

The Gospel of John
Week Seventeen
John 10:25-11:13

Day One

25 Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 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."

vs. 25&26 – The Jews demanded a direct statement from Jesus, something to the effect, "I am the Messiah of Israel." Jesus gave them a statement, in fact many statements, but they did not receive or believe what He said. Keep in mind that the spirituality of the leaders was so wretched that Jesus spoke in parables so that their clouded understanding would not be cleared. Jesus told them that His miracles spoke to His identity, which was a problem for the Jews, since He had performed several of them on the Sabbath day in violation of their interpretation of the Law.

Jesus told them why they could not hear what He was saying: They were not His sheep. His sheep would hear His voice. Since they did not believe, they could not hear. Their faith prevented them from hearing His response. As I have written many times, I must ask myself: **What am I not hearing because I don't have the faith to hear? Where are my presuppositions and assumptions preventing me from hearing what the Lord is saying to me and us? Those are also good questions to ask, don't you think? .**

v. 27 – Jesus sheep know who He is and they hear His voice. It is that simple. There are believers who tell me, "I don't hear God" or "He doesn't speak to me." If I am reading what Jesus said correctly, that cannot be the case. Jesus' sheep hear His voice, whether it is through His word, other people – some who know Him and others who don't – through circumstances or by His still, small voice. **What is God saying to you today? What is the theme of His messages to you lately? Have you written it down?** You don't want the Lord saying to you what He said to Israel:

You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you (Psalm 50:17).

v. 28 – Jesus summarized once again what He would do and does for His sheep: 1) He gives them eternal life; 2) they are secure in His watchful care; 3) death, and consequently the fear of death, no longer has dominion over them.

v. 29 – Jesus indicated that the care of His sheep was and is a team effort. He and the Father were involved in caring for the sheep and giving them eternal life.

v. 30 – Jesus stated the source of this extraordinary care was and is the unity between the Father and Him. He did not tell the Jews He was the Messiah. Instead, He told them that He and the Father were one! This was the same as saying that Jesus was and is God, and the Jews heard what He said. That is why they reacted as they did, which we will see in tomorrow's study.

Day Two

31 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, 32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" 33 "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." 34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?"

v. 31 – The Jews once again tried to kill Jesus. This is the third instance in John's gospel where they attempted to stone Jesus – once in John 5, then again in John 8 and now in this instance. Jesus certainly was revealing what was in their hearts, and it was not a pretty sight. These men who had memorized God's word had murderous hearts, thus showing the unspiritual nature from which they functioned.

v. 32 – Jesus did not run or hide when they tried to stone Him. He asked them a question concerning the reason for their intent. **Were they going to kill Him for some specific miracle? For which miracle was He about to lose His life? The healing of the man crippled for 38 years? The man born blind?** Those hardly seem like crimes, but those were the source of the persecution Jesus encountered. **For what are you being persecuted? You are being persecuted, aren't you?** Remember what we are taught:

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).

When you are persecuted, it is not because you have done anything wrong, but rather something right!

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord (1 Peter 3:13-15).

v. 33 – The Jews understood exactly what Jesus meant when He said, "I and the Father are one!" Jesus was not saying He was godly or sent by God. He was saying He was God! When modern commentators say that Jesus never made the claim that He was God or Messiah, they are loony. The Jews knew what Jesus was saying and He is still saying it today: He is God! The Jews considered this blasphemy, for they were looking for a Messiah on the order of David – a mortal man who would serve as king.

Can you see that they missed what Jesus was saying because of what they were thinking? What are you missing due to faulty thinking?

v. 34 – Jesus responded by referring to Psalm 82:6. Was Jesus toying with them or was there a message in what He said? If you read Psalm 82 in its entirety, you see that Jesus was alluding to their failed leadership:

"They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler." (Psalm 82:5-7).

