

“Whose Hands Are You In?”
John 10:22-42
March 15, 2020
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

We will turn this morning to John chapter ten, verses twenty-two through forty-two.

The last two Lord’s Days we have considered verses one through twenty-one of this chapter, Jesus’s claim to be the Good Shepherd along with its implications for our relationship to God and our relationships to one another.

That theme of Jesus being the Good Shepherd to his people continues now, though chronologically we have moved ahead to some degree. Our text takes place at the time of the Feast of Dedication – Hanukkah – in the winter.

A group comes up to Jesus, and they are clearly familiar with Jesus and what he has said and done – seeing as when they ask him about his identity, he refers to the knowledge they already have of him. With that knowledge, Jesus can return to the Good Shepherd theme, even if there is a chronological jump here.

With that in mind, please listen carefully to John 10:22-42, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

^{10:22} At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴ 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.” ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. ²⁷ 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.”

³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” ³³ The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” ³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? ³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. ⁴¹ And many came to him. And they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” ⁴² And many believed in him there.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Lord, we do believe that your word
is firmly fixed forever, with you, in the heavens.
Your faithfulness endures to all generations.
You have made this world and it stands as you will it to.
Lord, as your people, help us to never forget your precepts,
because by them you have given us life.
Lord, we are yours; save us,
for we have sought your ways.
Grant us life now through this, your word.
In Jesus’s name. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:89, 90, 93, 94]

Our text this morning contains some significant claims by Jesus, as well as hostility from those who hear him. And as we consider this passage, it might be best to begin with the hostility – because it seems to start right from the beginning.

The question of the crowd in verse twenty-four may begin the hostilities. As one commentator points out, the question that is here translated “How long will you keep us in suspense?” could also be translated “How long are you going to annoy us?” The first rendering would be an honest question. The second would indicate that the crowd is trying to get Jesus to claim that he is the Messiah in a clear and open way, so that they can use it against him – to attack him. The context is what we must use to determine which it is, and the rest of the passage – including Jesus’s initial response – might lean towards there being more of a hostile intent behind the question. [Carson, 392]

Either way, Jesus tells us of the crowd’s persistent unbelief in verse twenty-five. “I told you, and you do not believe,” he says. The people in this crowd had seen Jesus’s works. They had heard his words. And *still* they did not believe. Jesus says he has been clear by his words and actions.

The crowd has seen Jesus’s love in his deeds, they have seen his power in his miraculous works, they have heard him speak about who he is, and they *still* do not believe. Why is that?

Well, Jesus goes on to tell us in the rest of verse twenty-five and into verse twenty-seven – he says, “The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe *because you are not among my sheep*. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

Earlier in chapter ten Jesus spoke about how he was the Good Shepherd, and how his sheep hear his words to them, recognize his voice, and then follow him. Shepherds in Jesus’s time and place did not drive their sheep from behind as is done in much of the Western world today, but they called to them and led them – and the sheep really did recognize their shepherd’s voice and follow them.

And so Jesus is saying that while his sheep hear his voice, recognize him as their shepherd, and follow him, there are also sheep who hear his voice and *do not* recognize him as their shepherd and follow him.

Which means that they must instead follow someone else.

Sheep in a sheep fold were not independent or feral – they belonged to someone. And so Jesus implies that some sheep respond to other voices, and recognize others as their shepherds.

In some ways this should not surprise us – earlier in chapter ten Jesus spoke of anti-shepherds – of thieves and hired hands – who have a relationship to the sheep, but not a good one: they either prey on the sheep or they are lukewarm in their commitment to the sheep. But every sheep has a shepherd – whether it is Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, or some other anti-shepherd.

And Jesus’s words here remind us that the same is true of each and every one of our hearts and lives.

Every one of us follows a shepherd – we look to something or someone to provide for us and protect us. And we respond to rivals to our shepherd with hostility. And that is what we see in our text.

Because the people in this crowd are following another shepherd, when Jesus calls them to follow him, they respond with hostility.

