

JESUS GIVES ETERNAL LIFE

John 10:22-42

Key verse 10:27,28

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

In the previous verses 1 to 21 we had reflected on the good shepherd Jesus. While a stranger thinks only of himself and runs away in times of need and danger, the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep and is ready to give his life. For example, in chapter 9, Jesus served the blind man as good shepherd until he testified that he believed in the Messiah and worshipped him. In contrast, the superiors of the Jews were not sheep of Jesus, because they fought persistently against Jesus and against the man born blind to the end. In verse 20 they said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" In today's text we want to reflect more deeply on who Jesus is. Let us get to know Jesus, who gives eternal life to his sheep, so that we may serve the work of God in our generation with the firm certainty of eternal life.

1. I give them eternal life (22-30)

Consider verse 22: "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter." The Feast of Dedication of the Temple (Hebrew Hanukkah) takes place in the month of December. This festival dates back to the time of the Maccabees. When King Antiochus (Epiphanes) abolished worship in Jerusalem in 168 B.C. by a religious edict, killing many people and forcing the priests to sacrifice to the foreign gods, there was a man

of faith, Matattias, who together with his five sons did not look away, but fought courageously for God with holy zeal, just as Phinehas once did (Gen 25:7-11). Matattias and his sons won allies and waged a victorious partisan war against Antiochus. The temple dedication festival commemorated how God had rededicated the temple in 164 B.C. after the terrible time of persecution, thus giving light to his people and restoring worship in the temple.

Consider verses 23.24: "and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Why did the Jews say, "How long will you keep us in suspense?" At present, because of the Covid 19 pandemic, we experience every day what it means to live in uncertainty. Will the number of infections continue to rise? When will I myself be affected? Will there be a vaccine soon? Will there be a lock-down again? How much will the economy suffer? This is uncertainty, because there are different theories on these questions and nobody can give a patent answer. But many young people also live in ignorance about the spiritual world. The reason is that many do not know the Bible and have heard many false teachings in religious education, e.g. about creation, the Fall, judgment and hell, also about Jesus'

death on the cross and resurrection. It is a spiritual fact that the church itself is responsible for the fact that it has torn the Word of God apart and that many precious souls live in uncertainty. It is really miserable to live in the uncertainty, so that one does not know what the truth is, what is to come and how it continues.

But Jesus had a clear answer to the uncertainty of the Jewish superiors. Let us look at verses 25:26: "Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep."

The uncertainty of the Jewish superiors was a self-inflicted, even unnecessary uncertainty, based on their false ideas about Jesus and their false expectations of the Messiah. Jesus did so many works. In John's gospel we have learned how Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding of Cana; how he healed the son of a royal official; how he fed a crowd of 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish; how he healed a 38 year old sick man; and how the man born blind became seeing and believed in the Messiah.

Jesus had never left the Jewish leaders in the dark, but through his words and signs he had clearly identified himself as the Messiah. Jesus had said in John 5:37, "And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me." In John 6:38, Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me." The cause of the uncertainty of the Jewish leaders was solely due to their unbelief and false life purpose. Although Jesus had clearly revealed to them that He is God and the promised Messiah, they remained in uncertainty. Jesus was very sad that His chosen people lived as slaves of sin and as servants of Satan, so that they were always in the dark when they saw Jesus, instead of living with the peace of God. Let us look at verse 27: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me." This verse says who is a sheep of Jesus.

Not all people are Jesus' sheep, but those who listen to Jesus, who know Him and who follow Him.

First: They listen to the voice of Jesus. There are many voices in this world and especially through the social media young people hear a lot. It is decisive to whom we listen. Many listen to the spirit of the times, which says "do what you enjoy"; "be your own master"; "don't let others tell you anything". Proverbs 22:17-19 says: "Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the Lord, I teach you today, even you." Among the many voices of this world, let us listen to the voice of the wise, that is, to God's servants and to the good shepherd Jesus.

Second: They know Jesus. To know Jesus means to have a personal relationship to Jesus. In John 17:3 Jesus says: „Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.“ Even many who call themselves Christians live unrelated to Jesus. But Jesus' sheep know their good shepherd and have a very personal life relationship with him. For many years I knew Jesus only superficially as a historical person. I had no relationship to Jesus. So I lived as I wanted to: for my own goals and for my own glory. I wanted to make a great name for myself that would shine in big letters day and night. But through a word of God from Mk 8:29: "You are the Christ" I was allowed to establish a personal relationship with Jesus. Now I know Jesus: He is my King and my Christ.

