

Marvel: What Did Jesus Do?

I and the Father are One

John 10:22-42

Mark Vroegop

“At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. 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.’ 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 among my sheep. 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. 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.’ The Jews picked up stones again to 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?’ 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.’ 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?” If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 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.’ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. And many came to him. And they said, ‘John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.’ And many believed in him there” (John 10:22–42).

When was the last time, while in the midst of a conflict with another person, you thought *I’m not sure they can hear what I’m saying?*

This statement will usually emerge from a sense of frustration and deep concern. Words are being spoken. The ears are physically hearing what is being said. But it doesn’t result in mutual understanding and true listening. In many respects, it makes things worse.

Words can fall on deaf ears, creating even more conflict. It’s awful. And it happens all the time in our relationships.

In fact, it can be a bit surprising when someone really understands what you are saying. The brokenness of our humanity creates a gravitational pull toward not hearing one another. So, when words are

spoken, received, understood, and acted upon, it's pretty incredible. It takes a lot of work to build enough trust so that communication can take place without huge issues.

A Broken Filter

Do you know why that is the case? It's because the heart—what you feel, think, and believe—filters what is heard.

What is true in the human relationship realm is even truer in the spiritual realm. I'm talking about your relationship with God, what you believe about the Bible, what you've done with Jesus, and how you handle your individual sin issues.

In the same way that the words of a person can "go in one ear and out the other," the words of Jesus can follow the same path. Life-giving words that land on hardened hearts go nowhere.

What's remarkable about the Gospel of John is the contrast that we keep seeing between those who believe and those who resist the message of Jesus. Some people embrace Jesus's teaching. Others reject him. Some people fall at his feet in worship. Others pick up stones to kill him.

Our text today makes this very clear. In John 10, Jesus makes a series of profound statements. If you are his disciple, his words make you want to shout for joy. If you are against Jesus, his words make you angry.

John wrote this gospel in order to identify a path toward belief. And we find in this text a sobering thought: **you'll never hear Jesus correctly if you don't want to listen.**

Or to state it positively: **it's a miracle that anyone listens to Jesus.**

Let's examine this text by answering three questions: (1) "What is our problem?" (2) "To whom do we belong?" and (3) "What will you do?"

What's the Problem?

Our text begins with a description of the setting where the conversation with Jesus and the Jews took place. Verse 22 identifies that the context was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem.

For those of you who like history, this feast has an interesting backstory. It's not a biblically mandated feast. Instead, it was a cultural event meant to celebrate the rededication of the temple after it was desecrated. In 167 B.C., the Syrian leader Antiochus Epiphanes attacked the city of Jerusalem, entered the temple, and set up a pagan altar on the site of the altar of burnt offerings.¹ He was severe in his persecution of the Jewish people and outlawed the possession of the Hebrew Scriptures.

¹ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 61.

Under the Jewish leadership of Judas Maccabaeus, the temple was recaptured and consecrated on December 25, 164 B.C. This festival became known as the Festival of Lights, a time to celebrate the dawning light of freedom. Today the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah is a similar celebration.

The Festival of Dedication was both a spiritual and a political event. It marked an event where the Jewish people threw off their oppressors and purified their place of worship. It's important for you to remember that this political/spiritual current is underneath Jesus's teaching. During Jesus's day, Rome was occupying Jerusalem, and people were looking for the Messiah to come to liberate the Jewish people again.

Part of the problem as it relates to Jesus's teaching was the regular collision with spiritual truths and political ideology. Jesus was challenging the people to consider which kingdom their affections were really set upon—the kingdom of God or the kingdom of man. Part of the problem for the Jewish people was that their allegiance to the nation of Israel had surpassed their affection for the God of Israel.

In John 11, we read these insightful words:

“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:48).

I don't think it's by accident or merely for a chronology that John mentions this. The conversation that follows is loaded for personal, spiritual, and political reasons.

Verse 23 tells us that Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon, a large covered area in the temple where the early church met (see Acts 3:11 and 5:12). Jesus is in the theological and political center of the Jewish nation. Remember that as we move forward in our text.

A confrontation of sorts ensues in verse 24 as the Jews gather around Jesus and ask him a very direct question: “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” These people are frustrated with Jesus that he's not, in their opinion, being clear about who he is. However, Jesus has been very clear.

The issue is the divisive nature of Jesus's ministry. In 10:19-21 we find this running debate among the Jews as to whether or not he really is the Messiah. Some people thought he was demon-possessed. Others thought he was insane. Still others believed in him. This conflict over Jesus created a lot of tension.

And what is fascinating and telling is the fact that they blame Jesus. In their minds, the conflict about Jesus is because of his lack of clarity. Jesus is going to turn the tables. Look at his answer in verses 25-26, because it gets to the heart of the problem.

“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 among my sheep’” (John 10:25–26).

Jesus had told them who he was. The problem was not his lack of clarity, but their lack of belief. They had another image in mind of what the Messiah would be. They could not conceive of a suffering servant or the value of a kingdom that was not political or military in nature.² Jesus didn't fit their expectations. He confronted the idols of their heart.

His works should have been enough to convince them. The problem was not the plainness of Jesus's words but the hardness of their own hearts. That's why Jesus says that the reason they don't believe is because they are not among his sheep.

These people are coming to Jesus for the wrong reasons, and they are not willing to receive his words. Second Corinthians 4:4 tells us something similar: "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).

There are many ways the enemy keeps people blinded. If you are a Christian now, I'm sure you can remember what this was like. Here's a list of some of the things that blind people:

- Pride – they refuse to acknowledge they need help
- Comparison – they balance the scales by looking at other people
- Power – they can't embrace the humility and the different agenda that's required
- Control – they don't want to have someone else run their life
- Affections – they love their present life or sin issues too much

And there are many more. If you are not a follower of Jesus, what is your belief barrier? Christian, what were the issues that stood in your way before Jesus broke through?

