

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church

Shobonier, Illinois

Easter 4C

May 11, 2025

John 10:22-30

The Unsnatchables

[Jesus said,] “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 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. 30 I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

During Prohibition, Treasury agent Eliot Ness led a special unit to apprehend Chicago gangster Al Capone. The unit was made up of incorruptible men who were known as the Untouchables. Needless to say, they accomplished their mission.

Today, on this Good Shepherd Sunday, we hear of another incorruptible man on a mission. He, too, was often untouchable, until His hour had come. And yet, even when death touched Him, it couldn't hold Him. And it is through His incorruptible life, death, and resurrection that He saves us from destruction. For this One is the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for the sheep. And today, we hear Him describe those who hear His voice “the Unsnatchables.”

In our Gospel reading (John 10:22-30), we hear some Jews ask Jesus to tell them plainly if He was the Christ, the Messiah. But Jesus had already told them plainly. Their stubborn unbelief made them deaf to Jesus' words and blinded them to the signs that Jesus did. They were lost and needed a shepherd, but they would not listen to the Shepherd God had sent.

They had turned against God's holy people and had abandoned the Messianic hope of sacrifice. The priests had become servants of Caesar and of their own bellies. They don't want a Messiah. They want only the status quo, living only for the moment, unable to see what truly ails them. They do not think they need a Physician, a Shepherd, or a Lord. Because they do not listen to Jesus, they are not a part of His flock.

Still, in His tender compassion, Jesus does plainly answer their question and calls them to follow Him. Even as He does to us. And as we listen to His voice, we hear wonderful words of comfort, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 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. I and the Father are one." Yes, His sheep are the unsnatchables. That's why it's so important that they listen to Him.

For there is much in this world that would try to snatch you away from your Good Shepherd. The devil "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Pet. 5:8). And that someone is you, dear Christian. He will stop at nothing until he leads you away from Jesus and into great despair or false belief. He will not rest until you no longer hear your Shepherd's voice and instead listen to him.

And if the devil weren't enough, the world joins forces with him. The world continually proclaims that what is truly good and right is actually evil, and that what is wicked and sinful is actually good and right. We see and hear it every day. Perversion, debauchery, immorality of all kinds, denial of God's creation, even the murder of babies, carry the day. And those who speak against such things are demeaned and persecuted, silenced, canceled, or worse. The world continually harasses and bullies us to stop listening to Jesus and living as His sheep. The world continually berates and badgers us until we submit to its thinking and agenda.

And if this weren't bad enough, our own sinful nature doesn't help matters. It too is all too eager to lead us away from our Lord. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." (Is. 53:6). If left to ourselves, we would be exactly like those Jews. For the reality is that we would rather go our own way. We would rather give in to the ways of the devil and the world.

Yet, our Lord does not leave us as sheep without a shepherd. For He is the Good Shepherd from whom nothing and no one can snatch us away. St. Paul puts it this way:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:35-39).

For those who belong to Christ, those who listen to His voice and follow Him, can not and will not be snatched away from Him. For the hands that hold you so tightly are the hands with the nail prints that Thomas demanded to see and touch. They're the same hands that raised a little girl from death to life. They're the same hands that were raised in blessing and that blessed the little children that were brought to Him. They're the same hands that show strength in weakness as He spreads them wide upon the cross. For your Good Shepherd is also the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Your Shepherd laid down His life, sacrificed Himself, shed His holy, precious blood for you so that you would be His own dear lamb forever. Your Shepherd knows you and calls you by name. You are His. Nothing can snatch you out of His hand. Absolutely nothing!

And should there be any trace of doubt about that, Jesus clears that up too. "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. I and the Father are one." What comforting words! Jesus is one with the Father – one in substance, one in will, one in grace, one in mercy, one in love. Jesus, the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, has done everything necessary to make you a lamb of His flock. By His Spirit, He has called you "by the Gospel, enlightened you with His gifts, sanctified and kept you in the true faith." And He continues to do all that for you so that you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Beloved, when the Shepherd speaks, His sheep listen. They don't just hear His voice in the sense of sound vibrating on the eardrum. They hear His voice and the Holy Spirit moves that Word into the heart. They are convicted of their sin through the Law, and they are set free by

the Gospel, the forgiveness of all their sins. Through the voice of the Shepherd, the Spirit creates and sustains saving faith, the kind of faith which trusts the Shepherd and His promises. He provides for all their needs of body and soul by leading them to “green pastures and beside still waters” (Ps. 23). He guards and protects them from all danger and harm with His rod and His staff. They hear His voice and follow Him, not because they choose to do so, but because He chose them, called them, made them His own, and made Himself known to them. They listen to His voice because of all that He says and does for them. They follow Him because He regularly speaks to them and feeds them in Word and Sacrament. And in His speaking and feeding, His lambs receive eternal life.

By virtue of your Baptism into Christ, you have been made an un snatchable. Rejoice and rest secure in that truth, and continually hear His voice and follow Him now and forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener