

Jesus And His Teachings.

Text: John 10:17-21

Suggested Hymns:

391, 222, 165, 283, 380

- 1) How Jesus Taught
- 2) The effect of Jesus Teaching
- 3) The causes of divisions
- 4) How Jesus teachings are received today

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 10:17-21, ¹⁷ ***“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸ “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”***

¹⁹ ***Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. ²⁰ And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?” ²¹ Others said, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. One of the things that a shepherd does is to teach. The Good Shepherd also freely and willingly gives His life for the sheep. Our text says, ***“No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.***

The title of Teacher pleased Jesus. You may recall the scene of the Upper Room, where Jesus said farewell to His disciples just prior to His death and said, ***“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.”¹*** In other words, ***“I am pleased that you call Me Teacher.”***

Whenever an opportunity presented itself Jesus taught the wisdom of God to everyone, as only He, could bring it from God. Therefore, when His disciples called Him ***“Teacher,”*** they were not merely trying to please Him. They knew what His objective was.

They recognised that Jesus sought to teach so that people might learn the truth for their comfort, for their knowledge, and for their hope. So they called

Him Teacher, and Teacher He always was. Jesus utilised every opportunity to teach. May the Lord bless our meditation as we consider Jesus and His teachings.

1. How Jesus Taught

Many opportunities presented themselves for teaching. Walking along a road with His disciples, Jesus passed a fig tree. He begins to teach, *“Do you see that fig tree? When the proper time comes, you will expect to pick figs from it. That is how a Christian life should be. That tree is like faith in God. Fruit is expected of faith as it is of the fig tree. To love and do things which are pleasing to God is the fruit of faith.”*²

On another journey, Jesus looked up in a tree and saw a short-statured, repentant, ostracised tax collector. He begins to teach. *“Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”*³ When some people present raised their eyebrows, and some even murmured, Jesus used the opportunity to teach, *“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”*⁴ Jesus used every opportunity as it presented itself.

Not all of Jesus’ teaching was done on the spur of the moment. Some of the greatest of Jesus’ teachings were presented by Him after a series of incidents and discussions had preceded them. In some instances this lasted for days. People would come to Him with questions. He would answer them. He would instruct them. An incident would intervene; for instance, He would heal a sufferer, before going on with His instruction.

Our text is taken from the culmination of such a series of discussions and events. For days Jesus had been teaching in the Temple. He had taught the people about the proper evaluation of some of the things they were doing, the observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, and other things pertaining to their everyday living.

But Jesus always returned to His central theme, *“I have come as the Good Shepherd, the Saviour of mankind. I lead the lost lambs of God back into the Father’s fold.”* As Jesus taught, a number of interesting incidents intervened.

Now, whenever a Scripture text is based upon a series of incidents and discussions, it is improper to consider it without studying what has gone before.

So, in this instance, we should begin at Chapter 7 and read through to the end of Chapter 10.

You will find that in all preceding discussions Jesus presents the prime objective of His coming to earth, and in the proper sequence, presents the effect of that coming on mankind. Our text today gives us the final effect of Jesus' preaching.

2. The Effect Of Jesus Teaching

It is a sad conclusion which John has to make. After three days of preaching, three days of question periods and open forums, and every kind of instruction, the result was that *there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings.*

Imagine how the disciples of Jesus must have felt. They had been with Jesus for three years. They knew what Jesus said and why He said it. They knew what He was hoping to achieve. They had heard His teachings and knew the effect on themselves. But other people listened, too, and on these people the words of Jesus had different effects.

There were those who said, "*Jesus is a blasphemous liar.*" To their own satisfaction they proved that. Among the Israelites it was permissible for the religious leaders to initiate legal proceedings, even execution, against a person who lied about God or who lied about himself in his relationship to God. Jesus claimed that He had come from God; that He was God's own Son, and that He was the Messiah, the Christ, who had been sent by God.

In this, the religious leaders of the day said that Jesus had lied. Therefore they felt perfectly at liberty to pick up stones to execute Him. This they did, but Jesus simply walked between them, and no man could touch Him.

