

"Safe with Our Shepherd"

Text: John 10:22-30

May the God who gave his own Son to pay our sin debt also now grant to each of us a love and dedication toward those things that are truly worthwhile. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Communication requires two things: a sender and a receiver. The most powerful transmitter in the world is worthless if no one turns on a radio, and all of the radios in the world are of little use if no one is broadcasting.

The same holds true with human interaction. Someone has to send, someone else has to receive. If either one is missing, communication fails. Wives tend to get this, since husbands tend to have their "radios" turned off A LOT. Kids too, for that matter. And yet wives/moms just keep transmitting...

Why is this general topic so important? Because as Christians, you and I are in the communication business. That's our job, that's our calling, that's our mission – and it ought to be our passion. When we sit at the feet of God's Word, we are supposed to be the radios, receiving and actually *hearing* God's message to us. But our life's work is to be transmitters. In leaving us with his Great Commission, our Lord commanded us to center our lives around the communication of the gospel, which, we all agree, is the key to eternal life. The message we are to broadcast is very simple: Whoever believes that Jesus paid for the sins of the world through his sinless life and innocent death on the cross, will be saved.

Understand that this is not *part* of our lives; this is our life. It is the sum and substance. Failure in every other secular pursuit is as nothing if we but succeed in our calling to "**go and make disciples**" for Jesus Christ.

Begin this morning by reevaluating your life on this basis. In this you and I are supposed to be the "senders" of the information – the transmitters. If Christians fail in this critical mission, gospel communication does not exist, and eternal tragedies can be the only result.

If gospel-communication fails, it must never be the transmitters who fail. With this introduction we prepare to hear the words of our text for this morning, found recorded in the Gospel of John, the Tenth Chapter:

^{ESV} **John 10:22-30** *At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."*

These are God's Words – the tools of our stock and trade as communicators of the gospel. That our God would through the study of these words spiritually strengthen us for the work that lies ahead, so we pray: "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

Take just a moment and analyze this statement: *Jesus, as a true "man of God," was dedicated to his Father's business – doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.*

I'm sure that no one would have trouble with that statement. The Gospels (including our text) certainly portray Jesus as a man singly dedicated to religious pursuits. The question that remains, however, is what affect or direction that dedication carries forward to us. We know, for example, that Jesus alone was able to offer the necessary payment for our sins. Human beings, once they have sinned, have no currency to offer the Righteous Judge as payment. Nothing we could ever do could undo the damage of our sins. We were and are lost apart from the work of Jesus as our substitute.

So it is that we are not surprised when we read in our text that Jesus was found walking in the temple in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication. That is, after all, a fitting place for a "man of God." The problem is how we *react* to our Lord's dedication. In other words, the temptation is always there to imagine that since Jesus was so dedicated, we don't have to be. Jesus did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves, therefore we are now free to be about everything *but* our Father's business.

Could it possibly be true that just as there were things that only *Jesus* could do, so now there are also things that only *man* can do? Sounds strange, doesn't it? Yet by God's own decree that is exactly the case today. Jesus himself rendered the payment for sins and thereby reconciled sinners to God. Only he could do that. Yet that payment is of no benefit to the individual who never hears about it. Here is where we come in, since this gospel proclamation is not Jesus' work. It is ours. Returning to the opening truths concerning communication, Jesus entrusted Christians with more than just the message of the gospel. He left us with the *proclamation* –the transmitting – of that message. It is left to us as Christians to broadcast to the world exactly what Jesus has done for mankind. This is the focus, the goal, the burden that should be felt by every single Christian every single day. The Holy Spirit has chosen not to work faith directly from heaven. He works through the Word that we alone can share.

So many radios; but who among us is transmitting?

Jesus, of course, was the master communicator. We can therefore not only learn to communicate better by studying his example, we also learn here that sometimes the radios are just plain shut off. In other words, even a perfect, powerful revelation of the gospel will at times fall on deaf ears.

You recall in our text how the Jews surrounded Jesus in the temple and demanded that he tell them whether or not he was the Christ. Jesus answer was that he *had* told them – that he had, in fact, been telling them for several years. The miracles served as irrefutable proof that Jesus was the Messiah. They spoke clearly and definitively to anyone and everyone who bothered to "listen."

What the Jews were doing here was sort of like walking up to some big, burly guy and asking him if he is really strong. Rather than answering with words, the guy walks over and picks up the back end of a bus and sets it back down. Next he walks over to a fire hydrant, grabs hold of it, snaps it off and tosses it about half a city block. Finally he walks to a railroad track, rips up one of the steel rails, bends it into the shape of a pretzel, and drops it at your feet. To all of which the Jews would then say, "How very nice, but tell us one way or the other if you are really *strong*?"

