

## Seeking Blessed Assurance

(John 10:22-30)

Sermon delivered by The Very Rev. Matt Rhodes at Christ Church, Millwood, Virginia  
Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 12, 2019

In the name of one God: creator; redeemer; and sustainer. Amen.

How often in life do we have to hear something before it finally sinks in? Is there a particular number of times that we must be told something before we believe it? And how well do we read the world around us and understand what we are seeing?

These are three questions that are quite relevant in considering this passage from John's Gospel. We are already well into Jesus' ministry, and his disciples and friends and the crowds of those following him have heard and witnessed some incredible things. Yet here we are, with so much having taken place ... and they have not yet figured it out. In this passage, it is specifically the members of the Jewish community who will make this request ... the same Jews who will just a few verses later want to stone Jesus because of what they consider blasphemy: stating that he and his Father are one.

Even for them, and perhaps even for those more supportive of Jesus, the answer has been in front of them ... ***with*** them ... the entire time. Yet they ***still*** ask the question. They make a request that Jesus share with them the statement of fact to which many at that time had already borne witness... ***time and time and time again.***

"If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."<sup>1</sup>

Somehow, I do not think the answer they got was the one they were expecting. It is human nature I believe to hope that we get what we ask for, and so undoubtedly they were waiting for Jesus to simply turn and say, "Okay. I ***am*** the Messiah." But ***he did not.***

No, instead he began to lecture them. "I have told you," he says, "and you ***do not*** believe."<sup>2</sup> You have seen what I have done in the name of God, and you ***do not believe me.*** Essentially, he tells them ... in the words of Cynthia Jarvis ... "Take a look at my life; take a look at my actions. My behavior shows you who I am."<sup>3</sup> Jesus being just as much human as he is divine (the divinity which his critics would shortly seize upon), I would not doubt there was a bit of exasperation in his voice. I even wonder if he did not in the midst of his prayers and conversation with his divine Father ask, "What ***else*** do I need to show them before they ***believe?***"

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<sup>1</sup> John 10:24 (NRSV).

<sup>2</sup> John 10:25 (NRSV).

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Jarvis, "John 10:19-30: Pastoral Perspective." *Feasting on the Gospels: John, Vol. 2*, Kindle edition.

Setting aside for a moment those who were skeptical of him, was this moment for others possibly a matter of simply needing reassurance, or could it in fact have been a request rooted in a fledgling faith that was not yet deeply rooted? With everything they had seen and heard from Jesus they had to have been amazed ... and overwhelmed ... and stunned. But no amount of amazement in the world seemed to give them what they in their deepest selves were seeking, and what they may have been lacking: true, abiding faith.

I think what they were seeking was, in the words of the beloved hymn by Fanny Crosby, **blessed assurance**. They had received a “foretaste of glory divine;” they had witnessed “perfect delight” and seen glimpses of “visions of rapture.”<sup>4</sup> They may have known on some deeper level what they had gotten during this time with Jesus, but by their request they seemed to give a sense that they may not have fully **understood** ... or **believed**.

Jesus tells them they do not believe because they are not yet numbered among his sheep ... the flock of the Good Shepherd. Yet he has given them all they need; he has taught them; he has demonstrated to them; in his words, he has already told them the answer to the question they are asking. They are **agonizingly** close. They **know** the answer. They just do not **believe**.

In today’s world, it is easy to lose the assuredness we have that God is with us, moving and working among us. Despite all of the miracles that take place in the midst of the difficulties and pain of this life ... the tremendous ones that burst forth like incredible flames in front of us and the small, almost imperceptible ones that take place just out of sight ... we ourselves may feel the urge to make the same request: “If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

When we do ... and if you are like me, there will be moments when you **will** ask ... may we hear again the words of Jesus: “I **have** told you.” May we always be mindful of the gifts we have received ... the gifts of all we have seen and heard and witnessed that makes the presence of Jesus real and tangible in our lives.

Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Lyrics of “Blessed Assurance,” by Fanny Crosby. [https://hymnary.org/text/blessed\\_assurance\\_jesus\\_is\\_mine#Author](https://hymnary.org/text/blessed_assurance_jesus_is_mine#Author)