What we see in our text this morning is that people actively reject Jesus as their shepherd, because they prefer to entrust themselves to someone else.

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And that hostility can reach to the level of people picking up stones.

One commentator puts it like this – he writes: “Never forget that the famous ‘good shepherd’ chapter ends up with people trying to stone Jesus to death. / Controversy and danger are certainly in the air in this passage. Often when we think of Jesus as the ‘good shepherd’ we imagine pictures of him with flowers in his hair, surrounded by happy children, with a few sheep as well to give the picture a pastoral touch. I remember such pictures from my childhood. The reality – the real question he was talking about when he spoke of himself as the good shepherd – was and is very different. It was and is all about power and rule, about God’s kingdom and the world’s kingdoms, about God appointing a true king, not where there had been a vacuum waiting for someone to fill it, but where there had been too many kings, too many rulers, and all of them were anxious and ready to strike out at anyone trying to stake a new claim.” [Wright, 156]

In other words, Jesus didn’t show up and declare he was the good shepherd in a world where there were *no* shepherds. He declared it in a world where there were *bad* shepherds. Some were external bad shepherds, to be sure – but others were bad shepherds of the heart.

And no matter who you are, these false shepherds – these anti-shepherds – are present in your life as rivals to Christ. If you’re not a Christian, then you are following such rival anti-shepherds with all your heart. And if you are a Christian, then those rival shepherds are always present, calling you away from the Good Shepherd – calling you away from your true shepherd.

What do those false shepherds look like? What are those things that we so often prefer to entrust ourselves to, rather than Christ?

Well, we considered some of them two weeks ago.

But it is worth returning to the question this morning.

Because this morning is pretty weird.

Besides a few musicians, I'm preaching in an empty sanctuary. And you are all at home looking at a screen. Because we're living in the middle of a global pandemic.

And something like a pandemic can have a tendency to reveal the shepherds or the rival shepherds of our hearts.

And two major anti-shepherds that have been revealed in many of our thoughts and actions in moments like this are the anti-shepherds of control and comfort.

One major false shepherd for a lot of people is the illusion of control. That is what we are tempted to entrust ourselves to – the illusion that we ourselves are in control of our lives and so can handle any threats that may come our way.

And that false shepherd can take a number of forms in our lives.

For some of us it has to do with information. Whatever your perspective on all of this is, you find yourself just devouring information about it. You keep reading more. You keep looking for more articles that either confirm your fears or your optimism. You check how many confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus there are in each state throughout the day. You talk to others and you try to tell them all you know, and maybe you argue with them, or maybe you just dump all the information you've gathered onto them.

It's good to be informed about what's going on. It's good to be thoughtful.

But we need to recognize that at some point we cross the line from being well-informed, so that we know what to do, to using information as a way to feel as if we are in control ... when we're not. Then, you are looking to the false shepherd of control. Information is just the means of grasping at it.

Or maybe you are more oriented towards concrete things. For many of us, when we are overwhelmed by something so big, we focus in on details we can handle to make ourselves feel in control.

And as many have pointed out, there is no greater example of that right now than our relationship to toilet paper. As I'm sure just about all of you know, there has been a run on toilet paper just about everywhere. You can find videos online of people fighting over the last case at one store or another. You can find all sorts of pictures of people waiting in line to check out with a cart *filled* with giant packs of toilet paper. Internationally, we seem to have all agreed that this will be the thing we will all focus on.

I tried to look up what was behind this, and every news article I saw said ... that there was nothing. They all said it is psychological. There is no toilet paper shortage in terms of the supply chain. People just started hoarding toilet paper and then there was a run on it. We all hyper-focused on one product we use every day, and decided if we can master that, if we can gather an unnecessarily large stock of that, *then* we'll feel okay ... then we'll feel in control.

I've always been a bit contrarian. So I haven't been hoarding toilet paper. But I do keep buying more pasta. My wife keeps telling me to stop – that we don't need any more. But I keep buying more. I can try to defend it ... but the truth is that it doesn't make a ton of sense.

