

March 15, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 10:19-42.

1. Why did Jesus cause division so often?
2. What did the Feast of Dedication celebrate and what is the modern expression of it?
3. Why are Jesus' miracles important?
4. Can a person deny the miracles of Jesus and be born again?
5. Why did the Jews desire to stone Jesus?

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO BELIEVE JESUS?

John 10:19-42

The verse we opened the service with establishes a very important principle. Natural people do not grasp the truth about Jesus or any other truth that God gives through the Holy Spirit. Natural people are just normal folks who are born through the same process by which we all come into this world.

The problem with natural people is twofold. First is the fact that we are all born with a sin nature. This means we are thoroughly sinful in character and, therefore, we love to sin. Second is that, because of our sin nature, we are not able to grasp spiritual truth. Because we are sinful, we are at odds with God our Creator and know nothing by experience about God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are unable to grasp spiritual truth no matter how clearly it is stated or taught.

God's desire is to gain our attention so that He can draw us to Himself where He gives us a new heart, a new character that is not blinded by sin. Then and only then will we begin to understand spiritual things. God used Jesus, God the Son, to do many mighty miracles in order to arrest the attention of the religious folks in His day. They saw the works. Granted, they didn't understand how Jesus did what He did. But rather than trust Him, they denied that He came from God, choosing rather to assert that He was a fraud.

John told us near the end of this Gospel account that Jesus did many miracles so that people would believe Him. Sometimes they did. Too many times they did not. But, let's not worry about how people responded who are long dead or how they did not respond when they had the opportunity. What about us? What do you think about Jesus' miracles? Who do you think He is? How and why did He do all those things?

Jesus Taught in Real Time and Real Circumstances (vv.19-23).

This discussion came after the Feast of Tabernacles (vv.19-21). As often happened in Jesus' ministry, a division erupted. *There was again a division among the Jews because of these words (v.19)*. We should have noticed from this book that division because of Jesus is a recurring theme in John's account of Jesus' work and ministry. There was a division when Jesus presented Himself as the living waters. *So there was a division among the people over Him (7:43)*. There was division when He healed the man born blind. *There was a division among them (9:16)*.

To modern religious ears, the idea of division is not acceptable. We must all co-exist in peace some people think. But the fact that the promised Christ would cause division was promised. Isaiah promised this reality regarding Messiah when he declared, *"And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 8:14). When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the temple at His birth, the old prophet Simeon *blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed"* (Luke 2:34).

Therefore, division had to happen. It had to be like this because Jesus brought truth from heaven— sinless, untainted truth. He said to

His followers, *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34)*. Such truth cuts across the grain of sinful human wisdom. Normal folks chaff at this idea of division based on truth because *the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot (Romans 8:7)*. Therefore natural people also resist Christ’s servants when we tell the same truth. Jesus warned, *“It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household” (Matthew 10:25)*. We should not be surprised when people who are governed and motivated by the flesh oppose the truth of the Bible. We should expect resistance and determine that we will continue to teach what our Lord taught.

The division in Jesus’ case fell on the authority of Christ’s power. Some of the people concluded that He had a demon. *Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” (v.20)*. This was to attribute Christ’s miracles to Satan. That is ultimate blasphemy. The religious leaders were at the front of this blasphemous assault.

Other people were just as convinced that Jesus was from God. *Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” (v.21)*. Obviously, the people who witnessed this story of the Good Shepherd and who were at the Feast of Dedication also witnessed Jesus healing the blind man. The man Jesus healed came to this same conclusion. When the Pharisees question him, *The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him” (John 9:30-31)*.

The sides of the debate have not changed even in our own day. Jesus of Nazareth had to be who He said He was, God the Son come from heaven. Or Jesus of Nazareth was a deceiver who did miracles through some magical or demonic power. There are no other choices. If you reject Jesus’ claim that He is God the Son, you have to accept that He was at best self-deceived and at worst a liar.

This latest division took place during the Feast of Dedication (vv.22-23). According to verse twenty-two, it was *at that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter (v.22)*. Consider briefly what we know about the Feast of Dedication. This was not one of the required feasts that God ordained in the Old Testament law. It was comparatively a recent creation. This is a feast the Jewish people created in order to celebrate their victory over Antiochus Epiphanes.

During the years 175-164 BC, this evil Syrian king flexed his military muscle in the middle east. He was ruling over a remnant of Alexander the Great’s empire. He loathed the Jews because they resisted him and because they considered themselves to be God’s people. In the late fall of 167 BC, he arrived in Jerusalem, erected a statue of Zeus in the most holy place, and then offered a pig on the altar in order to defile it. He stopped all sacrifices and Jewish worship. A priest named Mattathias along with his sons raised a rebellion against the wicked Antiochus. Three years later, Mattathias’ son, Judas Maccabeus, was successful to defeat Antiochus, free Jerusalem, and restore worship at the temple. This victory was on 25 Chislev, 164 BC.

Therefore, this feast in “winter” (Chislev was our Nov. 15- Dec. 15) celebrated a great victory for the Jewish people. Jews still celebrate it. Today the feast is called Hanukkah—you might have heard of it. It will be celebrated December 6-15. In our text, it appears that Jesus and the disciples had been hanging out in or near Jerusalem since they had come there for the Feast of Tabernacles which had ended a month earlier (chapters 7-9).

In that setting, we see again that Jesus taught in the temple. It was winter, *and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon (v.23)*. Because it was winter, it would have been warmer if Jesus was teaching on the porches. It is also significant that after Christ rose from the grave and ascended to heaven, this is where we find the group of believers meeting and the apostles preaching (Acts 3:11). The picture of gathering storm clouds leading up to the crucifixion of the Lion of the tribe of Judah in the context of “winter” makes us think of C.S. Lewis’s story *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It was winter as long as the white witch was in

control. But when Aslan, the lion who represents Christ, came and died on the stone altar, Spring came and life was renewed.

Jesus Taught That He and the Heavenly Father Are Equal (vv.24-33).

Jesus plainly stated the fact again that He and the Father are equal (vv.24-27). His statement came in the context of people wondering (again, still) who He was. *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" (v.24).* "The Christ" was very important to these people. Ever since the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, God promised the arrival of Him who would redeem the world from sin. Likewise the Jewish people knew all about the promise of the Prophet like Moses who God would raise up and who the people were supposed to follow. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Branch of Jesse, the Son of David, the Servant of Jehovah were all Old Testament pictures of this Christ. Therefore, the populace as a whole, knew that the Christ would be the one ordained by God to lead God's chosen people. Everyone in Israel knew about this promised Savior.

Many people today still believe there is a coming Messiah. Protestants and Catholics have learned about Jesus the Savior from the time they were infants. Muslims and other cults create their own Christ and look for His coming. Who is the real Christ, when will He arrive, where will He show up, what will He do? Inquiring minds want to know.

Actually, there is no need to wonder since Jesus has already stated the truth and we should already know it (vv.25-27). Jesus had already explained the authority behind His works. When the people wondered, *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 (v.25).* Jesus clearly articulated that He is the Christ. Specifically He had told the leaders, the members of the Sanhedrin, that He and God His Father work together (5:17). He said that He is the Light of the World (Christ's character) (8:12). In fact, the essence of Jesus' ministry for the past nearly three years was revealing that He is the Christ.

Jesus not only stated and taught that He is the promised Christ, but He proved He is the Christ by His miracles. Jesus regularly explained that He did miracles because He was doing the work God the Father sent Him to do. All of His miracles were intended, not just as benefit to the recipients (though they did benefit) but as proof that He is the Christ, who God sent.

People could not believe it. Jesus revealed the truth, *but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock (v.26).* It was not that the rulers and people simply doubted that Jesus is the Christ. Yes, there were arguments, confusion, debate, and divisions. But there is something more important at stake here. The "doubters" were unbelievers who could not believe. They could not believe because they were not part of Jesus' flock. God makes up Jesus' flock of people who He Himself draws into the fold of Christ, the Body of Christ, the Church.

These people were not part of the flock because they would not be drawn by God. God did not draw them because they wanted a different kind of Messiah. These people wanted an earthly king who would restore Israel to the position of world leader. They could not accept a suffering Christ who would die to pay the penalty for their sins. They preferred to attempt to pay for their sins by keeping their own laws. They couldn't believe that Jesus was the Christ.

Nothing has changed since that day. Jews today who are looking for Messiah still want an earthly ruler and are still trying to atone for sins through their own works. Multitudes of Gentiles (the rest of the world) refuse to put faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. They want a Christ who will make life easy for them and shower them with blessings like a genie from a bottle. The truth that they need a Savior who shed His blood to pay the penalty for their sins escapes them. They cannot believe because they are not part of the Good Shepherd's flock.

Sheep trust the Shepherd and follow Him. Jesus said, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me (v.27).* That is why the critics doubted Jesus. They were not His sheep. We who are Christ's sheep hear Him speak through His Word. The Bible is not just a collection of ancient writings to us. We hear the words of the Bible as our Shepherd's words of instruction, warning, and comfort.

We are convinced that Christ speaks in a supernatural way through the pages of the Bible. We are confident that Jesus Christ knows us intimately. In response to that confidence, we follow Christ. We are not satisfied to be religious, say religious things, and simply attend a church service when its convenient (even if it is a comfortable setting in which to catch up on our sleep). People like that probably don't believe Jesus and are probably not part of His flock. We hear Christ call us out of the normal rat race of the world and we follow Him. We hear Him speak when we read His word and we follow what He says.

