

# Secure?

## John 10:27-28

Readings: Psalm 23, Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30

“We are all less safe now”

So said a headline in the Mercury after the Boston bombings this week. Is that how you feel. Do you feel safe?

As we listen to the news it is easy to feel insecure. We hear of disasters, acts of terrorism, climate change, social change or economic gloom with seemingly no change we feel anxious. There may also be personal issues, related to our job, our relationships, our finances or our health. It is very easy to not feel safe. So many things promise security, nothing seems to deliver.

Now you may think that I am falling into the trap which is captured in the unfortunate Church poster “Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.”

My aim is not to worry you but rather in the midst of these realities to point us all to the words of Jesus where we will hear an amazing offer of security, we will look at its cast iron guarantee and look at how we can truly know, no matter what happens in our world that we have eternal security.



### WHO IS OFFERING

In looking at an offer perhaps the first thing you want to know is who is offering. This issue of who is Jesus starts our passage. This is around the time of Hanukkah, a nationalist festival celebrating the triumph of Judas Maccabeus (Judas the Hammer) over foreign overlords in 164BC leading to a new dynasty of Jewish Kings which lasted till the arrival of Roman General Pompey in 63BC. Just as ANZAC Day often brings reflections on the nature of what it is to be Australian, Hanukkah raised issues of who was the true King of Israel so it is no surprise that this issue is raised in relation to Jesus. The Jewish leadership wants to clearly know whether Jesus is claiming to be the Christ, the Messiah, the long awaited true King of David's line. (v24)

Jesus basically says, I have already told you. (v25) Earlier in the John 10 Jesus has claimed to be the Good Shepherd, a clear claim to be the true King. However he doesn't want to use their word, "Christ" as they would immediately think of a political or military ruler who would expel their Roman overlords. But he points those asking to the signs that he has done, healing the man born blind, feeding the 5000 and so on as conclusive evidence of his claim.

Jesus is then the Christ, the Messiah, the long awaited promised King. However he has far more to offer than passing national liberation.

## THE OFFER

Returning to the image of a Shepherd Jesus makes his amazing offer of security, “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.” (v27-28)

This is a stunning promise of safety.

Jesus promises his sheep, those who follow him, that he will *give* them eternal life. Before we go any further we need to stop. The security that we desire, that we crave, is not something we earn, or pay for. This security comes as a gift, a present. It doesn't cost a thing, not even postage and packaging. Jesus will give his sheep eternal life.

And how good is the product? Jesus' promise here is more than just long life, it is life as it was meant to be. Earlier, in John 10, Jesus has said that he has come to save the sheep (v9) that is to bring them out of danger, into a secure place, and more specifically he says “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (v10) Jesus then is not just talking about ongoing existence, a perpetuation of our experience, but of properly living now knowing the eternal security we have.

Our reading from Revelation pictures how wonderful this will be: safe, secure with every tear wiped away. That is the future that we are promised in Christ. Perhaps we don't experience life to the full now as Jesus promises because we think this world, with all its pleasures and beauties is all there is, forgetting that this world is passing away, there is no true security to be found here, rather there is a greater, more beautiful, more wonderful world restored that awaits.

That is the offer, but wait, there is more. Not only is there the promise of life, but the promise of security, “no one can snatch them out of my hand”. It is a wonderful image. There are few things worse and unsettling than having something snatched away. Anyone who has had their bag or wallet snatched knows what it is like. Jesus says that we cannot be snatched from his hand.

And please note where we are. We are not in his bag, in his pocket, in his room, we are in his hand. We are a prized and valued possession who has his attention and he will let no one snatch us from him.

## THE GUARANTOR (29-30)

Well this is all very well, a fine offer but what guarantee is there? Jesus says that he has a great backer. There are many financial and insurance products which sound very interesting but the wise investor wants to know who is behind this, who is putting up the money. The bigger and better known the backer the less risk there is.

Behind Jesus' offer is God the Father and he is also fully involved in this security operation. “What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.” John 10:29-30 It is God the Father who has drawn the sheep to Jesus, it is he who has chosen his flock and has entrusted them to his Son but his hands remain around those who are his own, he also ensures that no one can snatch us away. Imagine yourself if you will in Jesus hands, feel the security, that comes from being there, and then imagine another set of hands coming enfolding Jesus hands, the hands of God the Father. Now that's security.

Or perhaps another way of thinking about it is with a child walking with it parents. The child instinctively knows where it wants to be, he doesn't want to be on Dad's side, or she doesn't want to be on Mum's side, no, the child knows the really safe place to be is in the middle with both hands being held. For there the child can walk, run, or even swing, “Whee”, knowing they are perfectly safe, and there they can enjoy life to the full.

Jesus and the Father hold us in their hands. They are both working together. This is at least part of what Jesus means when he says that he and the Father are one. The Greek for “one” is neuter so Jesus cannot mean that they are the same person, as

some have thought, but rather they are unified in purpose and intention, they are both working for the same end, the safety, security and life of the sheep.

## **GUARENTEED SECURITY**

Here is the wonderful point made throughout the New Testament in Christ we have complete, everlasting, eternal security. The apostle John later wrote "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Not so that we may hope we have eternal life, wish, imagine, contemplate the possibility, but rather know that we have eternal life.

Paul famously put it like this "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 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." (Romans 8:38-39) Paul says this in the context of looking forward to the new creation, life to the full, nothing can stop God's love from bringing us to this glorious future.

Think about it, where do you have your security, where do your hopes lie? Someone can take away your job, but no one can snatch you out of Jesus' hands. Someone can snatch away your wealth, but no one can take you out of God's hands. Someone take away your health, but no one can take you out of God's hands. Someone may take away your family or friends, but nothing can take us out of God's hands. Someone may even take away your life, but no one and nothing can take us out of Jesus' hands.

Now please notice what is not being said here, this is not a promise of an easy life, Paul prior to the passage said "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" Paul understood that these were all a possibility but they would not separate us from the love of Jesus, we are still in his hands. Spurgeon put it something like this, Jesus does not promise that the ship will reach the harbour but that none of the passengers will be lost, not that the building will survive but that the inhabitants will be safe.

We will face all manner of trials and tribulations whether they be the ravages of age, the debilitation of illness, the horror of cancer, the darkness of loneliness but these will pass and they cannot, will not, shall not take us out of the Lord's hands. Whatever dark valleys we may have to walk through we are in the Son's hand and we are in the Father's hands. In the midst of all our trials we can know that we are not forgotten, we are still in his care and he has a glorious future for us with him and nothing and no one can snatch it away.

## **TAKING UP THE OFFER**

So how do we take up this offer, we listen to the call of Jesus. Notice this is not a blind faith. Jesus called on those listening to him to look at the evidence, the signs. We can look back to more than healings and feedings to the wonder and power of the resurrection. Here is God's declaration that Jesus is truly the Christ, the King, and we are then to take him at his word.

And as we hear his call to put ourselves in his hands we will see that they are scarred. Here is not just a reminder that he is the working model of the safety that is promised, but it is reminder of that he died for us. The Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. Such death defying love is what keeps us secure.

Eternal security is ours. It is his gift to us, let us treasure it, celebrate it, and let it lead us to life, life to the full. We can all celebrate being safe now.

*Dear Lord Jesus, Great Shepherd of the sheep, thank you for giving your life for the sheep, help us to hear your voice and know the great security that comes from being in your hands and the hands of your Father, knowing that nothing and no one can take us out of your hands. Amen.*