God's expectation was that the Jews would provide exemplary leadership due to having God's Word and presence. Instead, they were simply politicians and pawns for Rome and their own self-interests. How sad. What's more, their focus had become narrow and rigid, preventing any chance they could be used by God for His purposes

Day Three

35 If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken— 36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 37 Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

vs. 35&36 – Jesus knew Scripture! He was able to use the very Scripture that the Jews tried to use against Him and used those verses in His defense. Whenever I enter the pulpit, I count on the same dynamic – that Jesus will help me use Scripture to feed His people and refute His enemies, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

How I wish modern theologians would heed Jesus' words that the Scripture cannot be broken. I just finished an issues in modern theology class in seminary and it was a brutal class. We had to read a lot of books by modern German theologians and none of them took the Scripture seriously. They discounted and dismissed much of what Jesus and the writers had to say, for one reason or another. How tragic. They hold such a low view of Scripture when Jesus held such a high view, and Jesus would know!

What's more, Jesus was referring to His high standing in heaven in this verse, which the writer of Hebrews explained in the opening of his letter:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. (Hebrews 1:1-4).

And then explained our exalted position in the next chapter:

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers (Hebrews 2:5-11).

Are you living up to your exalted position as the crown of God's creation in Christ?

v. 37 – Jesus ordered them not to believe Him unless He could provide evidence of who He claimed to be by doing what the Father does. So the Jews' low opinion of Jesus was really a low opinion of God the Father. They saw the Father as harsh and legalistic, just like the Jews were, so they could not accept Jesus was from God because He did not act like they thought God would or should act.

What "opinion" do you have of God? Does it match reality? If not, guess who has to change his or her "opinion"?

v. 38 – Jesus was trying to help the Jews. He was saying, "Look, if you are having trouble processing who I am by what I am saying, then look at my miracles. They are an expression of your Father's love. Use them as verification of my heavenly credentials." Unfortunately, they could not get past their interpretation of who God was and what they expected Him to do, which was not at all like Jesus.

Day Four

39 Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. 40 Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed 41 and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." 42 And in that place many believed in Jesus.

v. 39 – Jesus was in constant danger, yet at the same time He was in no danger. While the Jews wanted desperately to seize Him, they could not do anything that was not in perfect accord with God's will and timing. The same is true for you and me. We can and should take great confidence in this:

My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me (Psalm 31:5).

'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring' (Acts 17:31).

Are you afraid for your life? Afraid to do some things because they may be dangerous? I am not talking being reckless. I am talking about doing things that are a part of life, like traveling, trying new things, or going to the top of tall buildings.

v. 40 – Jesus had had enough of that visit to Jerusalem, which had lasted several months, and took a break across the Jordan River to what is known today as the country of Jordan. Perhaps Jesus needed a break to restore His ministry confidence and went to a place where His ministry was welcomed. He could heal and teach, with no concerns about the legalistic Jews watching His every move.

Does that thought make Jesus too “human” in your eyes, thinking that He may have needed encouragement? It fits the picture of Him described in Hebrews:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering (Hebrews 2:9-10).

v. 41 – Jesus had ministry success in this retreat spot, for many people came, remembering what John the Baptist had said about him. Even though John had never done any public miracle to verify his words, the people bore witness to the truth of what he had said. It is ironic that these people judged properly but the Jewish leaders could not do so.

v. 42 – The issue always comes down to faith or no-faith in Christ. That was the issue then and it is the issue today. People who say they have no faith are not aware of how much faith they have every day! They believe the other drivers will stay on their side of the road when they drive. They have faith a can of peas they open will not be poisoned. They have faith their cars will start when they turn the key, that the bridge will remain intact when they walk over it, and that they will be back to work the next day. Contrary to what some people say, they live in faith. So to having faith in God is really a natural outflow of their already faith-saturated lives. **Does that make sense?**

Day Five

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This

sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

v. 1 – Jesus was a friend of Lazarus' family, which included Lazarus and his two sisters. They lived in Bethany, which was only about two miles from Jerusalem. This is probably where Jesus stayed whenever He went to Jerusalem.

vs. 2&3 – Mary figured prominently in the gospels, for she was the one who was at the feet of Jesus on two occasions – one to anoint His feet and the other to learn from Him, while her sister Martha fussed and fumed. Now we see the family in crisis, for Lazarus was sick unto death. The sisters sent for Jesus, which means that his friends knew where Jesus was at that point in time.

