

John 10:22-30 (Fourth Sunday of Easter—Series C)
“I’m Certain”
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT
May 8, 2022

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Gospel Lesson from John 10:

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. 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.” 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, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. 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.”

The old proverb says that in this world only two things are for certain: death and taxes.

We live in a terribly uncertain world. Change is uncertain. It’s not always predictable.

Uncertainty is frightening and stressful, worrisome and disconcerting. Is there anything that we can be certain of that doesn’t involve death or taxes?

Let’s start with the created world itself. Even with all our technology, we still cannot predict the weather with 100% accuracy. There’s always a bit of uncertainty with the forecast that can affect our plans for a picnic or a day at the beach, our plans for a golf outing or a ball game. We can’t predict drought and flood. They can come without warning and stay for unanticipated lengths of time. Who knows when the earth will tremble and quake? Who could guess that a tornado would rip through their town? The world is a very uncertain place.

Yet there are more uncertainties that we face. The job you had for 20 years is suddenly gone. You are out of work with a family to take care of. When will you get another job? Will it

pay enough so that you can pay the bills and put food on the table and clothes on your back? How long will a new job even last?

A marriage breaks down and ends in divorce. What happens with the children? How will they deal with this devastating end to their parent's marriage? What God has joined together man is separating. How will the couple handle this spiritually and emotionally?

You get a diagnosis from your doctor and it is cancer. Will I beat it? Will the treatments be successful? What kind of quality of life can I expect? How do I tell my loved ones? What would happen if . . . ?

This world is a very uncertain place. These are but a few examples of life's uncertainties. I'm sure each of you can add to these from your own lives. Thinking about uncertainties is unsettling. We don't like dealing with the unknown. We don't like living with the uncertain. It makes us very nervous. Uncertainties make us frightened, stressed, worried, sleepless, and anxious. Those emotions can cause us various physical ailments as well as mental insecurities. We begin to doubt our friends and our relationships; we begin to doubt our self-worth and our abilities to "make it through." Is there anything that we can be certain of and place our confidence and trust in?

Jesus said, "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." Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd died on the cross and rose again from the dead in order to make you and me and all people a part of His flock. The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, has created faith in our hearts to believe in Jesus

Christ as our only Savior from sin and death. Through the waters of Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit has made us children of the heavenly Father, sheep who through the Word of Christ hear the voice of our Shepherd Jesus saying, "I forgive you all your sins. You are mine. I give you eternal life and you will never perish. Death and hell have no power over you. No one will drag you away from My hands."

Want proof that this is sure and certain? Look at the hands of your Good Shepherd. This is the Shepherd who laid down His life on behalf of His sheep—you and me. See the marks of the nails in His hands? They nailed Jesus to the cross to suffer death so that you would not perish but have eternal life through the forgiveness of your sins. See the nail scars in His hands? Jesus is risen from the dead and you also will rise again to enter with Him in body and soul into life everlasting in a new creation.

Listen to what the Psalmist writes about the certainty of being in the Lord's hands: "For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" (Psalms 95:3-7a). God's hands, Christ's hands, hold what He has made and He cares for His people. As a shepherd protects and provides for His flock, so Christ provides and protects us, His sheep, and brings us to eternal life.

We have His promise and guarantee. No one is able to snatch us out of God's hand—not the devil, not the world, not our own sinful flesh; not life's uncertainties, not our fears, not our troubles. St. Paul picks up this very theme in Romans 8, "For I am sure that neither

death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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" (Romans 8:38-39).

Paul is sure. We are sure. There can be no uncertainty—Christ has died and sin has been paid for in full with His own sacrificial death. Forgiveness is won for us! There can be no uncertainty—Christ is risen and we too will rise again with Christ on the Last Day. Eternal life in body and soul is won for us! Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has made us the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hands who are securely in His holy hands of mercy and grace, blessed with complete forgiveness and eternal life just as our Lord Himself says.

Martin Luther wrote of such confidence and certainty, "But I know that I am baptized, that I hear God's Word, and that I believe this article of faith, that is, believe in Jesus Christ. God has granted me grace to hear and to believe, and, thus equipped, I came to Him by the will of the Heavenly Father. This is sufficient for me. Why should I fear? And whom should I fear? For He says here: 'Him who comes to Me I will not cast out.' This I will accept, love, and cherish. Therefore I will surely remain secure with Him. For here I am dearly and unmistakably assured that I will not be rejected and cast out. And in another passage it is written that no one will snatch me out of His hand (John 10:28). Christ is determined to

protect and defend me, so that no one will take me from Him, even though all the devils and the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18) were against me.”¹

The world is uncertain, but Jesus Christ is certain. The world is uncertain, but our forgiveness is definite. The world is uncertain but eternal life is a sure thing. Today the Lord Jesus, your Good Shepherd, leads you by means of His Word and Sacrament from fear and uncertainty to focus on His redeeming love and care for you here and now. Today Jesus Christ removes the uncertainties of life from the worries of your heart and fills you with the assurance of His forgiveness and eternal life. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). His love and grace to you is sure and certain. By grace, through faith, Christ has given you eternal life and you will never perish. No one will snatch you out of His nail-scarred hands of love! And that’s for certain. Amen.

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 23: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 23 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 60.