Why did the Jews demand a verbal affirmation of what the miracles clearly demonstrated, and why did Jesus refuse? Jesus knew, of course, that while the miracles provided no evidence by which they could accuse or condemn him, he knew that they would certainly use his words for exactly that. He knew that the moment he answered them, his ministry would end. We don't have to guess at that. He *did* answer the question eventually,

didn't he? At his trial on Good Friday he gave them a clear and unequivocal answer to the question that they here asked, and the result was immediate condemnation and execution. Understand that these folks were shot through with evil. They asked Jesus what they did there in Solomon's Porch not because they were seeking the truth and wanted to become disciples; they sought the rope by which they would hang him – as they eventually did. **"...you yourselves have heard his blasphemy..." "Crucify him!"**

Jesus therefore allowed the miracles to communicate to the people, for who could possibly condemn him for the good that he did? Who could condemn a man for feeding the poor, healing the sick, making whole the handicapped, or raising the dead? Every single one of these actions delivered a loud and clear message to all who saw or heard of them: *This man is different! This man is sent from God!* That's also why Jesus said what he did in our text: **"I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock."**

The forms of communication can vary, but unbelief blocks reception. What does this tell us? Are we just out of luck because the miracles have come to an end? Actually, no. We have in fact been given an even more potent tool. Our Bibles represent that **"more sure witness"** that Peter – who himself had seen all of those miracles – described in this way: **"We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."** (2 Peter 1:18-21)

Our communication can take many forms. Our actions often speak louder than our words. But while our actions might make those around us curious, it is always and only the Word of God that can convert and save, for through that Word alone the Holy Spirit works.

Is the work then of Jesus done? Yes and no. His work of redemption ended on Good Friday, but you and I still need him desperately every single day. In fact the revelation of our Savior's influence in our lives to this very day represents the most comforting message of our text. Hear

his words again: ***"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."***

Take some time here to digest the message of these words. Let them fill you, comfort you, encourage you.

Jesus here not only refers to himself as our Shepherd, he also reveals to us the truly amazing news that *no one will ever be able to steal us from him*. Do you realize how valuable that is to each of us? True, we have the ability to wander – as sheep are prone to do – but consider just what a blessing it is that Jesus day by day prevents any and every evil force from taking us captive again to sin and unbelief. You and I are not mere pawns in a titan struggle between good and evil. We are well loved children of God, and as such we fall under his constant and watchful protection. There we are safe; there we are secure.

Nor should we overlook here the clear statement as to *why* we are so secure. Jesus promised that those who know his voice have been *given* a priceless gift: eternal life. ***"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish."*** This is the heart of the message that we have the privilege to communicate to the world. It is and should be the most joyful of obligations because what we have to offer does not demand; it gives. It does not require; it provides. It does not condemn or exclude; it is a declaration of sins forgiven and inclusion in the most elite of all organizations – the Holy Christian Church and the communion of saints.

On an individual basis that means that you and I have nothing but good news to share with friends, family, co-workers and the like. Jesus wants to bring every single human being under his perfect protection and security. *Use each of us, dear Jesus, as instruments of your love and as communicators of this most comforting truth. Amen.*

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Acts 20:17-35** Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ ¶ And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

^{ESV} **Revelation 7:9-17** After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." ¹³ ¶ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

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The Third Sunday after Easter – April 17, 2016

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 436 (Red Hymnal)

"The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Acts 20:17-35) The thread that runs through our readings and sermon text this morning is sheep and their Good Shepherd. Jesus is obviously that Good Shepherd and we his sheep. Paul speaks to us in our first reading this morning, warning us as sheep that we should expect to be attacked by the enemies of the Good Shepherd – "**fierce wolves**," as he calls them. His definition of a wolf is anyone who does not hold to the "**whole counsel**" of God's Word.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 118 (Page 29)

The Second Lesson: (Revelation 7:9-17) What great benefits we would receive if we would use the Book of Revelation as that for which it was intended - a book of comfort for God's New Testament Church. This morning we see a picture of the splendor of the Last Day. How wonderful will be that day for those that are God's. How terrible for those who are not!

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 324 (Verses 1-3) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus Sinners Doth Receive"

The Sermon – Text: John 10:22-30 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Safe with Our Shepherd"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Baptism Hymn -753 (Brown Hymnal)

"Let the Children Come to Me"

The Baptism of David Dallas Meyer

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -51 (Red Hymnal)

"Now May He Who from the Dead"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance - Sunday (46) Ave (46)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Coffee/Fellowship Time
	-11:15 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Service w/Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Coffee/Fellowship Time

CLC News – Pastor Matthew Ude has resigned his call as foreign missionary to India. His infant daughter, Kaylee, underwent another successful procedure last week to treat a serious brain infection. Holy Trinity of West Columbia, SC has called Pastor David Pfeiffer.

Gift for Retiring Faculty – After many years of faithful service, Professor John Pfeiffer is retiring from Immanuel College at the end of the current school year. As is our custom, a thank-offering is being collected. Please mark any contributions to this fund as "Pfeiffer Gift."

Looking Ahead – Both the Voters' Assembly and the Women's Fellowship have scheduled meetings for May 1. A fellowship meal is also being planned. The next Sunday, May 8, is Confirmation Sunday here at St Paul, and a fellowship meal is also being planned for that event.

Safety Sign-up Sheets – The sheets for the remaining classes to be presented by Phil Pfennig are on the mailbox table. Please take a moment to sign the appropriate sheet if you plan to participate.

Congratulations! – David Dallas Meyer was born to Samuel and Karla Meyer on Wednesday morning. Thanks be to God, who gives good gifts to mankind! David is scheduled to be baptized this morning.

Organ Update – The organ installation was postponed for scheduling reasons. We are shooting for this weekend, but stay tuned...