

Sermon John 10 22 30 4th S of Easter S C

Sermon: 4th Sunday of Easter

Text: John 10:22-30 (vv.27-30)

Theme: No one can snatch us out of Jesus' hand

Goal: To comfort God's people with the assurance that we are secured and saved in Jesus' hand in spite of the enemies around us.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Solomon's Colonnade, where Jesus spoke these words, was located in the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple of Jerusalem, and was frequented by many people, not only by Jews like the other courts of the temple. Lots of foreigners used to come to this place to learn about the God of Israel and to worship God, but they had to keep a distance . It was not allow for them to enter the temple. But Jesus' message was for all and He introduces Himself as the Good Shepherd of all the peoples.

The assurance Jesus gives us in this text "no one can snatch them out of my hand" raises a question: Why, then, so many Christians are not following Jesus anymore? Where is the problem? Is there a solution?

We will analyse some causes and enemies of the Christian faith and see if we find the answer to this question.

I – The first enemy: The Devil

The first enemy who tries to grab us out of God's hand is the devil. He was successful in his attempt with Adam and Eve. But how did it happen? Did he just catch them out of the paradise? No. He would not have been able to do that. He deceived them with false promises. And they listened to the devil's lies. St. James wrote: "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed... Don't be deceived, my dear brothers!" (James 1:14, 16). The big problem is not the devil, the big problem is myself, my evil desires.

Peter wrote: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith” (1 Peter 5:8). He tries, but he cannot catch you out of God’s gracious hand. But if you give him a finger, he will take your whole hand and eventually your entire body.

A Commentary wrote: The hand of God is not a fist, clenched in power, but it is the outstretched palm of God’s gift. One can walk off it, and Satan continually would tempt us to put our faith in anything else and so to journey off that hand. He cannot snatch us from that place. He cannot exert his power against God and prevail, but he can deceive the sheep, he can tempt us still. We need the active shepherding work of Christ, He still gives. (Phil Brandt, p. 30).

We also have to remember that Jesus resisted to the devil’s temptations on our behalf and He taught us as well how to resist: Using the Bible: “It is written!” Clinging to the Bible Truths we will receive strength to resist the devil’s temptations.

II – The second enemy: The World

The second enemy, who tries to catch us out from God’s hand is the world. The world in itself is not bad. It’s God’s creation and was made for us: We are managers of the creation, we are God’s stewards. Because of the fall, the world around us is not a paradise any more, but it is a dangerous place for Christians, due to its attractions and temptations. When Jesus told the Parable of the Sower, He explained: “Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful” (Mark 4:18, 19).

The world itself cannot catch us out of Jesus’ gracious hands. But the world can deceive us to run after other pastures that seem better

than the one Jesus leads us. I have a big concern about this second enemy: Many Christians are giving more time and value to the things of this world than to the things of God's kingdom. And *the one you feed more becomes stronger and stronger*. The faith we had as children doesn't grow in the same proportion due to the lack of spiritual food, and we follow other ways that lead to nothing. Again: Clinging to God's Word and to the Holy Communion will strengthen us against the temptation of the world, and will confirm us as God's sheep in his gracious hand.

III – The third enemy: The Death.

The third enemy who tries to catch us out of God's hand is the Death. *Death is such a cruel foe. It not only mercilessly pursues me, but it pursues my friends and family as well. It leaves enormous holes in the lives of the people who are left to grieve and carry on without them... And there is just nothing we can do about this enemy of ours. We are helpless before it* (Phil Brandt, pp. 30, 33). And many desperate when they have to face his/her own death or the death of a beloved one.

Is there nothing that we can do? We are still celebrating Easter, the victory of the One who didn't remain in the grave and who promised to take our body from the grave as well, while our soul rests with Him in heaven, as we heard from Revelation 7. Death cannot catch us out of Jesus' gracious hand; on the contrary: Through death we reach the life, the eternal life! As Christians we confess: *I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting*. This comforts us and gives us the hope that nothing and nobody but the resurrected Jesus can give us. He will wipe away all our tears.

IV – The fourth enemy: Ourselves

The fourth enemy who tries to catch us out from God's hand is the most dangerous one: Ourselves. While the other enemies cannot catch us out from God's gracious hands, but they can only deceive

us; I/we can decide to walk out of Jesus' gracious hands. Jesus doesn't force anyone to follow Him, but He invites: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." He knows us by name and when we listen to His voice and follow Him we are secure. But when we stop listening to Him, when we begin to walk far from His flock, the danger is close. He doesn't want to lose anyone of His sheep, and He searches for the lost sheep, being always willing to find the lost and to accept the repented one. This is what we confess in the Psalm 23. We have to fight against our own will with the weapons that God gives us: His Word and His Holy Communion, remembering always that we are baptized as beloved children of our gracious God.

Conclusion: And so Jesus stands at my side, with shepherds staff and mighty hand, fending off the assaults of my foe. He leads me to the cool still waters and the green pastures of His Word and Sacraments, to the friends and congregants who love me and support me... And what is more, Jesus promises you and me today that he dries every tear, even the tears of grief we weep at gravesides. His resurrection means that He has mastery over death and its hold over me has been broken. I will succumb, my friends will all succumb, but He has already broken that bondage and in baptism I have been given an eternal life that lives and does not die. (Phil Brandt p. 33, 34).

The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, is at the same time the Good Shepherd. "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7.17).
Amen.