



**SERIES – Believe: The Book of John**

**SPEAKER: Nat Crawford**

**Saturday, February 18, 2023**

**Scripture: John 10:34-42**

**TITLE: Neutrality Is Not an Option**

We've reached a point in the story of Jesus where neutrality is no longer an option. There could be no "in between." Like the prophet Elijah declared at the mountain top conflict with the 450 prophets of Baal was heating up in 1 Kings 18:21, "How long will you go on limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." For all of us, there finally comes a time when you must decide! Here's John 10:34-39

"Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the Word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him who the father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 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. Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.'"

One more time Jesus clearly states that He was specifically sent into the world by His Father and boldly declares, "I am the Son of God!" He then immediately supports His bold, clear words by pointing them to His validating works. He graciously challenges them one more time to be believing. And before them He lays out two viable options. "If you can't believe what I say, then believe what you see me do!" As the divided crowd had already debated: "He has a demon and is insane; why listen to him?" While the other side responds, "These are not the words of one oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Some 2,000 years later it is increasingly difficult to slip our feet into their sandals of His hostile haters and comprehend their setting and culture with its heated debate. This conflict has been slowly growing until it has reached the moment of crisis. The master teacher and incomparable miracle worker from Nazareth has both clearly declared himself to be from God and supported that claim with validating evidence. And the religious leaders—the false caregivers of God's flock have not missed the bluntness of his point. They knew the implications of his statements: I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the door. And now, I am the shepherd, the good one. He had publicly exposed their duplicity just days earlier when He granted permission to cast the first stone of judgment against the defenseless woman caught in an adulterous act. These thieves, robbers and hirelings hung their heads and slithered away. As the only guilt-free one in the circle, He Himself forgave her rather than condemning her (John 8).

And now on the very day of this conflict He had displayed a true shepherd's heart in contrast to the cold harshness of the supposed shepherds when He sought out the one they had cast out—a

blind man who had been given both physical and spiritual 20/20 vision. His deafened ears had been opened to hear the voice of his shepherd. And when he saw and heard, he believed!

But those who should have recognized Jesus, rejoiced at His presence, welcomed and received Him, chose to condemn. “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe in me; 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.” But His gracious appeal fell again on blind eyes and deafened ears. “Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.”

Beware of the danger of too often saying no to the Savior. There ultimately comes a time when the Good Shepherd no longer calls one’s name. As He instructed His disciples when their message of Good News was rejected, so He now does the same. He shakes the dust off of His sandals, departs from the temple courts, and returns to the place where it all began. And as they had done three years earlier, the lost sheep of Israel departed from the false shepherds of Israel and wandered out to the desert to hear the voice of the shepherd, the Good Shepherd. The chapter concludes with John 10:40-42.

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

Again, remember the stated purpose for writing his Gospel that John declared. John 20:30-31

“Many other signs Jesus did that are not written in this book. But these have been written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing, you might have life in his name!”

Once more the words of David the shepherd-king: “The Lord is my shepherd...no wants!