It is very important for us to have this relationship with Christ because He does what only God can do (vv.28-33). He told the people that He gives eternal life (vv.28-30). *"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."* When Jesus stated that He gives eternal life, He used a verb that means that He authorizes, creates, or produces eternal life for His sheep.

Eternal life is life patterned after the quality of His own life that lasts forever. Therefore, no one can take that life from the sheep. Once we have it, we have it! Oh blessed thought! Paul reaffirmed this wonderful truth when he wrote, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1)*. By reading the context of that amazing promise, we discover just what it entails. Paul continued, *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" (Romans 8:31-35)*.

God the Father gives each sheep to Christ. He is great beyond comparison. Therefore, no one or nothing can take us from Him. And Jesus is the same! That is the reality that caused so much division. The Jews concluded Jesus blasphemed when He made this claim of

equality with God (vv.31-33). They were ready to stone Him. John wrote, *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him (v.31)*. This was evidence that they concluded that Jesus had just claimed equality with God. Stoning was the standard punishment for blasphemy.

As they picked up stones, Jesus inquired as to which good work would they stone Him? *Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" (v.32)*. The response to that question helps us realize that the Jews clearly acknowledged that Jesus claimed to be equal with God. *The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God" (v.33)*. The Jewish leaders affirmed the very thing that cults like Mormonism, Islam, Hinduism, and a plethora of other "isms" deny. They disagreed with Jesus, but still they acknowledged that Jesus claimed deity. If Jesus is not equal with God the Father, He was deceived or dishonest and was not a good man. If He was not a good man, how could His sacrifice redeem us from sin's penalty? He was the perfect man, good in every sense, and He was God in the flesh, the only one who can redeem us from sin.

Jesus Appealed to Scripture to Prove He Is Who He Claims to be (vv.34-38).

He knew they trusted their Bible (vv.34-36). *Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came – and Scripture cannot be broken – do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (vv.34-36)*.

Where in their law did God say they were gods? Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 where God speaks, *I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you" (Psalm 82:6)*. We need to consider context to realize that this refers to mere men: *"Nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince" (Psalm 82:7)*. It is obvious from this statement that God spoke about some group of humans (probably the unjust judges of Israel). But God used the idea of gods and sons of the One God to describe a human. How do we explain this? Because those judges were ordained by God to serve as His representatives,

they should have indeed lived and judged like sons of God. They didn't, but that is aside from the argument that God referred to the rulers as gods.

In light of that statement, Jesus argued that Scripture cannot be broken. This means that all Scripture serves as commentary on each passage of Scripture. Was their Bible in error to claim that God called men who He ordained to leadership gods? Was this a mistake? No. The Pharisees especially believed this and taught it. How then can Christ blaspheme if He agrees with their Bible? He was the ultimate representative of God. God truly did send Him to earth to do His work. Therefore, He was not guilty of blasphemy and their own Scripture affirmed Him.

Jesus argued further that His works prove Scripture (vv.37-38). He said, *If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me (v.37)*. It was very obvious that Jesus was doing the Father's work. He taught with unusual authority. He did what only God could do. The people agreed on this. Since, therefore, Jesus did God's work, the people should have believed Him. He said, *"But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (v.38)*.

The purpose of the miracles was to convince. What were the options for response? They could deny that a miracle had been done. That would be quite foolish when the blind man is seeing and the lame man is walking. Could they deny that this was the work of God? That is how the Jews responded. Jesus tells us to just believe that the amazing works were done in the power of God to prove that He is God.

Conclusion (vv.39-42).

At the heat of the argument when Jesus had said all that was necessary to convince the people who would not be convinced, Jesus escaped (vv.39-40). He would not allow the people to stone Him and no one could arrest Jesus before the time for Him to be glorified. *Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands (v.39)*. According to God's timing, Christ would be glorified at the

crucifixion which was still over four months away. It is a reminder that God controls all things for His glory.

Jesus disappeared from Jerusalem. *He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained (v.40)*. Maybe the Jews were glad He was gone. Maybe you would be glad if you stopped hearing about Jesus and all this sin and sacrifice and salvation stuff. But read the words, *There He remained*. That meant there would be no more conviction from truth for the nonbelievers. The last thing you want is for Jesus to leave you and stay away.

In contrast to the majority of the people, there were many who believed Jesus (vv.41-42). They were convinced by works. *And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." (v.41)*. They believed. *And many believed in him there (v.42)*. Some of those folks might have been convinced intellectually. No doubt some were convinced eternally and were born again.

The important question is this, "Do you believe in Him?" You have all the evidence necessary here in this Bible to convince you to trust Jesus Christ alone for salvation from sin. Listen again to John's argument as we close. *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31)*. Jesus gave us ample reason to believe in Him.