

“Jesus, the Father, and Faith”
Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Easter 2019
John 10:22-30
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado
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There are two things that we should talk about from the Gospel reading today. One is who Jesus is in relation to God the Father. The other has to do with faith.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus declares, “I and the Father are one.”

The unity Jesus is talking about is not just a unity of will or purpose, though He is united with the Father in that way. It is more. Jesus is saying that He and the Father are one being together, one God. Jesus shares the divine nature with the Father.

We can confirm that this is what Jesus means when we look at the context in two respects. First, Jesus says that He gives His sheep eternal life and that no one will snatch them out of His hand. There is no power that is stronger than Jesus. He then also says that no one can snatch them out of His Father’s hand. There is no power that is stronger than the Father.

So Jesus proclaims that He shares the same power with the Father. The Father is almighty. Jesus is also almighty. There is no power in existence that can overcome the Father. There is no power in existence that can overcome Jesus. The result is that Jesus and the Father are one being as God together, though two distinct persons.

Here we have the roots of the Christian teaching of God as the Trinity. Jesus and the Father are two distinct persons. Jesus refers both to Himself and to the Father, “I and the Father are one.” Yet, Jesus proclaims that they are one God together. When we add the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), as the Father is truth and the Son is truth (John 14:6), we get the Trinity. Three distinct persons, yet one God, one divine being. There cannot be three Truths.

We hold the teaching that God is the Holy Trinity in faith. We believe it on the authority of Jesus, who reveals God to us. We also believe who our beloved Good Shepherd is (John 10:11). He is one with the Father. This faith gives us great comfort and joy.

The context also confirms how Jesus is one with the Father in how the Jews who did not believe in Jesus reacted.

In the verses immediately following our text, John says that the Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus after He said that He and the Father are one. Jesus asked them to point out the good work for which they were about to stone Him. They responded that it was not for a good work that they were about to stone Him but because Jesus, being a Man, made Himself God (John 10:31-33).

The Jews knew exactly what Jesus was declaring. They knew exactly that He was claiming to be one God with the Father as God. They knew that Jesus was claiming that whatever can be properly ascribed to God the Father can properly be ascribed to Him, as well. As we follow John’s narrative and let it speak for itself, it is clear enough what Jesus claims.

Jesus makes a bold claim. It is the boldest of all claims. He will eventually be called upon to back that claim up. They think they show Him to be a liar when they crucify Him. Jesus’s claim is established, and God the Father vindicates Him, when Jesus rises from the dead.

Now maybe we wonder what difference it makes that Jesus is one God with the Father. Many people seem to think that the doctrine of the Trinity is just so much fancy theological talk that makes no difference to our lives.

Jesus tells us why it matters. Since He is one with the Father, no one can snatch those who

believe in Him out of His hand. If Jesus is not one with the Father in almighty power, then there is a created power greater than Jesus. Indeed, then he is a mere man, and we have no way of being confident that He has more power than the devil or death or some earthly government or some human being that threatens us with death and takes our life away. If Jesus is a mere man, then we have no way of being confident that Jesus is more powerful than sickness and the mortality of our own nature when such things take our life away. If Jesus is a mere man, we have no hope or promise of life in Jesus overcoming death and reunion with those we love who have died in Christian faith.

Indeed, Christian faith becomes useless. If Jesus is not one with the Father, then all that is left is a good man who gave us a moral example to try to live up to. But He cannot then be a Savior. If we fail to live up to His self-less example, then we are left with nothing. If we think we are really living up to His example, then we are justifying ourselves before God.

Jesus says that the sheep hear His voice and follow Him. They entrust themselves to Him. He knows them and gives them eternal life. It would be utter folly for the sheep to entrust their existence to a shepherd who is not able to deliver, who is a mere man. But because Jesus is one with the Father, He can deliver, and He does. You dwell securely in Him and in the power of His promise.

So what about faith? Jesus was in conflict with Jews who just simply refused to believe His oneness with the Father. They had their reasons.

People today, even in Christian churches, refuse to believe that Jesus is one with the Father. They think that they too have their reasons.

When a person believes, however, those reasons disappear as so much fog when the sun shines on it. Then one wonders how one could have not believed it, just like one wondered how one could believe such claims when one had so many reasons not to prior to faith.

But faith makes all the difference. By faith here we mean hearing the Gospel teach us about Jesus and believing it. In such faith, Jesus knows us, and we know Jesus and belong to Him. Faith does not create the realities in which it believes. Without faith, however, those realities seem like so much hooey. With faith, the realities are real and live in the heart and give hope and power to one's existence.

This faith also makes all the difference because it is the difference between being a sheep in God's sheepfold or not. Of course, this makes Jesus the point of departure in all things pertaining to God. Faith with respect to Jesus is not neutral and not partial. It is all-in we could say. When the Holy Spirit causes the light of faith in Jesus to shine in the heart, any issue with Jesus being the ultimate and eternal point of departure vanishes.

We thank God today for faith in Jesus that He gives and sustains in us through His Word and the power of the Spirit. We give thanks for believing that He is risen; for believing who He claims to be, our Lord and God.

He calls you by name. He says I have come for you. He speaks to you of His power to preserve you. He gives His life and takes it again to redeem you. He leads you in the green pastures of eternal life with God. And your heart says thank you and amen and rests in Jesus. He knows you and you know Him. He keeps you and leads you, even when you are overwhelmed.

We rejoice today because Jesus is who He claims to be. He is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia! And the promise of who He is for you will never fail.

Amen.