Of course being prepared is good. Having an emergency supply of things is wise. But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about something beyond that – the things we grasp at to make ourselves feel okay – the things we pursue as a way of looking to the false shepherd of control.

Or maybe for you it's oriented towards actions. Maybe, on the one hand, you have become hyper-focused on ways to restrict your movements that go well beyond what officials are suggesting. Or you are frantically cleaning parts of your house that no one has suggested will lead to anyone getting coronavirus. Or, on the other hand, maybe you are flaunting the suggestions of officials – asserting to yourself and those around you that *you* are in control of yourself and not anyone else. It can take opposite forms, but still, in our actions, we are prone to find all sorts of ways to look to the false shepherd of control.

But whatever form it might take, it *is* a false shepherd. It is an illusion. We may entrust ourselves to it, but it cannot keep us safe. And a pandemic, of all things, should drive home just how little control we really have over things.

In his first homily on the Gospel of John, Augustine has an extended discussion about flies and fleas – a problem experienced more in Augustine's world than in many of our lives, but a problem that will still have relevance for us.

Augustine makes several theological points about flies and fleas, but one of them is that our experience of these creatures should humble us and lead us to reflect on how much power and control we really have in this world.

Augustine tells his congregation: “When man was proud and challenged God, and, even though he was mortal, he terrified other mortals, and even though he was human, he did not acknowledge his neighbors as human, then, just when he flaunts himself, he is afflicted with fleas.”

Augustine goes on: “Why do you puff yourself up so, human pride? Someone was rude to you, and you swelled up in wrath; fight off the fleas so that you can get to sleep – recognize who you really are. [...] God could have curbed the pride of Pharaoh's people with bears, with lions, with serpents; what he did do was send flies and frogs among them, so that pride would be curbed by the most worthless of creatures.” [Augustine, Homily 1.15]

Brothers and sisters, Augustine could look at how the people around him, from the peasant to the powerful – and how the culture around him, from Rome to Hippo – all took pride in their own glory, and asserted their own power and control in this world ... and then witness how those same people were tortured by tiny little bugs as they tried to sleep – by fleas and flies. And Augustine says that *that* should be a reminder to them of how little control they really have in this life.

And we now see something far more drastic. The technology in our world so far surpasses any other time in human history. And the powerful nations of our world boast in their power and their control over themselves and over creation. We each individually tell ourselves that *we* are in control over our lives.

And then, something smaller than the smallest bug – something so tiny it cannot be seen with the naked eye – comes along, and the most powerful countries in the world, the most technologically advanced societies in human history, are brought to a halt. And people great and small find themselves at risk of serious illness. And we are scared.

Augustine is right. There is a lesson in all this. We, individually and collectively, have far less control over our lives than we like to imagine.

The false shepherd of control offers itself to us in many ways. But it is a *false* shepherd. It cannot keep us safe and secure. Something smaller than a flea can send it running away like a hired hand.

Of course, for some of us, the shepherd we look to in times of concern is less that of control and more that of comfort. We look for comfort to distract us from what we are worried about or afraid of, and so we entrust our souls to that instead.

That could take a number of forms as well. We might look to overeating, or to drinking too much, or to compulsive sexual sin ... or something as simple as entertainment – television, movies, or videogames.

Now, in a difficult time it can be good to take some comfort in good food, in intimacy with our spouse, in some form of entertainment. But I'm not talking about the right use of these things, I'm talking about when we look to them to shepherd our souls – when we entrust ourselves to them.

Take TV shows as an example. It can be fine to escape for a little while with entertainment. But you can get some indication that you are asking much more than that from TV, when an episode ends, and you look at the clock, and you know you should turn the TV off ... but the thought of that makes your chest tighten up, and you feel the anxiety or fear or dread start to grow in your stomach, and so you quickly tell yourself, "Just one more episode" – and you watch on. You're not really looking for entertainment. You're looking to entrust yourself to a shepherd who will keep you from what you fear.

