

Our Confidence in Church Planting and Evangelism

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Hopefully on the way in you've got a service sheet and see you've got four statements in this one verse, John 10, 16. What I want to do this evening, therefore, is to begin to wring this verse dry. What do we mean by that, boys and girls, perhaps when you go swimming, get out of the pool, you stuff sweat. What do mum and dad do? They start to wring it out, don't they?

Get the water out of it. Hopefully that's what we're going to do with this verse, get the meaning out of the verse for us and elsewhere looking in John to see how that helps us here. Let's look at the first thing Jesus says in John 10, 16. First thing, I have the sheep. We've all got a friend, don't we? They're all talk. They give it this. All the big things.

with Jesus. Never the case with Jesus. The God who spoke the universe into being and it happened as soon as he said it, speaks here and Jesus says, I have other sheep. Let's be upfront from the start. What he means here is people. Well, technically the sheep are his as well. Yes, we get that, the earth is his. But here he's talking about people. He has other people. Notice this is significant. These sheep, these people belong to him, notice, before they have come to him.

They belong to him. They've not yet come to him. If this wasn't true, he wouldn't have said that I must bring them also, would he? Meaning that he has sheep that are with him, people that currently belong to him who are with him, and people who belong to him who aren't yet with him. That's the big thing he's saying here. Back in the Old Testament, during the period called the exile, when God's people were far in Babylon, we read that great promise in Ezekiel 24, a promise that from towards the end of Ezekiel, a promise that God himself would come. They'd be mistreated by the Jewish religious leaders. Now God himself is going to come and shepherd his people. Here now is prophesied by Ezekiel, is God come in John chapter 10 to shepherd his people? But let's not miss the question looming here. How can Jesus have sheep, people who belong to him, before he's called them? How can Jesus have people who belong to him before they've repented and turned from their sin? The answer is that these people already belong to the Father, and the Father has already given them to Jesus. This is all over John's gospel. It's everywhere. We see all over the place. Here's one place, John 17 verse 6. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. Now as Jesus speaking to his Father, they were yours. You gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Paul writes about it as well. Let me read Colossians 1 from verse 12. He writes to the church there, giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the domain of darkness. This is all the Father who's done this. And brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Paul is saying that these Christians in Colossae, they were qualified to be saved by the Father. And it was the Father who delivered them from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of his Son Jesus. Think of Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3. Paul teaches us when we came to belong to the Father. He writes this,

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him, when? Before the creation of the world, to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one he loves. Jesus doesn't say anything different in his gospel to what Paul writes about in his letters. John 6, 37. Wonderful verse.

[4 : 49] All those the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

Jesus has other sheep. Other people who belong to him but have not yet turned in repentance and faith yet. What does Jesus say next? I have other sheep. I must bring them also.

I'm a fan of Lord of the Rings. The glasses give it away a bit, don't they? And towards the end of the first volume, the fellowship of the ring, you've got the one main character, Frodo Baggins.

He and the fellowship find himself in Lothlorien and Frodo can't sleep at night. He has this encounter with Lady of the Wood, Lady Galadriel, shows them what life will be like if he doesn't go and take the ring of power to Mount Doom. And Frodo says, then I know what I must do. It's just, I'm afraid to do it. Frodo knows what he must do, but he's scared.

There's no certainty that he can do it. All the odds are against him. He's determined, but the result is not definite. Not so with Jesus. When Jesus says something, it is as good as done. When Jesus says, I must bring them also, realize what this means.

[6 : 31] If you are here and you are a Christian, he's talking here about you. He has done this in your life.

I must bring them. I must bring Stuart. I must bring Fiona. I must bring Anna. I must bring Neil.

I must bring, put your name there and if you are saved, he's done it. He's brought you. Perhaps you're here this evening. You wouldn't say you're a Christian yet.

And yet there's something inside of you thinking, I need to know more of this man. Speak to someone after service. I'd love to chat with you afterwards if you've got any questions.

