

## Be Careful What You Wish For

4<sup>th</sup> Sun. of Easter – 05/11/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 10:22-30 Pastor Keith Besel

v.27-28, [Jesus says,] **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”**

### **Introduction**

✘ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ What is it that you wish for more than anything else? Really stop here for a second or two and think about that. If you could have anything ... anything at all, what would your wish be?

➔ We all have hopes and dreams. Some are simple and small like, “I wish I could have a piece of candy right now.” Some are grand and glorious like, “I wish I could live a long and healthy and happy life, with no troubles or difficulties until the day that I finally just fall asleep and wake up in Paradise with Jesus.”

✘ Did you know that God actually shared His greatest wish; His desire with all of us in Paul’s first letter to Timothy, chapter 2:4? We are told there that God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

➔ That has always been His desire ever since Adam and Eve first fell away from Him in their sin and disobedience. And it is still His desire for you and me and “all people” today.

✘ So, it breaks God’s heart to hear people like the Jews in our Gospel Reading today when they express their wishes with an attitude of defiance and unbelief.

### **I. Wishing to Promote/Advance Our Own Will**

✘ We’ve all heard the saying, “Be careful what you wish for,” right?

➔ Well, we’re told in verse 24 that the Jews “gathered around” Jesus in the Temple with a confrontational posture to express their wish. More accurately, it was to voice their complaint or accusation. They are not happy with Jesus because it has become clear to them that He is not as easy to manipulate and intimidate as most of the people who came to the Temple.

➔ We don’t know exactly what group(s) of the Jewish leaders these “Jews” represent. They could have been Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes or members of the ruling council known as the Sanhedrin. These men ruled and ran the Jewish Church under the guise of “caring about people’s souls.” But their motives were certainly questionable. And one thing is for sure, whatever they wished for they usually got – often through intimidation and fear.

✘ So they expressed their wishes here with frustration. In the original Greek, verse 24 puts their first question in the form of a common idiom of their day, “How long will you vex us?” Clearly they are not happy with Jesus right now. “If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”

➔ Jesus knows full well what these guys are trying to do. He knows they are only looking for ammunition to use against Him. But that doesn’t scare Him in the least.

✘ Neither should you or I be intimidated or afraid to talk openly about who Jesus is; about His teaching revealed to us in the Bible; and about what He has done for us and continues to do for us every day.

➔ Because look, this kind of approach that we see used here by the Jewish leaders has been, and will be used throughout all of history when it comes to those who wish for and desire something different than Jesus.

➔ In the early 1500s, at the time of Martin Luther, it was the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and the Roman Catholic Pope, Leo X whose wishes were to rule over the majority of what we know today as both western and eastern Europe. Charles V wished for political power and domination, while Pope Leo X wished to build St. Peter's Basilica as a monument to himself. And in order for them to get what they were wishing for, they worked together through fear and intimidation, telling people that they were following God's will, but showing that they really had their own best interests; their own wishes and agendas in mind instead.

➔ Today, we still have both political and church leaders of all flavors and persuasions expressing their impatience and frustration with Jesus and His Word and will. "How long will You vex us," you people of Jesus? The only way they believe they will get their own wishes met, is to intimidate and breed fear within our culture – including our political rulers and those within the various churchly bodies; getting them to plug their eyes and ears to what God has already said; what He has given to us in His Word and through the works of Jesus.

So, they twist God's desire that all people will come to the knowledge of His truth by scaring folks into thinking, for example, that God really created many more genders than just male and female; by influencing people to think that God's idea of "women's health" is to forcefully attack and murder infant girls and boys while they are still in their mothers' wombs; by labeling those who believe Jesus' words in John 14:6, that He alone is "the way, the truth and the life" and that "no one comes to the Father except through [Him]" ... by labeling those who embrace that will of God as "haters" and "intolerant" and "unloving" because they...we actually hear Jesus' Word and follow Him and His will instead of our own.

## II. Jesus' and the Father's Will Over Mine

✕ So, Jesus' response to the Jews' expression of frustration is telling and instructive for you and me today, because He refuses to fall into their own vexing trap and accusation.

➔ He simply, lovingly and directly addresses their misguided desire with an honest response of His authoritative truth. Verses 25-26, "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 part of My flock.'"

✕ It's as if Jesus says to those Jews, "Be careful what you wish for." You asked for Me to speak "plainly" and that's exactly what you will now receive. You see, Jesus doesn't shy away from drawing a bold line between Himself and these supposed church leaders.

