

# "Confident Communicators"

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 an understanding of, a love for, and dedication to those things that are truly worthwhile. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

There's a relatively new trend in broadcasting. Maybe you've noticed it. Off-camera individuals routinely now laugh loudly whenever the broadcaster says something that is supposed to be funny, or an audience in the studio either claps or in some other way communicates their approval or disapproval. There's a reason for the change. It used to be that radio and television broadcasters had to be supremely confident people – comfortable with what they were saying in the absence of any feedback. The rest of us can gauge the reaction to things we say by reading the reaction, the body language, of our audience. Broadcasters look into a camera or speak into a microphone. They used to have no way of knowing the reaction to what they were saying. For that matter, they had no idea if anyone was even watching or listening. To solve the problem, broadcasters are now provided with a sympathetic audience to bolster their courage and confidence.

There's also another reason for the change. Those watching or listening tend to be swayed by the reaction of others, even when they suspect that the reaction is artificial. That's also why they add laugh tracks to mindless sitcoms. Most of the dialog isn't funny, but when those watching hear a whole crowd laughing uproariously, the dialog somehow doesn't seem quite so terrible.

Because we are supposed to be communicators, Christians can and should learn from this. We need to be confident in the message we are communicating, and in the power of what we are sharing. The feedback we receive tends to be negligible, even counterproductive. People are good at masking their true feelings, and at pretending to listen. Our mandate is simply to soldier on, in confident love.

Use this information as preparation for hearing the words of our text for this morning, found recorded in the Gospel of John, the Tenth Chapter:

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 10:22-30** *At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple,*

*in the colonnade of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> 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, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."*

This is God's Word – the tool of our stock-in-trade as those called to share the gospel. That our God would through the study of these words spiritually strengthen us, grant us confidence, and in all ways equip us for the vital 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 among us would have trouble with that statement. The Gospels (including our text for this morning) certainly portray Jesus as a man singly dedicated to religious pursuits. The real question is what effect or direction that dedication by Jesus carries forward for 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 for that sin. 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. Jesus alone could do that work.

We are therefore not at all 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, exactly what we would expect from a Godly man. 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 - which is where we come in. This gospel proclamation is not Jesus' work, it is ours. Jesus entrusted Christians with more than just the message of the gospel as our personal possession. He left us with the *proclamation* –the sharing – of that message. It is left to us as Christians to communicate to the world exactly what Jesus has done for mankind. This is the focus, the goal, the passion 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. Part of what we do here each week is not only to learn more about the message we have been called to share, but to develop confidence in that message.

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 message falls on deaf ears. In other words, even a perfect, powerful revelation of the gospel will at times be rejected. That fact can never be allowed to deter us, as it never stopped our Savior.

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 his entire ministry. The miracles served as divine evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus' miracles spoke clearly and definitively to anyone and everyone who bothered to "listen."

The Jews were amazed by the miracles. They were confused by the miracles. Most loved the miracles. But they stubbornly refused to be convinced by those miracles.

Why did the Jews demand a verbal affirmation of what the miracles clearly demonstrated, and why did Jesus refuse to give it to them? Jesus knew, of course, that while the miracles provided no evidence by which they could accuse or condemn him, he also knew that they would certainly use his *words* for exactly that. He knew that the moment he answered them, his ministry would end, because his life 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 had asked for years, and the result was immediate condemnation and execution. Understand that these men

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 asked because they wanted Jesus to provide the rope by which they could hang him – as he and they eventually did.

For a time, 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, <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> 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 routinely 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 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. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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 promise is meant to be for each of us? True, we have the terrible power to destroy the faith that God has created in us – to wander, as sheep are prone to do. Yet 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. The devil has no power that we ourselves do not give him. You and I are not 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 – when we go on listening to our Savior's voice, which of course is his Word.

Nor should we overlook here the clear statement as to *why* we are so secure, why we can be so confident. 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 been told to share 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 – everyone in our "world." Jesus wants to bring every single human being under his perfect protection and security. Let this then be our prayer: *Thank you, dear Jesus, for all that you have done and continue to do for us. We are now your willing servants. Use each of us, dear Savior, as instruments of your love and as communicators of the life-giving truths that you have entrusted to us. Amen.*

ESV **Acts 20:17-35** Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. <sup>18</sup> ¶ 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, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; <sup>20</sup> how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, <sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." <sup>13</sup> ¶ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> "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. <sup>16</sup> They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. <sup>17</sup> 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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# ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA**

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**The Third Sunday after Easter – May 8, 2022**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 324 (Verses 1-3, 8) *(Red Hymnal)*

"Jesus Sinners Doth Receive"

**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.

**Psalm 23** (Page 36) (Read responsively) *(Brown Hymnal)*

**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 who are God's. How terrible for those who are not!

## The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – revised *(On Screens only)*

**The Pre-Sermon Hymn** – 338 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Thine Forever, God of Love"

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

**"Confident Communicators"**

**The Offertory** – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Prayers

**The Pre-Communion Hymn** – 783 *(Brown Hymnal)*

"Jesus Shepherd of the Sheep"

**The Preparation for Holy Communion** *(Brown Hymnal page 17)*

## The Distribution

**The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving** *(Brown Hymnal page 20)*

## The Benediction

**The Closing Hymn** – 51 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Now May He Who from the Dead"

## Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion** – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

**Attendance** – Sunday (35) Average (30)

**This Week at St. Paul:**

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

**CLC News** – Pastor Mark Tiefel has accepted the call to Peace Thru Christ of Middleton. Immanuel of Winter Haven has called Pastor John Hein. Pastor David Ude is considering the call to Redemption of Lynnwood. Friday, May 20, is the final day of classes at ILC. Class Day will be held at 3 pm and the annual Spring Concert at 7:30 pm. Graduation is scheduled for Saturday, May 21, at 10 am.

**Vacuum Cleaner** – A new vacuum cleaner has been purchased for the church. Several have expressed interest in helping to defray the cost. Offerings should be marked "Vacuum" and dropped in the offering box.

**Church Council Meeting** – The Church Council is scheduled to meet next Sunday during the fellowship hour.

**Summer Schedule** – Sunday, May 22, is the last Sunday of our regular schedule. Wednesday, May 18, is the final midweek Bible Class.