Perhaps speak to the person who welcomed you or the person who brought you this evening. Let's take a step back. Notice here, here's the logic of what's going on. The father has chosen a people for the son.

[7 : 38] Jesus will lay down his life for them. Jesus must bring them. This is not wishful thinking here at all.

Jesus has complete confidence and certainty. It's unquestionable. These people will be brought to him. Jesus will bring these people.

I mean, just think about what we're saying. If that's not you, which step's failing? The father hasn't chosen the flock. He hasn't chosen the people for his son. He hasn't given them to his son. Jesus didn't die for them.

Jesus isn't going to bring them. No. That's not possible, is it? So what are we saying? Well, we're saying this.

We can phrase it this way. There was no wasted blood on the cross of Christ. There was not one drop of blood that was shed through which someone will not be saved.

[8 : 48] Everyone the father has given to the son is everyone Jesus has died for. And every one of them will be saved. I must bring them also.

That's what Jesus is saying here in this verse. How does he bring them? How does Jesus save people?

Third, they will listen to my voice. Jesus has. Jesus must. So what's the response?

They will. Jesus says it with absolute certainty. They will listen to my voice. They will come. I wonder if you noticed that repeated in John chapter 10 as I read it.

John 10 verse 4. When he's brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them and the sheep follow him. Why? Because they know his voice.

[9 : 53] Later in John 10 verse 27. My sheep hear my voice and I know them. And they follow me. What about today though?

We go to uni, work, golf club, whatever we're doing tomorrow. Jesus isn't practically standing physically with us, is he? So how does he speak to them?

How do they hear his voice? If that's the very thing he said, he will use to call them. Well, let's do some work together.

It's Sunday evening. It's warm. We've had a good lunch. Let's do some work together. Let's turn our Bibles to John chapter 20. Keep one finger in John chapter 10. I want us to turn to John chapter 20.

Let me read for us from verse 19 of John 20.

[10 : 55] On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. After he said this, he showed them his hands and sides.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven them. John's Gospel is a wonderful book. It's all like a spider's web.

You pull one part and the whole thing shakes. In the middle section, 13 to 17, Jesus getting his disciples ready for their mission. And here we read this mission now.

Jesus very clear is for them to tell people about Jesus, who he is, what he's done. They are the eyewitnesses of everything he's done. In that center section, Jesus promises that he'll send someone, a helper, the Holy Spirit, who will come and who will help them.

[12 : 00] And here in John 20, we see that happening. And Jesus does this sort of weird thing. That's weird. I think it's weird. It is weird. He breathes on them. That's a weird thing, isn't it?

There's something cool going on here. The Greek words here used for breathe upon is nowhere else in the New Testament. That's striking, isn't it? In fact, nowhere else in the Greek Old Testament apart from one place.

Genesis 2, verse 7. When God breathes life into humanity. And so here in John chapter 20, on the day of the Savior's resurrection, the new creation has begun.

Jesus is breathing new life into these men. He has given them his life, his spirit. It's the same word. And Jesus is giving them his spirit because the apostles won't do this work, but God's going to do his work through them, through their words, through their breath.

So what we see is that the power of God's spirit is seen in the apostles' words when they talk about Jesus, who he is, what he's done.

[13 : 17] And when people hear that, they can respond positively or negatively. That's what the end of our reading now was. That's meant by verse 23. It's not that the apostles will forgive Jesus, but the message people hear from the apostles means that they can receive forgiveness and life or reject it.

Now, this is all very exciting. At least I think it's quite exciting anyway. But we need to remember, as I said this morning, we are not apostles. They were unique. What John is telling us throughout his gospel is that the apostles' testimony is powerful.

The apostles' testimony, they're witness, the New Testament, it contains the words of life. It is sufficient in the power of the Spirit for salvation.

That's why I got this weird section with Thomas afterwards. The apostles told him what's happened. He doesn't believe them. And then he's rebuked, saying you should have believed because it's the apostolic witness.

