

## Discipleship in the Lectionary – 05/08/2022



A look at the week's lectionary through the lens of discipleship and disciple-making.

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Revised Common Lectionary Year C

Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup>

**John 10:22-30**

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

### Hearing and following

Coming after Jesus healing a man born blind (9:1-41), Jesus' self-proclamation as the light of the world (9:5) and as the Good Shepherd (10:1-18), the text for this Fourth Sunday of Easter builds on these metaphors: the spiritual blindness of the non-believers is contrasted with the standing and assurance afforded to the believers as sheep in Jesus' flock. Complete with light and judgment symbolism, this passage identifies the mark of Jesus' flock: They do more than hear His voice - they also follow.

#### John 10:22-30

*<sup>22</sup> 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.*

The setting of this text communicates much. The Feast of Dedication celebrates the re-consecration of the temple in 164 B.C. following the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. Also known as Hanukkah and the Festival of Lights, the light imagery contrasts with the darkness of the physical blindness in 9:1-41 and the current spiritual blindness of the doubters that surround Jesus. The colonnade of Solomon was part of the original (Solomon's) temple that still survived in Jesus' day. This was the area that the king made judgments and exercised justice. Again, the symbolism here is loud. Jesus is the new temple.

*<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 among my sheep.*

In 10:19 there is division among the people as to who Jesus is - just like today. Those who are still in the dark ask Jesus to tell them plainly if He is the Messiah. This question betrays the need for further proof, further convincing, further assurance. It also betrays the locus of fault. They place the fault with Jesus who has not made Himself clear. If only He would speak plainly! In 10:25 Jesus explains to them that He has already told them and provided them with signs, but they still do not believe Him. For some people there will never be enough proof. The implication in 10:26 is God must first give the ability to believe. "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him*" (6:44). Note how Jesus did not say the reverse, "You are not my sheep because you do not believe." The focus is on the inability to believe. This is also emphasized in 6:65; 8:43; 8:47.

*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."*

Jesus makes a statement about the characteristics of His sheep: His sheep hear His voice. He knows His sheep. His sheep follow Him. Then Jesus describes the standing of His sheep: They are given eternal life. They belong to Him and His Father so, by definition, nobody can snatch them away. Jesus concludes with "*I and the Father are one.*" This statement echoes the *Shema*, the basic confession of Judaism: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*" (Deuteronomy 6:4). This is plain enough. The Jewish leaders (who John refers to as the Jews) certainly understand the implications of this statement - Jesus is God. In 10:31 they attempt to stone Jesus.

### Reflections

People in our day are divided over who Jesus is. Given the implications of 10:26, this is not surprising. What is surprising is that within mainstream Christianity, even within the same denomination, there can be so much diversity of belief as to who Jesus is. What is often celebrated today as intellectual integrity, or the freedom of the individual human conscience can emerge from the same misguided and arrogant thinking as Jesus encountered in His day. As far as the human conscience is concerned, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death*" (Proverbs 14:12). The human conscience is only truly free in Christ. As far as intellectual integrity is concerned, the very idea that there is no such thing as a universal truth is itself a universal truth that, by definition, should not exist! To discount the divine Jesus requires the arrogance to claim complete and total knowledge of the entire universe. As much as belief depends on us, the proud and self-confident skeptic may be better off accepting that we are as but sheep in a creation of a God that is bigger than we can ever fully understand. If we can fully understand God, then that god is too small!

Then there are those who only hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and fail to act. They are those who read the Word and intellectually agree with what they read but it stops there. There are many who claim to be Christ-followers but are in fact merely spectators.

Jesus is clear. The sheep that bear His mark are those that hear His voice and follow Him. Hear the Word and do the Word.