But comfort and distraction eventually have to end. We eventually have to stop. And the moment we do, all the things we are concerned about are still waiting for us.

Comfort is a good blessing, but it's a terrible shepherd. It abandons us the minute we stop giving it our attention. And we are left to our fears and anxieties.

What kinds of false shepherds do you turn to in times of insecurity or concern or frustration?

And can you see how those shepherds cannot protect you? How they cannot guard your heart and soul? Control is an illusion. Comfort is a fleeting thing. In the end, both abandon you.

People actively reject Jesus as their shepherd because they prefer to entrust themselves to something else.

What is that something else for you?

How do you pursue it?

And if you are honest, how does it fail you?

How can you see that it will always fail you?

The first thing our text tells us is that people actively reject Jesus as their shepherd because they prefer to entrust themselves to something else. But that something else can never keep them safe or secure.

Which brings us to our second point: Because Jesus is one with the Father, he alone is the Good Shepherd who can keep us safe in his hands.

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And there are a few important pieces in that point, so let's break them down.

The first is that Jesus is one with the Father – that Jesus is divine. Jesus makes this claim in verses twenty-seven through thirty. Jesus says: “²⁷ 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.”

In these words, Jesus claims to be united to and equal with God the Father. His fellow Jews certainly knew that that's what he was saying, because they pick up stones to stone him to death for blasphemy. This is the third time now in John's Gospel where a group of people have sought to kill Jesus for claiming to be one with, or equal to, God the Father. [Carson, 395]

And then there is a discussion about Jesus's claim in verses thirty-two through thirty-eight.

Jesus's argument can seem odd here. But we can go through it quickly to understand its general shape. Jesus points them to Psalm 82:6, and points out that the Scriptures themselves refer to the Israelites – as imperfect as they were and as frail as they were (as the rest of Psalm 82 describes) – he points to how the Scriptures still refer to these Israelites as “gods” and as “sons of the Most High” – in other words, sons of God. It speaks this highly of the Israelites, simply because they *received* the word of God. And if that is so for mere humans so imperfect and frail, then how could it be wrong for Jesus, who *is the Word of God himself*, to take those same terms onto himself – to say that he too is the Son of God?

In other words, on the one hand, Jesus is not, in verses thirty-two through thirty-eight, making a Biblical argument for his divinity. But on the other hand, he is also not merely saying that he is just like the ancient Israelites either. He's saying that, if he is greater than they were, how could he not take the labels onto himself that the Scripture placed on them? [Carson, 397-399; Augustine, 48.9]

This line of argument is meant to cause his attackers to pause ... and then, as they pause, he points them again to his works, and how his works point to his connection to God the Father. Jesus is one with God the Father.

And that is key to his claim in verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine.

Jesus holds on to all his sheep. No one and no thing can snatch them from his hand. He can keep them safe from anything *because of who he is*. He can keep them safe even from death – so that they will not perish but have eternal life, as he says in verse twenty-eight.

One commentator puts it like this – he says:

“Those who hear Jesus’ voice and recognize it as the voice of ‘their’ shepherd will be safe for ever. He will look after them, and even death itself, the last great enemy, cannot ultimately harm them. The reason Jesus can be so confident of this is that the guarantee is his own unbreakable bond of love and union with the father [...].

“Christian confidence about the future beyond death, in other words, is not a matter of wishful thinking, a vague general hope, or a temperamental inclination to assume things will turn out all right. It is built firmly on nothing less than the union of Jesus with the father – one of the main themes of this whole gospel.” [Wright, 157]

In other words, Christian hope is not based in general optimism, or a belief in the inherent immortality of the soul, or a conviction that good as a general category wins over evil – Christian hope is based in the belief that Jesus Christ is the shepherd of all who trust in and follow him, and he is so powerful, one with God the Father and united with him in action, that nothing can snatch us from his hands – not hardship, not suffering, not sin, not guilt – *not even death*.

