

May 12, 2019

St. John 10:22-30: ***“It’s a Moment of Clarity!”***

I. Most Can Never Hear.

II. The Blessedness of Being Able to Hear.

III. Full of Assurance.

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St. John 10:22-30

Dear Friends in Christ,

In 2007, Anthony J. Steinbronn published a book entitled *Worldviews, A Christian Response to Religious Pluralism*. On page 88 he wrote:

Popular culture exerts a powerful influence upon the modern man. Ken Meyers, in his assessment of pop culture, calls this culture a culture of diversion, one that prevents people from asking questions about their origin and about the meaning of life. Instead, man's quest is for novelty and a desire for instant gratification. The meaning of human existence is the self and attendance to its needs. (Anthony J. Steinbronn, *Worldviews, A Christian Response to Religious Pluralism*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 2007)

That was 2007, twelve years ago. The reality of that observation has escalated beyond what many of us ever imagined. We're not just a culture of diversion, as Ken Meyers defines it: one that "prevents people from asking questions about their origin and...the meaning of life", but we've become a culture of derision; derision defined as "contemptuous ridicule or mockery." That is to say, ridicule and mockery of that which doesn't agree with the culture's thinking. Steinbronn goes on to say, "Not only is the modern man preoccupied with the new, he also wants the new immediately."

You know what? This thinking floods the church in America. It's best expressed in the incessant demand that the church has to change with the times. Never! It must not! It cannot! God says, "I the Lord do not change." (Mal. 3:6) We're walking with Him in the temple. It's nothing new, but . . .

IT'S A MOMENT OF CLARITY!

I. Most Can Never Hear.

Would you mind going back with me to that thinking, "the church has to change with the times"? If that's the truth then God is permissive, immoral, irresponsible, and His Word is a lie! Listen to verses 22-26 of our text:

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."

Listen: that's the world! It has spent the past 2,000 plus years spending immeasurable amounts of time and money ridiculing and questioning the Christ, and that includes inventing scenario after scenario to, somehow, discredit Him! For 2,000 plus years!!

So, how about a miracle or two? Wouldn't that convince the most hardened unbeliever about Jesus? Well, it didn't when Jesus walked the earth and those who hated Him witnessed the miracles of healing, casting out demons and raising the dead. Remember the healing of the paralytic and that moment when Christ forgave His sins? We're told, "...the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" (Lk. 5:21) Exactly! That's Who stood in front of them! God!

But the words that really sting are these, Jesus words: "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." What a horrid truth. They didn't belong to God! Their hardness of heart, ridicule, hatred of being confronted with their sin and need of a Savior left them as citizens of the grave and hell!

And this brings us into the clarity of the moment; clarity that always brings comfort and hope. . .

II. The Blessedness of Being Able to Hear.

“The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life...” (vv. 25b, 27,28a)

The purpose of the miracles was to testify that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal Son of God. He is the Good Shepherd and His voice speaks to us. R.C.H. Lenski notes, “In the shepherd’s word, wherever and whenever it is spoken, the sheep hear the shepherd’s voice, and it is inexpressibly sweet and attractive to them.” (The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel, p. 753) And it is, is it not?

When we stand before Him torn and beaten by our sin and shame - when the pangs of guilt scream at and condemn us - when sorrows and regrets rob us of our peace is there anything sweeter than the voice of Jesus saying, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”? (Matt. 11:28,29)

What is it the voice of the Good Shepherd says to those fearful that life is defined only by birth, a span of suffering and death? “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (Jn. 10:10b) And, with that, those beloved words: “...whoever believes...should not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn. 3:16)

And look at the promise:

“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.” (vv. 28-30)

Jesus and the Father are one; the word used here for one meaning one in essence. Jesus is God - the Son. He is the Word that reveals the love of God to a fallen world. He leaves us the written Word to comfort and guide. Our Baptisms join us with Him. They mark us as His beloved, forgiven people. The Supper nourishes and feeds us forgiveness and eternal comfort.

Luther writes:

When a stranger calls, whistles, coaxes: “Come, sheep! Come, sheep!” it (the sheep) runs and flees, and the more you call, the more it runs, as if a wolf were after it, for it knows not the strange voice; but where the shepherd makes himself heard a little, they all run to him, for they know his voice. This is how all true Christians should do, hear no voice but their true shepherd’s, Christ, as he himself says.

III. Full of Assurance.

And the words of that voice that ring and drown out the diversions and derision of man are these: ***I give them eternal life.*** He gives us every assurance that nothing, not even the demons of hell, can take us away from His everlasting Presence.

Some years ago, Roh Mehl wrote a book entitled *The Cure for a Troubled Heart*. In the book he tells the following:

"I heard once about a dear, saintly old woman who was gradually losing her memory. Details began to blur... Throughout her life, however, this woman had cherished and depended on the Word of God, committing to memory many verses from her worn King James Bible.

"Her favorite verse had always been 2 Timothy 1:12: 'For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

"She was finally confined to bed in a nursing home, and her family knew she would never leave alive. As they visited with her, she would still quote verses of Scripture on occasion - especially 2 Timothy 1:12. But with the passing of time, even parts of this well-loved verse began to slip away.

"I know whom I have believed,' she would say. He is able to keep...what I have committed...to him.'

"Her voice grew weaker. And the verse became even shorter. 'What I have committed...to him.'

"As she was dying, her voice became so faint family members had to bend over to listen to the few whispered words on her lips. And at the end, there was only one word of her life verse left.

"Him.'

"She whispered it again and again as she stood on the threshold of heaven. 'Him...Him...Him.'

"It was all that was left...".

And it was everything! This **Moment of Clarity**. The Shepherd's voice. We want nothing but nothing of this world to divert us.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott