

5/12/2019

## “Belonging to a Loving God”

Scripture: John 10:22-30

Fourth Sunday in Easter

Theme: Followers of Jesus Christ belong to a loving God!

**John 10:22-30 (NIV)**

*<sup>22</sup> Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. <sup>24</sup> The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, “I did tell you, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”*

As already said, today we celebrate Mother’s Day, acknowledging the gift of life they have given to each of us. We honor all those who have born us or have been like mothers to us – providing love, sustenance, protection, nurture, care, guidance and more.

And as we consider a couple of today’s lectionary scripture passages, we can see how the person and role of a mother is very similar to that of our loving God.

† **We hear the voice of Jesus, who knows us.**

I remember growing up in a large house with four other siblings -- two girls, and three boys in the middle. When we were young, our mother seemed to always be watching us and listening for us no matter where we were. And if she couldn’t see us or hear us, she figured we were up to something we probably shouldn’t be. ☺ Then I would hear her call out, “Neil?” Or it might be another one of us. Or all three . . . “Robert, Albert, Neil!” ☺

Regardless of who she was wanting, we all knew her voice, whether at home, a relative’s house, or outside somewhere. And believe me, we listened to her voice and responded.

She made a point of letting us know that we were our parent’s children. Sometimes by telling us, but most especially by loving, caring, providing for and guiding us. We listened to her and did what she said . . . usually. And the instruction which she gave was

always backed up by her example. Some of you might have already heard me share a lesson or two from her.

And, speaking for myself, I can say that I usually listened to her, because I trusted her. I knew that she knew me probably better than any other person on earth. And I knew that she would speak her truth, sometimes straightforward, with love, wanting the best of me and from me.

And so, it is with Jesus.

Jesus had been teaching and doing the works of God, even miracles, throughout his ministry in Galilee, Judea and other areas. Sometimes he used straightforward and clear speaking. At other times he used metaphors and parables, which often took further explanation, even for his closest disciples. Now, as he approached the end of his earthly ministry, on another visit to Jerusalem, Jesus was questioned by some of his fellow Jews about whether or not he was the awaited Messiah.

He says to them . . . *“I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

Friends, Jesus knows us better than anyone, even than we do ourselves. He calls us by name, and invites us to follow him.

† **He gives us abundant and eternal life.**

As Jesus said, recorded by John earlier in this chapter of the good news. Speaking again of a shepherd and his flock, he says, ***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly (or “to the full”).”*** (John 10:10)

And now, as he affirms, . . . ***“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;”***  
As any loving parent does, Jesus wants the very best and most for our lives. That may be good health and a long life. It may be other loving relationships, good friends, and wise choices. It may be a good education, a job or career, material wealth, prosperity, respect and appreciation. And it is always a close relationship with God, our Heavenly Father or Parent, and an eternal place with them and others in our heavenly home.

As Clint Bowman of North Carolina shared with readers in today’s Upper Room devotional about A Mother’s Faith . . .

“A devout follower of Jesus Christ, my mom has emailed a ‘Weekly Inspiration’ to her children, friends, and co-workers for over five years. Each of these emails contains an insightful and empowering message that has served as a guide for me on how to live out the week ahead through believing and having faith in God. My mom’s relationship with God always serves as an example for me of what Jesus meant when he said, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door.”

“Mom has always made her best effort in her own journey toward salvation and is constantly finding new ways to spread the word of Christ and lead others to him. From her weekly inspirations to distributing *The Upper Room* to being an active church member, my mom inspires me to be a better person and to make sure I am putting forth my best effort for God’s kingdom.” he says.

So, remember that Jesus came to earth, died and rose again, that you might have new, abundant and eternal life.

† **No one can take us out of his loving hands and care.**

Jesus said, “. . . *no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.*”

What a profound statement of truth!

There may be times when we feel lost and alone. Even though we may have accepted Christ as savior, there are times when we may feel like forces of darkness surround us. We may wonder if we will slip and fall from God’s grace once again. We may face times of illness and loss of life. At such times we may question God’s plan or purpose, or even if we are still in Christ’s hands.

Friends, at such times, remember the words which Jesus spoke long ago. Hear him speak them to you. “. . . *no one will snatch them out of my hand.*”

In the Book of Acts of the Apostles, we are told of a woman named Tabitha. In the ninth chapter we read (vs. 36-43 NIV) . . .

“<sup>36</sup> Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. <sup>37</sup> At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. <sup>38</sup> Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, ‘Please come to us without delay.’

*“<sup>39</sup> So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. <sup>40</sup> Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, ‘Tabitha, get up.’ Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.”*

God was at work in and through Tabitha. And Tabitha was always in the loving hands of her Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was the instrument of God’s loving power of the Holy Spirit.

All those who hear and follow Jesus are part of his body here on earth. You and I can be the hands and feet of his love and care for all people. We can share his good news and kindness to all whom we meet.

It gives me great satisfaction and joy to have received that blessing through my mother in this life, to have been a part of it for many years already, and to still be a part of it here in this community and family of faith as elsewhere. May our Lord Jesus richly bless you and yours as well in the abundance of belonging to a loving God!

### **Questions for Reflection:**

**Whose or what voice(s) do you listen to?**

**Who really knows you?**

**Who has taken care of you and protected you? Who has provided for you and looked after your best interests, growth, health and life?**

**Do you belong to Jesus? Hear his voice and listen to him? Do you follow him? How has that made a real and positive difference in your life?**