Others said, "*Oh, no! He is not a blasphemous liar. He is crazy. Poor deluded mad-man! We must cater to Him a bit. He has the kind of sickness which makes Him think Himself greater than He is. Of course, He says a lot of things that are fine, and He does some things that are good.*

But claiming to be God's Son, claiming to be the Christ, claiming to be Jesus, who is to save men! Poor fellow! He believes it. He has managed to

delude a few others. But making such claims, He must be mad! He is crazy! How some people can accept every word He speaks is beyond us.”

Still others said, *“He is a good man. You can tell that by the way He speaks. He could not talk the way He does if He were not good in His heart. He is sincere. And look at the good He does. He helps the poor and takes care of the suffering. Everyone who needs a comforting word gets it from Him. He is not crazy. He is not a blasphemous liar. He is a very good man.”*

Others had still another opinion, *“He could not do the miracles He does if God were not with Him. So He cannot be a blasphemous liar. He could not teach as He does, if He was insane. He is not mad, because all of His teachings are integrated; they all fit together.*

Even those who are openly His enemies admit, “No man ever spoke like this Man!”⁵ No, He is not crazy; so He must be a Prophet. When God sent prophets in the olden days, they brought messages from Him. When necessary, they performed miracles. Yes, Jesus must be a Prophet.”

Finally, there were those who said, *“He is the Christ.”* There were those who accepted Him as He presented Himself in the teachings which preceded our text, as the Good Shepherd who came to find the lost lambs of God. There were those who believed.

No wonder John reports that there were divisions among Jesus’ hearers about His teachings. A liar! Crazy! A Prophet! The Saviour Christ! At least four “divisions” are noted in relationship with our text and, no doubt, represent the most widely accepted opinions of the day.

3. The Causes Of Divisions

Why these divisions? If we begin at Chapter 7 and read on through our text, we see the causes for these divisions. Consider first those who had all their lives been religious leaders. They knew all the answers. No one could tell them anything. They knew exactly what every word in the Ten Commandments meant. Let no one dare tell them that there might be something more than what they knew or what they presented!

Consequently, to save face, and for fear of losing their influence, they dare do nothing but to tell Jesus that He is wrong. They dare do nothing but call Him

a liar! They depended on their own wisdom rather than on the revelation of God. Pride of self was the main cause which made them say *“He is a liar.”*

Those who said, *“He is insane,”* permitted their supposed intellectual superiority, to blind them to their own ignorance. An example of this is found in the discussion recorded from Chapter 7 to Chapter 10. These people said, *“We know from the prophecies of old that the Christ, the Messiah, must come from Bethlehem. Now, this man comes from Nazareth.”*

Without further investigation, without asking Jesus, without even asking those who might have known, they said, *“We know, of course, that this One cannot be the Christ.”* *“Besides,”* they said, *“His teachings about getting to heaven are just too simple. You cannot tell us that it is so simple a matter to have your sins forgiven and to get to heaven. This man says He will pay the total penalty of all sins of all men, so that men may go to heaven. That is too simple!”*

And so they permitted their supposed intellectual superiority to blind them to the truth. And so they said, *“He must be deluded, mad. We cannot explain it in any other way.”*

Those who called Him a Prophet were sincere people. They accepted what they saw and what they heard. They saw Jesus perform miracles. Surely God must be behind Him, or He could not do this. They heard what He preached. And they said, *“Surely, such wisdom cannot come from man. So He must be above the average teacher. He must be a Prophet. But accept Him as the Christ, the promised Saviour? Oh, no! Of course not! He could not be that!”* These were sincere, honest people who accepted Jesus as far as they were able to explain Him!

When Jesus walked right through the midst of those who wanted to stone Him, He walked through the Temple porches where sat a man who had been blind from his birth. Jesus healed that man. Immediately the man disappeared. When the people could not find him, they went to the man’s parents.

They asked his parents, *“Was your son’s sight really restored, or is this some kind of hoax? Is this perhaps a case of mistaken identity?”* The parents, afraid of those who came, said, *“We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; “but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes*

we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself."⁶ So the people looked all the more for that person who had been blind.

