

I give them eternal life

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Easter) is John 10:22-33. The setting of our text is Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication—an eight-day feast also known as the Festival of Lights. It commemorated the great Jewish victory under the Maccabees and the rededication of the desecrated temple.

The larger context begins in chapter 9 with the healing of the blind man, as Jesus reveals himself as the Son of Man. In chapter 10 Jesus identifies himself as the true and good shepherd (10:1–18). The Jews are divided as to his authenticity; some say he is demon-possessed; others know demons do not open the eyes of blind people.

When Jesus says “*I told you*” he may have meant that the general thrust of his teaching made his claim clear. Or he may have been referring to the evidence of his whole manner of life (including the miracles)—all he had done in the Father’s name.

To give credence as to who he is Jesus tells them his mission is rooted deeply in the will of God the Father. This reference to His Father again tells these Jews that Jesus is the Christ. What’s more, Jesus tells them that he and the Father are one (v.30). That means the plan for our salvation was in place even before creation and is not some quickly hatched scheme made up by humans.

The sheep, in this text, are a gift from the Father, who is the source of all gifts. The Good Shepherd (Jesus), who “*lays down his life for the sheep*” (10:11), gives them the blessing of eternal life. A uniqueness of this Shepherd is that he not only lays down his life for the sheep but also gives life to his sheep out of grace. To perish is more than temporal death. It is eternal. No enemy can snatch us from the Shepherd’s grasp. This is a solid assurance that the “warranty” of eternal life will not expire: “they shall never perish.” Death has been destroyed. The soul will not perish. The resurrected body will not perish.

We, too, are his sheep. Everything Jesus says in this text totally applies to us and our daily life. What sweet comfort this is. And Jesus gives the means of grace to access and retain God’s gifts to us. Through baptism we were brought into God’s flock. As we continue to remember our baptism we are continually refreshed. Through his Word we receive the good news of our salvation. Through the Lord’s Supper we are given an intimate touching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for showering us with your gifts that save us. Thank you for the guarantee that no enemy has the power to take us out of your loving arms. Amen