeus rose up and defeated the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Epiphanes was determined to wipe out the Jewish religion by declaring mandatory worship of Zeus and other Greek gods. In his hatred he killed 80,000 men and sold another 80,000 into slavery. He desecrated the temple by offering a sacrifice to Zeus on a pagan altar. This was foretold by Daniel when he referred to the abomination that causes desolation. (Da 9:27) However a revolt started by a Jewish priest named Mattathias Maccabeus ended in a miraculous defeat of Epiphanes’ troops by Mattathias’ son Judas. Judas Maccabeus tore down the abomination of desolation and rededicated the temple with the Feast of Dedication which we know it as Hanukkah. Hanukkah commemorates God’s intervention in delivering his people and restoring the temple so that they could worship God in the right way. This turns out to be ironic because the religious leaders weren’t thinking about how to worship God, but rather how to kill Jesus.

As Jesus was walking along in Solomon's colonnade, a section of the temple that was built by Solomon, the Jews gathered around Jesus saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." (v24) The crowds surrounding Jesus probably have mixed motives as to why they are asking him this question. Some of them love him and honestly want to follow him and know if he really was God's anointed one. But the majority of them wanted to put him to death and are trying to use this occasion to get him to confess that he is God so that they can label him as a blasphemer and kill him.

Jesus responds in verse 25, "I did tell you, but you do not believe." The problem wasn't that Jesus didn't tell them who he was, the problem was that they didn't believe. Jesus told the Samaritan woman (Jn 4) that he was the Messiah and the man born blind that he was the son of God. (Jn 9) The blind man even rebuked the religious leaders by teaching them who Jesus was and their response was to throw him out of their community because they had already decided to get rid of anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ. (v9:22) Jesus was dealing directly with their problem, which of course was unbelief. And Jesus, the good shepherd that he is, tries to help his accusers overcome their unbelief. How? By giving them proof. The second half of v25 says, "The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me." Jesus appeals to his works. The religious leaders knew what Jesus was referring to. Jesus was referring to the prophet Isaiah who said that when the Messiah comes, he will demonstrate his authority in ways that everyone will know. The lame will walk, the blind will see, the deaf will hear and the mute will speak. (Isa 35:5-6) Miracles would happen. Everyone will know who he is because the Messiah will do things that mere men could never do. In other words Jesus was telling them, "You should know who I am by looking at what I've done." To this point Jesus has turned water into wine, fed more than 15,000 people with 5 biscuits and 2 sardines. He healed a 38 year paralytic. He healed the blind man. All the evidence was there if you had eyes to see it. If you wanted to see it. If you had an open mind and wanted to believe. But the guys didn't want to believe because they felt that their positions were threatened.

They didn't believe because they weren't Jesus' sheep. Verse 27 says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." If they were Jesus' sheep they would know his voice and listen to him. People recognize others by their voice. If someone that you know calls you on the phone, if they are a good friend you can recognize them without hearing their name. However there is something different about our parent's voice. We not only know their voice, but you know the tone of their voice and if they are happy, sad or angry. When you are really familiar with someone you know their voice. And that's what Jesus is talking about, those who love him will know his voice and they follow him because they trust him and know that he loves them too.

And to those who hear Jesus' voice, what's he saying to them? He's telling them about this incredible gift that he has for them. In verse 28, he says, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." This is an amazing statement. When we hear Jesus' voice and believe in him, we establish a relationship with him and he gives us a gift of eternal life. People don't usually give gifts to someone we don't have a relationship with. And here is where we find this incredible security that can't be found anywhere in the world. Let's take a moment and think about why this gives us security. First off eternal life is a gift from God. Who likes to receive gifts? And once a gift is given, it isn't taken back. You don't give a gift and

take it back right? People would call you an Indian giver. I'm not sure why Indians got stuck with this bad label. How cruel would it be for God to give a gift, only to take it back again? As the receiver of the gift we have no control over it. The only thing you can do is either except it or refuse it. And this is one reason why Christianity is different than all other religions. There is nothing that we can do to earn eternal life, it's a gift from God. This gives us security because we don't have to worry if we've done enough good deeds to get into heaven, like Islam or if we've been good enough what will we be reincarnated into a higher being as with Hinduism.