What we have in the gospels, what we have in John's gospel here, is the words of life that people can come to know and believe in Jesus.

[14 : 36] So where do we fit in this? Our mission now is to share this same apostolic witness. This is what we are to do to share what the apostles saw and learned and heard about Jesus.

This is how we know who Jesus is. This is how we know what Jesus is like. Fundamentally, Jesus comes to the world as the apostles' words comes to the world.

I want to put it another way. The shepherd's voice is heard in the world when his words goes out across the world. Whenever we speak the words of this book, whenever we share the Jesus, we read of in the gospels here, the shepherd's voice is heard.

Think about it. How was every single person who's ever lived ever been saved? Through hearing about Jesus.

Through reading about Jesus. Through someone speaking about Jesus. Go a level deeper. Through Jesus speaking to them.

[15 : 51] Therefore, as we talk to people about Jesus with our breath, we offer words, we offer people Jesus. This doesn't mean that when we talk about Jesus, the gospel's sort of like a magic spell.

Go recite the words, do the incantation right now. That's not the point. But rather, the Jesus we speak of has to match the Jesus we read of here. This is how people today hear the voice of Jesus.

So let's turn back to John 10, verse 16. Let's put some of these key things together that we've seen. Jesus has other sheep. People given to him by the Father who are not yet saved.

They belong to Jesus. They belong to Jesus. They've not repented yet. Jesus must bring them also. He died for them. They just don't know it yet.

Their ransom has been paid. They don't know that they're free in Christ yet. So we tell everyone we know about Jesus.

[16 : 59] We don't know who the sheep are. But Jesus does. Jesus died for people. Of course he's going to save all those he died for.

Of course. And these people will listen to Jesus. They will hear his voice as we speak to him about Jesus.

Because that's what Jesus promised happened would happen. The voice they hear in one sense is ours. In another sense it's not. It's the Lord Jesus speaking to them.

Calling them to himself. And we are all evidence of that. Therefore, we can have every confidence in evangelism. Every confidence in church planting.

You can see why this would cause people to go overseas. Literally taking their coffins with them on the ships. Saying, I'm going. Because there are people over there who don't know Jesus yet.

[18 : 04] But Jesus died for them. So I'm going to tell them about him. And we'll see what happens. What will happen ultimately, point four? There'll be one flock, one shepherd.

Just as certain as every other promise of Jesus, so too is this. One flock, one shepherd, one head of the church, Jesus Christ. Just look how Jesus goes on in John 10, verse 27 again.

My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. 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. All those who've heard the voice of Jesus, he calls to himself, he gives eternal life to them, they'll never perish, and they are safe in his hand.

Completely and utterly safe. I wonder if you've ever seen a toddler snatch something before. I've got three kids, Tabitha who's seven, Karris and Peter twins who are five.

[19 : 13] Things are pretty safe in their sticky hands, aren't they? A toddler snatches something, they scuttle off, you've got to wrestle them to the ground, prise that hand open, but you will get it.

Not so with Jesus. No one can snatch us out of his hand. Especially it's as if we are in the hand of Jesus and the hand of the Father is around Jesus' hands.

This one flock made up of people from all over the world, safe, forever. I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there'll be one flock, one shepherd. This is the confidence of our salvation. Because it's all about Jesus.

This is our confidence in church planting. Why pray for these church plants we did earlier. This is the picture we see fulfilled in Revelation. People from every tribe, nation, tongue throughout the ages standing before the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20 : 25] This is the confidence that we can have that as we go out and tell people about Jesus, as we read Mark's gospel one-to-one with people, as we stumble and stutter through what we did at the weekend when someone asks us what we got up to and we get to the church bit.

This is our confidence. This is our good news. And both of them are Jesus. Jesus died to save people and those people will be saved.

Our job is to speak. Speak about Jesus. that's what church planting is.