Third: They follow Jesus. To follow Jesus means to be obedient to him and his word. Let us think about the disciple of Jesus, Peter. Peter thought that with his good will and zeal he could follow Jesus to the end. When Jesus told him that he would soon deny him, he said confidently: "I will lay down my life for you!" But Peter denied his Lord and said three times "I do not know him". He was deeply disappointed in himself and ran

away crying. But in his desperation he remembered Jesus' words. Jesus was the good shepherd for Peter. As the risen Lord, he visited Peter at the lake and asked him (John 21:15-17) three times: "Do you love me?" Peter accepted the love of his good shepherd and listened to Jesus' words: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep!" So he followed the good shepherd Jesus to the end. He was spiritually restored and was preciously used as a shepherd for the church of God.

Through verse 27 we learn who is a good sheep of Jesus: whoever listens to Jesus' voice, knows Je-sus and follows Jesus. Accepting a word of Jesus and obeying him is the secret of the blessed life. Those who have experienced this mystery live as good sheep of Jesus and follow Jesus with trust. They know that their good shepherd always precedes them and leads their lives in the very best way.

Let us look at verse 28: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." In this verse Jesus speaks of eternal life. "Eternal life" sounds very abstract to many people and seems to have little to do with their practical life. But it is of central importance whether a person has eternal life or not. The Bible teaches that man, who was created for eternity, lost eternal life through the Fall in Paradise. Death came into the world through sin. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." This gift of God, eternal life, is not a vague hope, but a firm certainty that we have in Jesus. A person who has personally received the forgiveness of sin through Jesus has eternal life through this eternal love relationship. Eternal life is the greatest and most precious gift that Jesus gives his children. Eternal life is not something that we could work for. Eternal life is based 100% on the redemption work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Isaiah 53:5 says: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought

us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." Through Jesus' sacrifice we are reconciled with God and have a personal love and life relationship with Jesus. We have eternal life in Christ alone. And the debt that was on our life is completely erased by the blood of Jesus (Col 2:14).

A person who has eternal life through the love and life relationship with Jesus leads a completely new life. A life for the Lord. A life with mission. Apostle Paul gave his new life for the spreading of the gospel, whatever the cost. In 1 Tim 6:12 he encourages his spiritual son Timothy and says: "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses." And in 1 Cor 15:31 Paul testified: "I die every day--I mean that, brothers-- just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord." How could Paul die every day? He could do this because, with the firm certainty of eternal life, he gave his life daily for the spreading of the Gospel. Peter testified to his certainty of eternal life in 1 Peter 1:3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Our Lord Jesus taught His disciples and said in Mk 8:34b.35: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." Jesus said that whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever denies himself, takes up the cross of Jesus and follows Jesus, will receive his life - for eternal life!

Many people live as if physical life is everything: enough food and drink every day, a financially and professionally secure life and regular vacations. In Luke 12 Jesus told a parable of the rich grain farmer. When his field had been well tended, he built himself new large barns to gather all his provisions. Then the grain farmer said to himself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be mer-

ry." But the grain farmer had made his calculation without God. God said to him: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Jesus calls such people, who are only fixed on their physical life, "fools". Not only do they ruin their own lives, but they also exert a bad influence on their families and on their generation.

But the one who has eternal life gives this new life daily for God with the living hope for the Kingdom of God. Whoever has eternal life lives as a holy pilgrim in this world. He does not work for his selfish perishable gain, but works diligently for the glory of God. He sacrifices his time, strength, money and his whole heart for the work of God, because he knows that his work is not in vain in the LORD. How blessed is the life of those who do not value their lives for speech and who deny themselves every day to serve Jesus and fulfill his mission to the ends of the earth. They are blessed people! They will receive their life - to eternal life!

