

Only the Voice of Christ

Psalm 95, John 10:22–33

Sometimes people ask, “If all churches believe the Bible, then why are there so many denominations? Why do not all Christians agree?” Well, the answer, in large measure, boils down to this: are we listening to the voice of Christ, or are we listening to other voices? A lot of things believed in the Christian church today are not taught in the Bible.

Jesus had a high view of Holy Scripture. When speaking to the Father, he said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word is truth*.” He didn’t say, “Thy word is *mostly* truth” or “Thy word is *usually* truth” or “Thy word is truth *for now*—but that might change.” He didn’t say, “Thy word is truth, as long as the experts agree.” He simply said, “Thy word is *truth*,” a plain statement—no qualifications, no reservations. The “word” of which he spoke was God’s revealed word—the Old Testament. The New Testament had not been written yet. The prophet Isaiah clearly enunciated the biblical standard when he preached, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is *no light* in them” (Isa. 8:20). Note well: if someone claiming to be God’s representative contradicts the Bible, or teaches something not taught the Bible, it *must* be rejected. It is not a trivial matter; the one holding such reveals that he not enlightened, he is not born again. His teaching is not to be received but rejected; it is *not* the Word of God. Every preacher must represent Christ faithfully. He is responsible to the church, through its laying on of hands; ultimately, he is responsible to *God*, to whom he will give account at the final day. What will he say on that day when the Son of God sits on the throne of his glory and presses him with the question, “Where did you get *that* out of the Bible?”

Here is the standard: whatever is *contrary* to the Bible or *in addition* to the Bible is something the church has no business teaching. The church has authority to teach only what is expressly taught or appropriately deduced from Holy Scripture—nothing more.

Let us look briefly at the setting, then we’ll get to our text for exposition and application: verses 26–28. We are told that “it was the Feast of Dedication . . . and it was winter.” This was not one of the three annual feasts that we have recently studied (Passover, Firstfruits, Tabernacles), for those were in early spring, early summer and fall. The Greek word for “Dedication” is plural and literally means *renovations*. This feast celebrated the purification of the temple under Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BC, after it had been desecrated by the Seleucids (Greeks) under Antiochus IV, called by the blasphemous title Epiphanes (“God Manifest”), who profaned the holy place by setting up abominable idols depicting Greek gods and goddesses, and conducted their pagan worship there. The Hebrew word for the feast is Hanukkah (חֲנֻכָּה, *dedication*). At this season there would have been large

crowds in the temple precincts, who would hear our Lord's testimony concerning himself.

We read that the Jews surrounded Christ and accused him of not being totally candid about who he was—something totally untrue—trying to catch him in his words, hoping he might be killed by a mob or arrested by the Roman authorities. Jesus rebukes them, saying, “I told you, and you do not believe.” The problem was the Jews’ unbelief, not Jesus’ failure to be clear. He continues: “The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.” He was referring to his miracles—miracles prophesied hundreds of years before in Isaiah 35, “Behold, *your God will come* with vengeance, with the recompense of God; *He will come and save you.*’ Then *the eyes of the blind shall be opened*, and *the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped*. Then *the lame shall leap like a deer*, and *the tongue of the dumb sing.*” God would come personally to save his people, and would perform notable miracles—something Jesus clearly did, as documented in the four Gospels.

That brings us to the heart of our text, verses 26–28. I have three points: (1) Two categories; (2) One listens; (3) One is blessed. First,

1. Two categories

Jesus says, “But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice . . .” (vv. 26–27).

Here is a contrast between two groups of people: those identified as Christ’s sheep, and those who are “not” Christ’s sheep. At the end of his ministry, in Matthew 25, our Lord will identify this second group as “goats”: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his *sheep* from the *goats*. And He will set the *sheep* on His right hand, but the *goats* on the left.”

“The Son of Man” is the Lord Jesus, sitting on his judgment throne at the last day. He is the Shepherd, and his people are his sheep. Here is familiar Old Testament imagery: “The LORD is my *shepherd*; I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1). “We are his people, even the sheep of his pasture” (Ps. 100:3). “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock” (Ps. 80:1). “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd” (Isa. 40:11). Jesus proclaims, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. . . . I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:11, 14). Peter refers to him as the “chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4). Here’s the good news: if you belong to Christ, if you have asked him to save you, then he is *your* Shepherd, and you are one of *his sheep*! He is not the Shepherd of the deserving but of the undeserving. “Christ died for the *ungodly*!” (Rom. 5:6). Christ didn’t die for those who think they are good enough. He died for sinners!