The sisters knew that Jesus loved them and their brother, so they sent for Jesus to urgently return. They must have known their brother was dying and turned to the only person they knew who could save him. They had faith and a firm expectation that Jesus would come and heal Lazarus. Their faith was about to be tested and their expectation disappointed – for the time being.

Has your faith been tested? Have you encountered disappointment in your faith walk? If so, what can you learn from this story that unfolds in the coming verses.

v. 4 – Jesus recognized what was going on and what He needed to do. He was not pressed by the urgency of the moment to rush into action. He acted like he knew the sisters were sending word and Lazarus was ill. That is because He did know, not because He was functioning in omniscience, but because He was in communication with the Father.

God allowed this sickness and death for two reasons: to glorify the Son and reveal the Father's glory. How often in my life I have second-guessed God when something happened that I did not understand, only to understand it much later when I had a better perspective. **Are you in the midst of the same faith struggle? Can you release the present, trusting God for the future?** I remind you of a passage I have often quoted in these studies over the years:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

Day Six

5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. 7 Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." 8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"

v. 5 – John reported that Jesus loved Lazarus’ family. This once again points out that Jesus was truly human while being truly God. He had friends and loved some more than others. This isn’t favoritism or bias; it’s just human nature. **Do you have a best friend?** Then you understand what Jesus felt toward this family. This is important since without this perspective we lose some of the help that Jesus can give us, not just as God but as our elder brother.

v. 6 – Jesus stayed two more days, delaying on purpose so that Lazarus would die. Without knowing the end of this story, this would seem cruel. Instead, we see it as an act of God’s grace and power. That is why we cannot judge any situation we are encountering in the short-run. We must allow God time to reveal His plan and intention. This situation makes me think of Job’s story, which started well, went to bad, and then came back to good. **Perhaps it is time you read the book of Job again?**

vs. 7&8 – Jesus surprised the disciples by suggesting they return to Galilee. Jesus was a wanted man there and they had tried to seize and kill Him on several occasions. Yet He was recommending that they go back to the place of danger. As stated earlier, Jesus was a man of courage, trusting completely in the Father’s watchful care. Jesus knew that nothing would happen to Him until the right time, so He could function in obedience, trusting God the Father.

That is the place to which I want to be, the place of complete trust, not testing the Lord but not shrinking back either.

Jesus had confidence in the Father as evidenced early in His ministry when the devil tempted Him in Matthew 4. He responded to the temptations by quoting Scripture, and I am sure He relied on Scripture in this case as well. **What could He have been quoting and meditating?** Perhaps these:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart (Psalm 91:1-3).

You may want to read the rest of Psalm 91 on your own. **These would be good verses on which you could meditate as well, don’t you think?**

Day Seven

9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. 10 It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light." 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples

replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

vs. 9&10 – Jesus was not walking around guessing what the Father wanted for His life. He knew, for He was walking in the light. He knew that when He returned to Jerusalem, it would be for many others to see the light that Jesus provided. Jesus also knew that His time was short so He had to show Himself for His sheep to know and follow.

v. 11 – Jesus told the men Lazarus had died, but they misunderstood his analogy. This is the same thing that Jesus said about the daughter of Jairus, and people laughed at Him, for they knew she was dead. Jesus saw Lazarus as simply asleep, which became a Christian term for death in the early years of the church. They saw death, properly so, as something that we will all awaken from one day in the resurrection. **Do you see death as sleep?**

Jesus had faith that when He would speak to Lazarus' dead body, it would come back to life. **Do you have faith that God hears you when you pray?**

vs. 12&13 – As usual, the disciples did not grasp what Jesus was saying and tried to explain the facts to Him. I have done the same thing, trying to inform God of what He already knows or has a better perspective on than I do. **Have you ever done that to God?** Perhaps they were afraid to return to Jerusalem and were trying to talk the Lord out of going. Whatever their motive, they certainly were ill-informed, as I have been many times. **How about you? Have you ever tried to educate God as to the facts of your situation?**

This reminds me of what the Lord said to Job:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me (Job 38:1-3).