



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

**Sermon for Easter 4**

May 11, 2025

# Jesus Is the Answer

## John 10:22-30

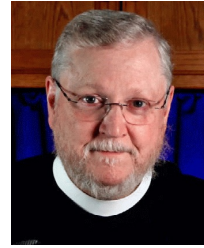
*<sup>22</sup> At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."*

Have you ever been in a store looking for something and finally you ask a clerk where it might be, and the clerk points to the shelf right in front of you? Sure enough, there it is. In all the confusion of looking, with all the other objects around, maybe even with an incorrect preconceived notion of what the item should look like, we overlook the obvious right before our eyes. Do you think that this could happen with our perception of God?

Arthur Graf wrote about a situation with his four-year-old daughter when she started asking her usual endless questions. He was working in the back yard and answered without much thought as he worked. The conversation went like this: "What is Spot doing?" "Spot is running." "What is Mommy doing?" "Mommy is pulling grass." "What are you doing Daddy?" "I'm planting a rose bush." Unexpectedly in the same tone of voice the little girl asked, "What is God doing?" This time there was no automatic, thoughtless answer. He explained later, "I could think of many things which God has done, but it took me a while to say what God was doing at that very moment." It was right before his eyes, but he didn't recognize it until he thought about it.

In today's Gospel, the Jews asked Jesus questions about Himself, who He was, if He were indeed the Christ, the Messiah. Yet, the answer had been right in front of them for some time. Jesus had been revealing who He truly was, by His miraculous works and by His words. He had raised the dead, healed diseases, driven out demons, fed numerous people. He had spoken and taught like one with authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees.

There was a reason the Jewish leaders, who in our pericope asked Jesus about His mission, did so in a hostile and argumentative spirit. They had a preconceived notion that Jesus was not the Messiah, that He didn't fit the bill, but rather was presenting Himself as



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*May 11, 2025*

such under false pretenses. The depth of their hostility is seen quite clearly in that, after Jesus' response, they picked up stones with the intent to kill Him.

People today ask questions about Jesus, but many of them ask with a preconceived notion. Their minds are already closed. The Gospel message of Jesus Christ as the Messiah seems to them absurd in a world so beset with problems. They're angry and hostile toward the God who would allow terrible things to happen within His creation. They blame God for sin and sorrow, suffering and disease, in the world, and so they close their minds to what God has done about sin through Jesus Christ. They close their minds to God's working in the world right now.

During the 1700's in France there was a well-known philosopher named Voltaire who expressed the typical attitude of unbelievers when he said, "Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open marketplace before 1,000 sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than admit a miracle."

When the Wright Brothers were working on their first airplane, the rumor spread that they were trying to make a man fly. In their home town of Dayton, Ohio, a local skeptic summed up the feeling of the entire town, saying, "No man will ever fly, and if a man does fly, it won't be anybody from Dayton. If any man from Dayton does fly, it won't be a Wright Brother."

Such skepticism becomes ingrained in all of us, and can, along with our old sinful nature, tempt us as Christians to ask Jesus in a doubting and troubled way, "Are you really the Christ? Were you really God become a man for my salvation? Did you really suffer and die for my sins and then rise again on Easter? Are you really with me every step of the way, even in times of difficulty, even until the end of the age? Will I really be with you forever in heaven?"

Now don't get me wrong. Those questions do need to be asked, and they need to be asked by each and every person. But not in a doubting or hostile way. Each of us needs to ask these questions of Jesus as those who are genuinely seeking peace and comfort, sincerely reaching out for help in the midst of helplessness, in a sincere quest for the truth. God's Holy Spirit is the one who leads, guides, and encourages us toward such sincere asking, and as we ask, Jesus stands before us as the answer.