That is what our safety *is* in Christ: Christ will not let us go. He will hold fast to us no matter what we face or what we go through.

Now ... that is no guarantee that we will not suffer in this life. Not at all. But it is a promise that whatever we endure, Jesus will be in control of it, and he will never let us go. Though we suffer, we will be held firmly and safely in his grasp. Though we face temptation, sin, or guilt – still, we will be held firmly and safely in his grasp through it all. And though we even face death – still, we will be held firmly and safely in his grasp, inheriting eternal life and never truly perishing.

This is what Jesus does for his sheep – for all who follow him. It is so much more than our feeble false shepherds can give us. And so, if you are a Christian, you must once again cast those false shepherds aside, and find your comfort and hope in the fact that Jesus is your true shepherd, and if you trust him, then nothing can snatch you out of his hand.

And if you’re not a Christian, but this morning you hear his voice, then you must respond – and follow him with your heart, placing your trust in him as your Good Shepherd, that you too would be embraced by him, and held in his powerful hands, out of which no one and no thing will ever snatch you.

This is the safety that Christ, the Good Shepherd, offers to his sheep. How do you need to draw close to him and place your trust in his powerful grasp of you again this morning?

That is the hope we have as those who are held firmly in Christ.

But as we consider that, and as we find our comfort in that, we also need to ask what we are to *do* with our security in Christ in this life. What do we do with the secure standing we have in Christ's hands?

And the answer is that we are to live differently.

But then how does that work?

This week I found myself thinking about an episode of *The Twilight Zone* from 1961 titled "The Shelter."

The timeframe is during the Cold War. A few families who live on the same street together are gathered for a party for Dr. Bill Stockton. One friend makes a speech on his appreciation and affection for Bill, while also throwing in a few jokes about Bill's eccentricity in building a bomb shelter under his home.

As the party continues, they're interrupted by Bill's son, who directs them to the radio, where they hear that unidentified objects have triggered the United States' ballistic missile radar, and that everyone is encouraged to seek shelter in their basement or their bomb shelter if they have one. The party quickly disperses as everyone goes home. Bill and his wife and son grab water, supplies, and then make their way down to the bomb shelter he had built.

And then, their neighbors start to show up. And they begin to beg that he let them in. The first urges Bill to let him and his family in, saying that there is enough room and they will sleep standing if they have to – their house doesn't even have a basement, he explains. But Bill argues back that their supplies are limited, and that the air filter can only filter enough air for three people. Finally, Bill runs down to his shelter and locks himself and his family in.

But then the rest of the neighbors show up with their families and their children. When they hear Bill has closed the door, some say they should tear it open. One man points out that there's certainly not enough room in there for all of them. Then the arguments begin as men and women fight about why *their* family should be let in rather than another.

But then, as they hear noises in the sky, they set aside their arguments with one another and focus on getting into the bomb shelter itself. One man runs and gets a large pipe for a battering ram. The men line up with it while the wives urge them on as they batter the door to the shelter over and over.

The camera goes to Bill and his family in the shelter, as they listen to the people outside. "Who are those people?" Bill's wife asks. "Our neighbors," Bill answers, "our friends."

Finally, the door begins to break, and the men begin to push their way into the shelter and just then ... at that moment ... the radio in the shelter comes to life again. And the announcer lets everyone know that the unidentified objects were just satellites. And there is no danger.

And everyone stops. And they start to look at each other ... embarrassed, shocked, and ashamed at how they have acted. Neighbors who had argued with each other begin to apologize. And then they turn to Bill and his family. One neighbor quickly says that they will of course pay for the damages – and he suggests that they have a block party to celebrate their safety – "anything to get back to normal" he says – whatever it takes to pay for the damages.

