

“Belief!”

04-21-13

We find Jesus in the same situation with the Jewish leaders that He finds Himself often. Here He's walking in the temple, no doubt doing His Father's Will showing love and compassion to the people around Him.

Open to John 10. However, the Jews want to hear some words from Jesus they can use to condemn Him and accuse Him of blasphemy. He's been a thorn in their side the whole three years of His ministry! Every time they think they have Him, either He gets away or they don't do what they want to do, because they're afraid of the people!

Look at verses 24-26, *“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 part of my flock.”*

They wanted to have Him say clearly if He was the Christ. Jesus' answer was clear, even though it might not have been the most direct. He says to them, *“I told you but you do not believe!”* They weren't seeing Him clearly because they didn't want to! They weren't hearing because it threatened them and it would shake up their world!

Because of their lack of faith, Jesus says that they're not part of His flock! So what about us now? To be thought of as one of His own all revolves around faith or belief! To put it simply, 'belief gets you into the flock – disbelief kicks you out!'

Let's talk about sheep! I'm sorry, but sheep aren't the smartest animals in the barnyard! In fact, they're dumb! Being a 'city boy', my first exposure to sheep was at a Lutheran monastery in southern Michigan. I was there with a group of teenagers from a group of churches to be trained as head acolytes. The monastery was in the woods and it had a flock of sheep.

Thinking they could get the sheep to do anything, many of the boys would yell and make a lot of noise. The sheep responded by continuing to eat and maybe raise their heads!

Sheep for the most part are totally focused on themselves. While their head is down eating away, they really don't care if anyone or anything is around them or not! They'll just continue to eat and eat. That's why sheep have to be moved often, because if they're not, they'll eat all the vegetation right down to the dirt! They'd fall off a cliff if they're eating because they didn't notice!

But there is one thing sheep will do pretty well, they'll follow a leader! Look at verses 14-15, *“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

I had a perfect example of this at the monastery. After a training session, we went out to the pen because it was time to feed the sheep. They were probably about 500 yards away. Even with all the noise and yelling, they just continued to eat. That was until the shepherd came! He shouted at the top of his lungs, *“Come-on girls”* a couple times and all of a sudden one of them looked up and slowly started to move toward us.

And when one of them starts to move they all do! This flock of sheep came running at full-speed toward the pen. There was only a three-foot wide opening, but they knew

what they were doing. They didn't even slow down until they were in the pen eating the food the shepherd had brought! They knew they would be taken care of because they trusted the shepherd!

Sheep will always follow a leader, even if the leader is wrong! Isn't that sometimes like us? We follow a leader for something and later we find out that the leader has led us to the wrong place. This seems to happen many times in the workplace and in other places.

Jesus is our true Shepherd! He guides and leads us each day along the right path. He protects us! Look at verses 27-28, *"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."*

We receive many blessings as we walk by faith! Jesus knows us! He calls us His own! We're part of His flock! In the waters of Baptism, He says, *"I have called you by name, you are mine!"* He came to earth as our Good Shepherd and willingly gave Himself for us. He gave His body and shed His blood that we might live!

Open to Revelation 7. But it's more than life here, it's an eternal life with Him forever! All the struggles and difficulties of this life are gone! We are secure and can rejoice because Jesus Christ has promised to take us to Himself forever!

Look at verses 15-17, *"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

This past week, there were quite a few things that shook our confidence and peace. On Monday, the bombings at the Boston Marathon. On Wednesday, the horrific explosion at the fertilizer plant in Texas. In both of these, there were lives that reached their end, and others that would never be the same! Along with these things, there are things that happened in our own lives, and it's so easy to lose heart. I'm sure at times these struggles can cause you to wonder if God is really here and if He really cares.

Let me assure you! He's here and He truly cares for every one of you! He said, *"I will never leave you, not forsake you."* As you walk by faith, the blessings of belief are endless! The promises of your Good Shepherd will continue to bring you joy and gladness, now and for eternity! You have a Shepherd Who will lead you exactly where you will be secure!

"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." Believe in Jesus Christ! Follow Him! Hang on to Him with all you've got! He truly is your Good Shepherd!