We remember John Wycliff (ca. 1330 - 1384). He served his people with the Word of God. But the official church condemned his writings as heretical, so Wycliff lost all his church offices. But he continued to serve God and translated the Bible into English. Many of his followers were persecuted and executed. Wycliff was condemned as a heretic after his death, his bones were exhumed and burned. Johann Hus (1370 - 1415) was a theologian, master and rector of the University of Prague. Because he stood up against the secularization of the church and preached the Bible to his people in the national language, he was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Constance and burned at the stake. So many servants and maidservants of God gave and give their lives with the certainty of eternal life to serve God. Although they did so much good and led many people to eternal life, they were hated, persecuted, condemned and many died as martyrs. How could missionary Peter and missionary Sa-

rah give their lives so selflessly for the young people during the past 40 years, even though they were often misunderstood and slandered? Because they have eternal life. And because they listen to the word of Jesus and follow Jesus. They hear God's word from Ezk 37,10 and prophecy God's word to the young people day by day. They learned that God made spiritually dead bones alive. Because God's servant has eternal life, he can do without wealth, honor or recognition and use everything to serve the local people and the next generation. He is full of visions and prepares the environment for three bases in the Muslim world. God writes his history through those who, with the certainty of eternal life, invest everything for the Kingdom of God.

Let us read verses 28b to 30: "... no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all ; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Here Jesus speaks of his sheep having a "double certainty". "No one can snatch them out of my hand" and "no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand". Jesus and the Father are one. As Jesus' sheep we are safe in Jesus' hand and safe in the Father's hand. What other security do we want to seek? Let us come to Jesus. Let us hear his voice. Let us entrust our whole life to him.

Let us read together once more verses 27.28: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." In this passage we have learned that we do not remain in the unknown, but as Jesus' sheep we are allowed to listen to the voice of our good shepherd and follow him. Then we have eternal life - here and today. We will never perish. No one will snatch us out of Jesus' hand. With this firm certainty of eternal life, we dedicate our entire lives to form one-to-one bible study teams with the young people, to serve the work of raising up disciples, and to prepare for the revival of Germany and Europe. Because we have eternal life and will never perish, and be-

cause no one can snatch us out of the hand of Jesus, we give ourselves to establish three bases in the Muslim world and send out 100,000 missionaries to all countries of the world by 2041. Amen.

2. All that John said about this man is true (31-42)

From the shepherd's heart, Jesus had served the Jews to the end and invited them to eternal life. But what was their reaction? Let us consider verse 31: "Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him." The time would have been to repent, to turn back and believe in him based on the words of Jesus. But the heart of these superiors was full of envy, resentment and false expectations. They expected the Messiah to be a political Messiah who would defeat and drive out the Romans. He was supposed to work with them, the superiors, instead of taking care of twelve ordinary men and raising them as disciples. In the eyes of the superiors, Jesus did everything wrong. They were so fixed, preoccupied and above all impenitent. Finally, the Jews said in verse 33: "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." Here what John had already testified in the first chapter of his gospel (1:10,11) is proven true: "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." The rulers of the Jews said: "For you are a man..." In this way they rejected the Messiah and lived as the children of the devil.

Jesus gave them another testimony and said in verses 37,38: "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." Jesus served them with a burning shepherd's heart. How much he wished that they would gain insight and repent. But they continued to reject Jesus. Let us look

at verse 39: "Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp." Jesus' time to die had not yet come. Therefore, the Father protected him so that Jesus escaped their hands. Jesus went away to the other side of the Jordan to the place where John had baptized before. Here Jesus stayed and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." (41) And many believed in him there (42). Here we can see that there were still those people among the Jews who believed in Jesus. Jesus was greatly encouraged by them. God always leads his story through a small holy seed of remnants. They are Jesus' sheep. They listen to the voice of their good shepherd. And he gives them eternal life.

Once the prophet Elijah felt so united and thought that he was the only one left who had not worshiped the idol Baal. Then God gave him the promise (1 Kings 19:18): "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." Also in our time God has left holy seeds, through which God continues to write his story. They listen to Jesus' word and are Jesus' sheep. Dasum is God's holy seed; Kai is God's holy seed. Our next generation is God's holy seed. God educates you to be the global spiritual leaders for the spiritual revival in Germany, Europe and to the ends of the earth. Let us pray that each one of us will be used as God's holy seed, who listens to Jesus' voice, follows Jesus, and with the certainty of eternal life, puts everything into the Kingdom of God. How can we free our continent from the lies of the spirit of the times? How can Germany live again with vision and hope in the midst of this pandemic? The answer is: by forming 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams so that young people hear the voice of the Good Shepherd Jesus and serve the world mission with the certainty of eternal life.

Let us read verses 27 and 28: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they

shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." Let us, as good sheep of Jesus, listen to his voice daily and follow our good shepherd. Let us, with the certainty of eternal life, here and today, use our new life - like many predecessors in faith - for the building of the Kingdom of God. As Jesus' sheep, we will never perish and no one can snatch us out of His hand.