

Jesus Proves That He Is The Christ

I love irony. I love it when you expect things to turn out one way, and then they turn out another way. In the words we look at this morning we see a clear, stark example of irony. Jesus goes to the temple for the festival of Hanukkah. He walks and walks along the columns at the temple—for a long time. Then the Jews surround him and ask him: *“How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”*¹ There is such fierce irony in those words. Literally, they ask Jesus “How long will you hold yourself away from us?”² Jesus wasn’t *away* from them at all. He was right there, walking along the pillars of the colonnade for hours. He wasn’t hiding. He was right there all along.

In the midst of that irony Jesus spends some time speaking about who he is. They give him a command: *“If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”*³ He tells them: “I did. But you don’t believe. The miracles I continue to do testify about me. But you don’t believe.”

Twice Jesus says it: *You do not believe.* And that makes us ask the question: *why?* Why did they continually, perpetually not believe that Jesus was the Christ? Was it because there was not enough proof for them? Was it because they did not have enough time for them to make up their mind? Was it because Jesus didn’t put in enough effort to convince them. To all of these questions we can clearly and safely say ‘NO.’ They continued to not-believe because they hated Jesus. Jesus spoke these words about these Jewish leaders: *“Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand...For this people’s heart has become calloused;”*⁴

Jesus was letting them know that the real issue wasn’t one of proof, or time or effort. The real reason why they could never get it was that they hated him. It was a huge problem for the people of Jesus’ time and it’s a huge problem for us today. It is impossible to convince unbelievers that Jesus is the Christ. You cannot prove it with clear logic. You cannot spend enough time being patient with people. You cannot change a person’s heart to be a Christian with all your effort. Why? Because unbelievers **hate** Jesus.

You cannot prove it to the world out there. And, what’s even worse, you cannot prove it to yourself. You can use all your brain, all your heart, all your time and all your effort and you will never convince that Jesus is the Christ—that he is your good Shepherd. You cannot prove to yourself that Jesus is the Christ.

How then can we be saved? How then can we ever convince the world out there that Jesus is the Christ and our Good Shepherd if we cannot even convince ourselves? The answer is here in these words. Jesus says: *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me”*⁵.

There is a very beautiful and important progression of thought here. Jesus says that his sheep listen to his voice. And then there’s a word missing in the english that is there in the greek⁶ It answers a question for us. It answers the question *how?* How is it that we are able to listen to his voice. He *knows* us. Now, when it says here that Jesus knows us, it’s not a wimpy sort of knowing. It’s a deep knowing. It’s knowing by experience. It’s not like knowing the lady scanning in your food at *Giant*. You may know her name by her name-tag. But you really don’t *know* her. But, you do know your family. You know them well. That’s the sort of knowing we find here. Jesus establishes a relationship with us. Through the visible gospel in the sacraments and the heard gospel in his word he gives to us the gift of faith. He knows us. Then we know him. And then after that we follow him.

We listen to his voice. All throughout our lives we listen to his voice. And it is these precious promises which convince us that he is the Christ and our Good Shepherd. We try to convince unbelievers around us that Jesus is the Christ with our words and our words fall on deaf ears. We become a cheerleader to ourselves saying “what’s wrong with you? Believe in Jesus; follow him!”. And, despite our pleading and passion all we find in our hearts is

¹(John 10:24 NIV)

²έως ποτε την ψυχην ημων αλεις; ε συ ε ο χριστος, επε ημων παρερησια.

³(John 10:24 NIV)

⁴(Matthew 13:13–15 NIV)

⁵(John 10:27 NIV)

⁶αγω. και...εγω.

fear. And then Jesus speaks to us—a Shepherd who *knows* his sheep. And with one precious promise after another he convinces us that he is the Christ and our Good Shepherd.

Listen to the promises he speaks to us in these words: *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."*⁷ Three precious promises which do for us what we could never do for ourselves. He says: *"I give them eternal life"*. That's a present tense⁸. He gives to us eternal life not once or twice, but again and again and again in our lives to convince us that we have heaven waiting for us when we die. Then Jesus says: *they shall never perish*. Here we find one of the most powerful promises in the entire bible. Literally, these words read like this: *"And they will never ever ever be destroyed...forever!"*⁹ Our Good Shepherd promises to you that you will never be destroyed. One of two things will happen: either you will die or Jesus will come. And neither is all that bad. For in either scenario you will see Jesus Christ face to face. And finally, Jesus says: *"no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."*¹⁰ The key word in this sentence is the word 'no.'¹¹ When anyone reaches out to you, Jesus' precious sheep to snatch you away from him, Jesus reaches out and slaps that hand. He says 'NO!' with all the jealousy of a Good Shepherd guarding his sheep.

And so, my brothers and sisters, what will you do with these precious promises? Listen to them. Memorize them. Yes, I mentioned the *horrible* 'M' word. Memorize these precious passages and promises. For they are the ones that will strengthen you when you doubt, when you are afraid and when your strength fails. Memorize them. And then share them. Don't share them like the Jehovah's Witnesses do. Don't beat people over the head with Jesus as if, by your effort and time and logical proofs you would drag them into heaven. Speak God's word. And let Jesus prove it to them—not with powerful proofs, but with the same precious promises that first spoke to you and gave you faith.

The famous preacher C. H. Spurgeon once said that you don't need to guard and defend his word. God's word is Lion. You don't need to cage it to protect it. All you need to do is let it go. And so, my brothers and sisters, let your Good Shepherd speak. Let him prove that he is the Christ—not with powerful proofs. No, let him prove who he is with his precious promises. Amen.

⁷(John 10:28 NIV)

⁸καὶ γὰρ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον

⁹καὶ ἔ μὴ ἀπόλωνται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα

¹⁰(John 10:29 NIV)

¹¹καὶ ἔχ ἀεπάσει τις αὐτὰ ἐν τῆς χειρός μου.