And Bill looks at him. “Damages?” he asks, “I wonder. I wonder if anyone of us has any idea what those damages really are. Maybe one of them is finding out what we’re really like when we’re normal; the kind of people we are just underneath the skin. I mean all of us: a bunch of naked wild animals, who put such a price on staying alive that they’d claw their neighbors to death just for the privilege. We were spared a bomb tonight, but I wonder if we weren’t destroyed even without it.”

The episode is an extreme picture, and *The Twilight Zone* can be blunt. But its point is worth considering.

It’s easy for us to love our neighbors when all is well. It’s easy over good food and a pleasant evening to speak of our affection and respect for them. And it’s easy for us to care for one another and do kind things when we ourselves feel secure, comfortable, and in control in our own lives. But when those false shepherds of comfort and control leave us – when they are revealed for the illusions that they are – then our true character can be revealed, as we desperately grasp to recover that sense of safety that our illusions of control and comfort gave us. Then we openly begin to put ourselves first, and the command to love our neighbors can be quickly cast aside.

How do Christians avoid that? How do we keep from becoming like the neighbors in that episode?

It’s not primarily by mustering up more self-discipline to keep ourselves from panicking. It’s not primarily by being more stoic about our own lives and needs. It’s not even primarily by generating more emotional empathy for other people.

The foundational way that Christians are to be different is that we know we have something to keep us, that is far stronger than any bomb shelter. We know we have someone to protect us who is far more powerful than any governmental official or medical treatment. We know that Christ holds us in his hands, and no one and no thing can ever snatch us out of his hands.

And so, whatever comes our way – whether war or famine, social isolation or sickness – still Christ holds us in his hands. He is close to us. He is with us. He is sovereign over all that happens to us.

That doesn’t mean we won’t face hardship. It doesn’t mean we won’t face great loss or even death. But it does mean that whatever we face, he will be at our side, and in the end, none of those things will triumph over us – even if we die, we will not perish but he will give us eternal life, raising us up from the dead on the Last Day.

And so any bomb shelter, any isolated space, seems like flimsy protection compared to what Christ can give us.

And so instead of fighting for such flimsy comforts and aspects of control, we can stand in the confidence of Christ’s presence and sovereignty towards us, his sheep, and we can love others first, just as Christ has loved us.

Of course, loving others, secure in Christ, is going to look different for different people in different circumstances.

Sometimes, as we might imagine, it will mean a willingness to put ourselves at risk for the good of others, with confidence that we are held firmly in Christ. For Christians in many past ages this has meant risking infection during a plague in order to serve those in need, firm in the conviction

that Christ would hold them firmly in his hands, whatever came their way – even if it be sickness ... even if it be death.

But other times, it will mean being willing to sacrifice what we want for the good of others. It might mean that though it's in our own personal interest to defy the suggestions of health officials, we follow their guidance anyway. We self-isolate even when we find it frustrating. And we do it firm in the knowledge that Christ is what enables us to sacrifice what we want for the good of our neighbors.

Whatever it may look like, the fact the Christ holds us firmly in his grip means that we are free to love those around us, rather than battling them in an attempt to feel in control of our lives.

We live in a world of uncertainty. That feels truer now than it normally feels. We don't know what will happen with our own health or the health of those around us. We don't know what will happen next with the societal structures that have come to a halt around us. We don't know what the future will be.

But that's okay.

It's okay because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, one with the Father, Sovereign over the universe, holds us in his hand. And no foe – not sin, not suffering, not even death – can ever snatch us from his hands.

Because that is true, let us face the unknown with peace – knowing that nothing that may come can separate us from Christ our Lord.

And because that is true, let us live lives of love and willing-self-sacrifice to one another and to our neighbors, in a time of uncertainty – knowing that we don't need to battle for safety with those around us, because there is nothing in the universe that can hold us more securely than Christ holds us right now.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

Augustine. *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1-40*. Translated by Edmund Hill. Edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald. The Works of Saint Augustine. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2009.

Augustine. *Homilies on the Gospel of John*. Tractates XLV, XLVI, XLVII. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series, Volume 7.

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