How are those who are not Christ's sheep identified? *They do not believe!* Jesus nails it: "You do not believe, because you are not of My sheep." How can *you* know if you are one of Christ's sheep? You *believe* in him! You love him. You want to know him and have fellowship with him more than anything else. You want others to believe in him. You pray that the Lord would open hearts to the Gospel. People all around, including many of our loved ones, are lost. They want nothing to do with Christ.

Why do people not believe in Christ? It is not for lack of evidence. The standard of proof to establish the historicity of past events is set forth in Holy Scripture: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."¹ One witness cannot convict a man in a court of law. But in the case of Christ, God gave the written testimony of *four* evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There is also the testimony of Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost and in his first epistle. There's the testimony of the apostle Paul. These men were willing to lay down their lives rather than deny what they knew to be true: that the Lord Jesus had been put to death by crucifixion, and that he had risen from the dead on the third day, exactly as he had foretold, and that he was seen by witnesses. All the founders of the world's religions died and went to their grave—*all* of them! But Jesus rose from the dead! This is an astounding fact, yet you point it out to people and they respond with a collective "Ho, hum." They just don't *want* to believe. You tell them that if they don't believe in Christ they will go to hell—and they are not the least bit concerned. They go on in their unbelief. They don't *want* to believe in Christ.

But the reason Jesus gives is very striking: "You do not believe, because you are not of My sheep." What this plainly means is that they are not among the elect. When Adam sinned, he brought spiritual death, guilt and condemnation upon the whole human race. No one can truly understand the Gospel or believe in Christ unless he is born again. As Jesus put it, "unless one is born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). A person cannot savingly believe that which he cannot even see—that which doesn't make sense to him.

What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ? It means to acknowledge that you are a sinner, that you are guilty before a holy God, that you have fallen short of God's standard of absolute perfection, that you cannot earn your own salvation, that the Lord Jesus is your only hope. Does this describe you? Then your responsibility is to confess him before men and before the elders of the church. "Whosoever . . . shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). If you confess Christ before men, then he promises to acknowledge you before the Father on the day of judgment: "This

¹ 2 Cor. 3:1; cf. Deut. 17:6, 19:15; Matt. 18:16

person is mine, I died for him. His sins were laid on me. My perfect righteousness is credited to him. Come, thou blessed of my Father, enter into the heavenly kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Isn’t this what you want to hear from the lips of Christ?

This is my first point: “two categories” (sheep and goats). The second is:

2. One listens

Hear again the Word of God: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (v. 27). Out of all the men and women in the world, only Christ’s sheep—known only to God—hear his voice. To “hear” is to acknowledge, to respond to, to obey.

We’ve all seen children who, when they are spoken to, continue on in their play, never even acknowledging that they were spoken to. So we speak a second time, and again, no answer. Maybe they were given a specific instruction—“Stop what you are doing,” “Look at me,” “Come here”—but no response. Because the parents have not been proactive and have not consistently required the child’s attention—*every* time, time after time—bad habits have taken root, like stubborn weeds that need to be pulled out. But sometimes even the adults have set a poor example. The cry has gone out: “Dinner’s ready, come to the table,” but family members are absorbed in their devices, their games, their reading. They might say, “Coming” or “Just a minute,” but the food is getting cold, and the cook is getting irritated. When Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice,” the reference is not merely to sensory perception in the auditory nerve, but to *action*, to obedience.

So here are two categories: sheep and goats. The voice of Christ goes out. The Master speaks. The one listens; the other does not. He is too preoccupied, too busy with his own affairs. He goes on, as if he never heard. He does not listen to Christ. But the other—the sheep—listens, like a servant ready to do his master’s bidding. The most important—the most urgent—thing in the world is to answer Christ: “I am yours, I am at your service, I am ready to do your will. ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.’”

So I ask you, when the Savior utters his voice, do you hear? Do you have a heart to obey? The answer to that question determines if you are one of Christ’s sheep. All of us mess up. None of us have a perfect record. We can—and should—do better. We constantly need to recommit ourselves to Christ. But if there’s no response, if there is no desire to listen intently to the Savior and obey his call, then something is amiss. We need to take remedial action. There are two categories of people. One listens! “Master, speak! Thy servant heareth.”