Jesus finds him, stands before him and says, "*Who was it that healed you?*" And the man, who had not seen Jesus before, said, "*I know not. But He was one who called Himself the Christ. He said He is the Saviour of men. I cannot tell you who He is.*" And Jesus said, "*I, who stand before you, am He. And who do you say I am?*" The man looks at Jesus and says, "*Lord, I believe. I believe all that You said about Yourself.*"⁷

Jesus says in our text, ¹⁷ "*Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.*" ¹⁸ "*No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*" The blind man, in his own simple way, makes the confession which each of us must make if we are to believe in Jesus at all.

We must say, "*I know Jesus is the full expression of the love of God, so great that God gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should have everlasting life. I know my Saviour made a voluntary sacrifice, laid down His life, so that I might live. He took it up again in the resurrection in order that I might be assured of the truth of His promises.*" Thus the blind man confessed. Thus you and I, who were cured of spiritual blindness, must also confess.

4. How Jesus Teachings Are Received Today

Over Two thousand years have passed since Jesus' teaching in the Temple caused divisions among His hearers. For two thousand years the teachings of Jesus have been presented to man, always causing divisions. Today the Word of Jesus is being preached, and we still find the same four divisions among men.

Today we have those who say, "*He is a liar.*" They may use much nicer language. People have found very beautiful phrases to say this. But the meaning is the same, "*Jesus is not telling the truth.*"

Religious leaders over whose pulpit a cross points heavenward say, "*It's all a lie.*" Again, not in those words. They conveniently leave Jesus out of every teaching, thus condemning Him by silence. Or they say, "*He was certainly a fine, good man, but never can we accept Him as He presents Himself, as the only true Shepherd of souls.*" Since Jesus did claim to be the Saviour of all people,

and these people saying that He is not, is surely calling Him a teller of untruth — a liar!

There are those who still call Jesus crazy. No, not in those words! They would never do that. Usually the words run something like this, *“Like so many great religious leaders He was a fanatic. He was misled into believing that He was something He really was not. His followers, as so often happens to religious leaders, made Him great in His own eyes. He sincerely believed that He had a right to the claims He made. He believed them to be the truth. Poor deluded fellow!”*

There are those today who acknowledge Jesus as the great Prophet. They are quite willing to say that He presented a philosophy of life which man needs. They are quite willing to admit, *“If men followed the principles which Jesus taught, ours would be a better world.”* They are emphatic in professing, *“If mankind followed what Jesus taught, we would not have wars; we would have less crime, better human relations, more peace of mind, and other benefits and blessings. Indeed, Jesus was a great Prophet. But when He presents Himself as the one and only eternal Saviour of men — No! There we draw the line. That is far too simple an approach to the matter of getting to heaven. That we cannot accept!”*

Thank God that there are also those who bravely, simply, and gratefully say, **“My eyes have been opened. I know my Good Shepherd and am known by Him. He laid down His life and gives me hope for life and eternity. By Him, and Him alone, I am saved. What He teaches. That I believe.”**

Everyone who has heard Jesus’ teachings falls into one of these four classes. The teaching has had an effect on him. Since churches are made up of individuals, this is true also of churches. Not the cross on the spire, or Christ on the stationery makes a church truly Christian.

When a church says to Jesus, who proclaimed Himself the Saviour of men, *“We do not believe You,”* or *“We cannot trust You,”* or *“You are not what You think,”* such a church places itself on the level of those who denied Jesus in His day.

Only when a church presents Jesus as the one Saviour of mankind is it truly presenting His teaching. Let us thank God that we have been blessed by finding Jesus the Saviour in such a church,.

Let us thank God for our Lutheran heritage by showing your love for Him by loyally supporting the church which proclaims Jesus as He presented Himself — as the Lord and Saviour of mankind! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 13:13

² Luke 13:6-9

³ Luke 19:5-10

⁴ Matthew 18:11

⁵ John 7:46

⁶ John 9:20

⁷ John 9:38