➔ The problem then, just as it is today, is this: unbelief! The reason they have been "vexed" by Jesus; the reason that they have not discerned the truth about Jesus, as the promised Christ and the perfect Son of the Father is not because Jesus hasn't already told them, but because they have refused to submit to God's truth; the truth that Jesus has been teaching to them and showing them in His numerous miracles and signs that displayed clearly God's desire for them to come to the knowledge of the truth. They have just plain refused to believe in Jesus!

✕ Just as it was that day before the Jews in the Temple, so it has always been throughout history and so it is today and forevermore. It is always about submitting our will and our wishes to Jesus; about believing in Him in all things and in all ways!

➔ This is the criteria that Jesus uses to tell the Jews the hard but loving and justified truth that they needed to hear that day, "...you do not believe because you are not part of My flock" (v. 26).

✕ I can just hear those Jews asking, "What do You mean, Jesus, when You say You have a flock?" And "Who is it then, that are Your sheep?"

- Jesus spends the rest of this text today speaking plainly not only to those Jews, but to you and me, and all people about the answer to those questions.
- ✕ He answers the second question first, saying that there are six identifying truths about those who are His sheep.
- “My sheep,” He says, 1) “hear my voice”. From the moment we wake up in the morning until we go to sleep at night, the hearts and minds; the eyes and ears of Jesus’ sheep are trained by His gift of faith given to us at our baptism and His Holy Spirit now living within us ... trained to discern and “hear” the voice of Jesus above all of the thousands of voices trying to get our attention every day. When those unbelieving voices are saying, “Don’t listen to Jesus, He’s nothing important. He wants you to listen to me instead; to forget about His wish to have You worship Him first. He’s nothing but a myth, and those stories about Him dying for you are just foolishness.” When Jesus’ sheep hear these things, we block them out and we “hear His voice” as our Good Shepherd; the One who “laid down His life for [His] sheep” (Jn. 10:11).
- 2) Jesus says, “I know them.” As John 1:3 declares, “All things were made through Him and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” And later in John 1:12 we’re told, “To all...who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God.”
- 3) “They follow Me.” This is what happens with true belief, it shows itself in freely, willingly, joyfully submitting to the will of our loving Shepherd. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” That’s when my wishes and your wishes match up perfectly with Jesus’ wishes for us.
- And this is what Jesus wishes for you and for me and for all who hear His voice, believe in and follow Him: 4) “I give them eternal life”. Just before our text in John 9:9-10 He promises, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief” (that’s all of those other voices and influences we were talking about before); “the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”
- Which then means, 5) “they will never perish”. How is Jesus able to make this promise? Because He is the one and only crucified and risen Jesus. By His death He conquered death and by His resurrection, He is now able to give you and me the victory over death so that we – when we believe and trust and follow Him and His voice – we have life with Him; in His eternal heavenly presence, never to perish again!
- And this promise, dear Christians, is a promise not only to address our fears for the future, but to give us peace and security here and now, today as well. So Jesus says, 6) “and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”
- This world is filled with so many dangers and reasons for concern. Every one of us remembers our mothers today and the great comfort we had when we were little in knowing that Mom was holding us tight with her hand. When we faced a busy street we had to cross or we were worried about falling on that scary escalator or thought we might get lost in a big crowd, all we needed to do was hold on to Mom’s hand and we just knew we’d be safe.
- Well, Jesus gives all of us, as His sheep, no matter our age or situation in life right now; He gives us the greatest comfort; the best guarantee possible, “No one will snatch [you] out of My hand” – today or ever!
- ✕ How? How is Jesus able to make such a bold and conclusive promise? Verses 29-30 give us the final declaration of truth, this time about Jesus and the reason why He even has His fold of sheep. And it is only possible because of this proof-positive answer that Jesus gives to those Jews who didn’t believe when they defiantly challenged Him, “If You are the Christ, tell us plainly” (v. 24).

➔ Jesus says, “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.” There is no other question; no greater authority than this that Jesus can call upon in His answer. The One who “is greater than all” – that is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Redeemer – the One and only true God; He and I “are one.”

➔ That means that no one or no thing is able to snatch Jesus' sheep; the souls He has been given to care for and protect by the power of His bloody sacrifice and glorious resurrection; no one else has the almighty power or the all-knowing authority to snatch any souls from His saving hand.

## Conclusion

✘ Jesus can be no plainer in His response than He is in those final words, “I and the Father are one” (v. 30). He's pointing us all to the glorious mystery of His place within the one Triune God, which means that His hand is the Father's hand and therefore, Jesus' sheep are eternally saved and secure in His hand, which is the very hand of God!

➔ Isn't this what you and I wish for more than anything else? To hear His voice; to be known by Him; to follow Him; to be given eternal life; to never perish and therefore never to be snatched from our Shepherd's protective and saving hand? This is not only our wish – it is our certainty!

➔ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.*