I love how John Newton, a converted slave-trader said it:

*Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
T'was blind but now I see*

The problem is not the lack of plainness of Jesus's words, but the hardness of their hearts.

To Whom Do You Belong?

Verses 27-30 push the problem deeper by wrestling with the question of belonging. Jesus, in effect, tells the Jews that the reason they don't understand him is because they don't belong to him. He doesn't know them. They are not Jesus's sheep.

² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 392.

It's a penetrating statement with sweeping implications. Notice the centrality of Jesus in these verses:

"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. **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" (John 10:27–30).

These sheep are those who belong to Jesus. *Because* of this belonging to him, they hear, are known, and follow him. They don't hear him and *then* become his sheep. Jesus's sheep belong to him and hear his voice as a result of belonging to him. We see here the great mystery of God's sovereignty over our salvation.

We must acknowledge a real tension that exists here, because on the one hand, human beings are called to believe and are held responsible for the rejection of Jesus (see Acts 6:22-23, 36-40). But on the other hand, "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). As Jesus told Nicodemus, ". . . unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

"My sheep hear my voice" is a rebuke to those who are questioning Jesus. He's telling them that their problem is not simply misunderstanding what Jesus is saying. Jesus tells them that their real issue is not belonging to Jesus. They will never hear him while they are separated from him.

Jesus is inviting them and anyone who hears these words to consider who they really are and to whom they really belong. Jesus is attempting to help them understand the true nature of their problem. Their issue is not what they hear. The problem is what they want to hear.

Consider, however, how these words land on those who do belong to Jesus. These verses are full of amazing promises. The followers of Jesus are given eternal life, will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of Jesus's hand (v. 28). But what is this promise based upon?

Everything Jesus says is connected to his relationship with his sheep. The hope for their future rests upon their belonging to him. Why do you hear Jesus's word? Because of Jesus. Why do you follow Jesus? Because of Jesus. Why do you have eternal life? Because of Jesus. Why will you never perish? Because of Jesus. And what is your confidence that you are going to persevere to the end? It's only because of Jesus.

Behind your conversion, underneath your spiritual growth, and in front of your future is the power of God—both the power of resurrected Christ and the authority of the triune Godhead (v. 29).

That's why it is critical that the text says "I and the Father are one" (v. 30). The fountainhead of our salvation and the hope for our future is entirely connected to our relationship with Jesus. The security of

the sheep rests with the good shepherd.³ Or as Paul said to the church in Colossae “your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

If you are a believer in Jesus, it means that nothing can penetrate the vault of Jesus’s love for you. No sin, no trial, no problem, no temptation, and not even the devil himself can change the fact that you belong to Jesus. And when you hear his word or follow his commands, it is yet another evidence of his affection for you.

Being a disciple of Jesus flows from belonging to Christ, to his Church, and to one another.

What Will You Do?

Our text concludes with the response of the Jews at the temple. Rather than being broken over Jesus’s words and pleading for him to help them, they want to kill him (v. 31). Their actions, once again, simply confirm how far they are from Jesus.

Jesus then asks them for which good deed are they seeking to kill him (v. 32). They reply that they are going to kill him for blasphemy—making himself God (v. 33). This is the true claim that will get Jesus killed on the cross.

However, Jesus buys some time with them by citing a verse in Psalm 82:6. Verses 34-36 are an example of Jesus being wise as a serpent but innocent as a dove (Matt. 10:16). Jesus argues that if the Bible uses the terms “gods” for something less than God, why are they stoning him? I think it’s meant to make them think so that they don’t start throwing stones.

But then he gives them another invitation to believe:

“If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 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.” Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands” (John 10:37–39).

He’s making yet another appeal for them to believe in him based upon the works that he is doing. They don’t believe his words. But will they believe what he does? That’s the question. According to verse 39, they not only didn’t believe in him, but they also sought to arrest him.

It doesn’t matter what Jesus does. It doesn’t matter what he says. It doesn’t matter who he claims to be. Even though he’s in the temple during the Festival of Lights as the Light of the World, they will not believe. Their hearts are against him so that their ears are closed.

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 393.

In order for Jesus to be received, he must go across the Jordan River. There, he encounters people ready to receive him. Jerusalem—the seat of power, influence, and education—rejects him, while those living in the wilderness receive him.

Are You Listening?

You'll never hear Jesus if you don't want to listen. The problem is not our ears or even our understanding. The issue is the heart. I wonder if you would describe yourself as a person whose heart is closed. Perhaps you are listening to this sermon, and it's dawning on you that the Bible is actually talking about you. Oh, friend, that is a gift from God! Turn to Jesus today. Stop running from him. Why not come to Jesus right now? Why not turn from your sins, invite Christ to be your Savior, and follow him?

To those of you who are Christians, you should marvel that you ever heard in the first place. Do you remember the moment when the good news broke into your life? Do you remember the miracle of how you saw yourself and your life so differently? Thank God today because it is a miracle—a work of God's sovereign grace—that anyone believes.

Are you a Christian who knows what it means to be loved by God but who has stopped listening to what Jesus says? Whether it's because of pride, power, knowledge, or experience, let's be warned that it was the educated, religious people, in power who rejected Jesus's teaching.

Finally, are you a weary-hearted saint? Are you troubled by the weight of your failures last week? Or perhaps a physical issue has caused clouds to form over your soul? Maybe the devil is doing all sorts of evil things, and you wonder how you're going to make it to the end.

Let me assure you that underneath your life is not your strength, ingenuity, or knowledge. The foundation of your life, as a Christian, is this simple promise: You belong to Jesus.

Your hope in this life is this glorious truth:

"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" (John 10:27–28).

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