Another thing that gives us security is that we don't have to sustain eternal life. Jesus gives the gift of eternal life and he maintains it. Eternal life lasts because it's eternal. Jesus doesn't say, "I give you life for a time." No. Jesus says eternal, forever. We don't have to worry that it will all end one day all of a sudden, like driving a car without a gas gauge. No it will last for eternity. Jesus said that we shall never perish. Where in this world can you find a guarantee like that? In our world promises are made all the time and they are broken just as quickly. God is the creator of life and only he can sustain life.

What if someone steals your gift? Recently at Northwestern, 3 guys came up to a person and asked him for directions. Being a nice guy he pulled out his new Christmas gift (iPhone) to help them and they grabbed it and ran off. Can our gift of eternal life be taken from us? Jesus said, "no one can snatch them out of my hand." This is another reason to give us security. Eternal life can never be taken from us. Once it is given to us no one can take it from us. The devil likes to make us think that it can be taken from us or that we can somehow lose it, but it can't. Jesus won our salvation long long ago and since God knows all things, there isn't anything that we can do from now until we die that can make us lose our salvation. He knows our whole life, are we going to suddenly do something that is a deal breaker? How can no one snatch us from Jesus' hand? Let's read verses 29-30. "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."³⁰ "I and the Father are one." No one can snatch us from Jesus' hand because God the Father stands behind Jesus and assures it. And who is greater than the one who created the heavens and the earth? No one. It's like when God showed up to Job and said, "Where were you when I laid the foundations for the earth?" Who can challenge the one that is all powerful?

And it's through these verses that we see the reason Jesus can give eternal life is because he's God. He and the Father are one. Jesus is the provider of life for all things were made through him. (Jn 1) Some people say that Jesus never claimed to be God, that was added by others about a hundred years after he died and rose again. But that's not true. Jesus states very clearly in this passage that he is God. And the Jews knew it as well that's why they wanted to stone him. (v33) And don't you think that if Jesus didn't mean what he said, when the Jews tried to kill him, wouldn't he try to resolve the situation? He'd say, "Whoaa, wait a minute, you misunderstood me, let me clear this up," because you wouldn't want to be killed because of a misunderstanding, right? But Jesus never does that. That's because everyone involved knew what was going on and all of them stood their ground. Jesus meant to state that he is God, and the Jews understood what he was saying and they rejected it.

And here is the part that is so ironic. It is the Feast of Dedication, a time when they were supposed to be thanking God for the opportunity to worship him in the right way in the temple,

and Jesus was here revealing to them that he is God and they have a unique opportunity to worship him and they reject him and want to kill him by picking up stones to stone him. Murder was illegal by Rome and not to mention that stoning him in the temple was illegal according to their law. (Lev 24:16) So Jesus asked them, “For which miracle are you stoning me for?” (v32) And they reply, “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” (v33) This whole situation is so ironic. However Jesus continued to plead with them to open their eyes and look at the miracles that he performed for they testified to his true identity as the Messiah. However in their blindness they tried to kill Jesus yet again. But because of his God given ninja skills he was able to elude them.

So how does this apply to us. Let me relate it in this way. Have you heard of the company Kodak? They were founded in 1889 and practically invented photography. In the late 70’s while Kodak held 90% of the film market in the US, they invented the digital camera. However they couldn’t make the transition to the digital market successfully even though they invented the industry and now this once stable company is dying. Whether it was their own stubbornness holding onto their film or their own blindness to see what was happening in the market, whatever the reason they failed and are in danger of disappearing. The religious leaders of Jesus’ time were blind too. They were blind to the fact that the Messiah was right there in front of them and they couldn’t see him because they didn’t want to believe in him.

Jesus gives us all the proof that we need to know who he is, now it is up to us to believe. But this is not just believing in the facts of his life, this belief means to know him, love him and follow him. When we follow someone we are usually going toward a destination and Jesus is leading us to eternal life. But just as Jesus is known by his actions, our actions reveal our heart as well. From the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Therefore our actions should reveal if we love Jesus or not. Everything that belongs to Jesus, obeys his voice. All nature listens to God’s command. In the beginning, when God said let there be light, light appeared, as well as the earth, the seas, the animal etc. When Jesus rebuked the winds and the waves, they listened. How do you think Noah got all those animals into the ark? The animals listened to God. When God parted the Red Sea for Moses it stood up and when Joshua needed more time, the sun stood still because God asked it. Everything that belong to God listens to voice and obeys him. So how about you? Do you want security? What is secure in our world? Everything that we put our hope in, in this world will eventually fail us. It’s just a matter of time. But not Jesus, because he is God, he is almighty, he is faithful and through him we can have eternal life.