Maybe some of you have seen the famous painting of Jesus with a lamp in his hands outside of a walled enclosure, the entrance gate of which is barred. He has knocked again and again, but has received no answer; wild brambles have grown over the gate, showing how long and resolutely it has been closed. So Christ stands outside the temple of our hearts, wanting to enter as the answer to all our questions. The Holy Spirit opens that door at our baptism and as we hear God's Word. Only don't slam the door closed in unbelief, hostility, and doubt as you face trials, testing, and the temptations that befall us in this world!

Even though the Jews in our text were questioning Jesus with a hostile and



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### ***Sermon for Easter 4***

*May 11, 2025*

argumentative spirit, Jesus phrases His answer with love, caring, and compassion. He reaches out without argument or hostility. He describes a relationship in which He demonstrates complete concern for those who follow Him. He is the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep.

You see, sheep are not the brightest of God's creatures, and are quite myopic with respect to what's going on in the world. The only thing they're really concerned about is eating, drinking, sleeping, mating, and caring for their young. They need someone to take care of them, guide them, protect them. They need a shepherd. They come to know and trust their shepherd's voice. Spiritually, we are just as helpless, naïve, and blinded by our sin, which makes us more than a little myopic and self-centered in life. We need the Good Shepherd to lead, protect, and guide us. We need our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who has given of Himself totally for our eternal well-being. We need our Good Shepherd who provides the answer to all our deepest questions in life.

Jesus' answer to our questions comes with the very power of God, who created and rules all things. Christ affirms that it's the heavenly Father's will that the sheep follow Him. Jesus is speaking on behalf of the Father, and in fact, He and the Father are one. Although He is a distinct person of the Holy Trinity, He is of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We come to the only true God, by following Jesus. Only in Jesus do we see the loving heart of God.

Jesus alone reveals the loving, caring heart of God, a heart that was pierced for us, wounded for our sins and transgressions. Apart from Jesus, we would know only of God's overwhelming, awesome magnitude in creating our world and universe, in being beyond our comprehension, in punishing sin with death. Only in Jesus do we see God's love, forgiveness, and compassion. Only in following Jesus do we come to the Father.

A friend of mine was serving as a missionary in the Congo. One evening, he heard a converted African man pray, "Lord Jesus, you are the needle, and I am the cotton." This seemed to him like a strange phrase, so he asked the man what he meant by that statement. It turned out that the native African had visited the mission school that day and watched the girls sewing. What interested him most was that the thread always followed the needle. In the same way, he wanted to follow Jesus wherever He leads. When Jesus tells us that "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me," He wants to have us so close to Him at all times, so completely yielded to Him, that we follow Him as directly and dependently as the thread follows the needle. He calls us to follow Him as the answer to all our questions.

And Jesus' answer to our questions is a call for us to partake of His genuine peace and comfort. Not only are the everyday mundane cares of this life coming under His protection, but He alone has the words of "eternal life." He alone has the answer to death. "There is salvation in none other, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." The name of Jesus means "the Lord's salvation," and



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salvation means eternal life with God. That means that even if we face worldly death, there is life to follow, forever and ever. And it's going to be beautiful forever and ever, enjoying the full glory of God and the company of our Good Shepherd forever. Jesus assures us that "no one can snatch us out of His Father's hand." That means that God is true to His word of promise. In Romans, Paul puts it like this: "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." That doesn't mean that we, of our own free will, couldn't harden our hearts in skepticism and unbelief against Jesus, and again close the door on him. What it does mean is that God's wonderful promise of eternal life in Jesus is always before us, and by the grace of God, as we cling to Jesus in faith, He is there for us with loving, open arms leading us into the eternal glory of heaven.

When we approach Jesus, asking who He is with open and searching hearts, He stands before us as the answer to all of our deepest questions. And, in Him we find out who we really are: we are the sheep of His fold; we are His little lambs and He calls each of us by name. He will continue to be there for us until we don't need to ask questions any more, even into eternity.

I am Jesus' little lamb.  
Ever glad at heart I am.  
For my shepherd gently guides me.  
Knows my needs and well provides me.  
Loves me every day the same.  
Even calls me by my name. Amen.