Going somewhere new, speaking about Jesus. He's the one that saves. I want to end with a story. There's numerous missionary stories I could tell you about how this verse has been used to transform nations.

But I won't tell you one of those stories. I'll tell you three stories instead. Two short, one long. Here's what I've experienced in my life. Let me tell you first about Mary Burke. I worked at church in Edinburgh.

[21 : 38] Mary was 86 years old. Coming along to evangelistic seniors lunch once in my house. People in the community.

And then when she was 86, she was saved. When she was 86, she heard the voice of Jesus and she was saved.

Wasn't mean to hear the voice of Jesus. It's not a big booming voice. Don't miss hear me on that. Don't misunderstand that. It's that conviction of sin. That knowledge that you need to repent of your sin and you know there'll be salvation in Christ.

86. It's never too late. It's never too late to be saved. It's never too late to tell someone to be saved. Let me talk about Alice Russell.

Who's she? I had a Sunday evening off last summer. I went to a church in Edinburgh and a young woman came up to me after the service and said, did you go to Kevi? Kevi was the name of the high school I went to.

[22 : 45] Just a state school. King Edward's the sixth school. It sounds very grand. Just a local school. And I was like, yeah, I did, yeah. She said, did you still work in a hotel as well? I was like, yeah. She said, I was an year below you at school.

And I was like, Alice. Your name's Alice. She had no Christian family. No Christian friends at school. No Christian friends at uni.

Got a job. Became friends with her colleagues. Started spending time together as friends. Invite along to some church things.

She read Mark's gospel with her. Now she's saved. No Christian contact at all in her family growing up. And then a normal Christian doing a normal thing.

And now she's saved. Isn't that amazing? Let me end with one story. This one's slightly longer. This one's not one of my own. This is a story of a man called Rigby.

[23 : 48] Rigby was a traveling salesman. And there was this free church minister in Edinburgh called Alexander White. And he used to love to tell this story of this commercial traveler, a salesman named Rigby, who went in Edinburgh to store.

He used to stay in the Waverley Hotel. On Sunday, Rigby always made his way to St. George's where Alexander White was minister. And Rigby couldn't preach. He found it difficult to talk about spiritual things with others.

But before leaving the hotel for church, he looked for someone whom he could invite to come with him. I'm sure he did what we saw in Acts 4 as well and prayed for boldness to do that.

One morning, on approaching a man with his invitation, he received something like a rebuff. The stranger at first refused but finally consented and was so moved by the service that he asked Mr. Rigby to go with him again in the evening.

That night, at St. George's, this man found Christ. Next morning, in the course of his business, Mr. Rigby chanced to pass upon the home of Dr. Alexander White.

[24 : 54] Acting on a sudden impulse, he made up his mind to call and tell Dr. White of his experience on Sunday. Dr. White was deeply moved. I thought he said that last night's sermon felt very flat and I've been feeling very depressed about it.

But what did he say your name was? Mr. Rigby repeated it. Why? exclaimed Dr. White in delight. You are the man I've been looking for for years.

He then went to his study and returned, carrying a bundle of letters from which he read such extracts as these. I was spending a weekend in Edinburgh some weeks ago and a fellow commercial called Rigby invited me to accompany him to St. George's.

The message of that service changed my life forever. Another one read, I'm a young man and the other day I came to hear you preach at the invitation of a man called Rigby and in that service I decided to dedicate my life to Christ.

Dr. White went on to say that 12 of the letters were from young men of whom four had already entered the ministry. Why did it work? Why were people saved?

[26 : 07] Well for one, Rigby did not make up the mind of these people for them. He didn't say, oh they probably wouldn't be interested. Why did he invite them?

Why was Mary Burke saved? Why was Alice Russell saved? Because Jesus said, I have many other sheep who are not yet of this fold. I must call them, they will hear my voice.

Therefore there will be one flock and one shepherd. Let me pray. Well for one day, let me pray.

Lordinto, let me wait. So, I'll start my face.