How well do you listen to Christ? Be honest now. When you hear his voice in the Scriptures or in the sermon, are you eager to obey, to put the Word into practice? Or have you become dull of hearing? Have other things taken on greater importance than obedience to King Jesus? If so, then you need to repent and

recommit yourself to Christ. He is Lord! He is the one who demands—and deserves—immediate, absolute obedience. Obedience to Christ is always the best thing—best for us, best for his kingdom, best as a testimony before a watching world. It indicates: “I am Christ’s. I am his willing servant. I am not a hypocrite. I am fully devoted to him—no questions asked.” Like Abraham, who was called upon to offer up his son Isaac; like Daniel, who was ready to be thrown into the lions’ den rather than stop praying; like the saints of old who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, so must we be ready to do whatever the King calls us to do.

Two categories. One listens. Thirdly,

3. One is blessed.

Jesus continues: “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (v. 28).

Here is the supreme promise: eternal life. There is no greater promise. Here is the same gift that is promised in John 3:16—the same two Greek words, but there it is translated “everlasting life”: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have *everlasting life*.”

We live in a world of change, of decay. Buy some fresh fruit and don’t eat it for a couple days. What happens? It goes bad. Make some homemade baked goods—baked without chemical preservatives. What happens? They go bad. Wear a favorite garment—fresh and beautiful. Keep wearing it, and eventually it becomes old, tattered and worn. Buy a new Bible. Eventually, the leather cracks, the pages become wrinkled and torn. Buy a beautiful new car, and eventually it becomes rusted and stops functioning. In the words of the hymnwriter, “change and decay in all around I see; O thou who changest not, abide with me.”² Yes, everything around us is subject to change and decay, but God does *not* change. His promises are sure, and the greatest promise of all is eternal life. We cannot attain it by our good works or merit, and no one else can give it—only Christ. Is he your Lord and Savior? Then this promise is for you! “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). Adam was our covenantal representative. When he acted, he acted on behalf of his people; he represented all his seed. When Adam sinned, we sinned in him. The whole human race fell in Adam. But Christ is the covenantal representative of the elect. He accomplished the atonement for all his elect. Because he lives, we shall live also. Those who trust in him are truly blessed! The promise of eternal life is the most amazing promise of all, promised to the sheep who hear the Shepherd’s voice. Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice.”

² <https://www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org/hymns/abide-with-me/> accessed 9-27-2025

But there is another application as well, and it is this: *Only the voice of Christ should be heard in the church*. The church has no right to teach or preach anything other than what Christ taught in the Bible. The Bible is “the word of Christ.”³ The church is the kingdom of Christ and is duty-bound to hear her king. Other voices want to drown Christ out, but we must not let them. Why are there so many denominations, so many opinions? As I stated at the beginning of this sermon, it all boils down to this: *Are we listening to Christ?* Christ is the only King and Head of his church. No Christian church has authority to teach anything not taught in Christ’s Word, the Bible. Are we listening to Christ, or are we listening to other voices? Sadly, churches teach things that are not in the Bible: purgatory; transubstantiation; Mary as the mediatrix; the use of images and icons in worship; the false teaching that salvation is by grace *and cooperation with grace* (i.e., good works); the rapture—the idea that the world is going to go through hell on earth, but that Christians are going to be caught away and be spared; the idea that God gave the Jews an unconditional title to the land of Palestine, and that the Christian’s duty is to support political Israel; the “altar call”—pleading with people to walk the aisle and stand at the front to receive Christ; the idea of “entire sanctification”—that through a “crisis experience” after conversion, a Christian can become entirely sanctified and never, ever sin again; allowing female preachers, pastors and elders, contrary to the Bible command, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak”⁴; or the “prosperity gospel”, the false teaching that God wants his people to be rich, and if you are not rich, you obviously do not have faith. These are *not* the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice.” *Only Christ’s voice should be heard in the church*. When a man stands at the pulpit, he represents Christ. A church service should never devolve into a free-for-all with everybody talking at once, drowning out the voice of Christ.

How do we discern the voice of Christ? *Because it conforms to Holy Scripture*. We can’t discern the voice of Christ because it is loud. Sometimes Christ speaks through a still, small voice.

Listen to our Old Testament text, Psalm 95: “Today, *if you will hear His voice*: do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

Only the voice of Christ is to be heard in the church. Oh, my hearer, listen to Christ! Treasure his words. Meditate upon them. Shape your life by them. Speak

³ Col. 3:16

⁴ 1 Cor. 14:34

them with your own mouth. Receive his blessings. And be assured of the greatest blessing of all—eternal life. Amen.