

Introduction: Dismiss Kids... FTGs (CC - Drop in Box) — NEXT (next week)...

“Love Secures.”
John 10:1-30

Don't you love seeing these beautiful children! And how beautiful it is, not only for parents to say - our kid belongs to God and we are committed to raising them in God's wisdom and pointing them to Christ, — but ALSO for a church family to say, and we've got your back. We're going to pray for, and care, and come alongside of you! Thank you church, THE POWER OF WE...

But I've asked Monica to stay up here for a few minutes (she didn't forget to exit with Jon! Ha!) because I want your eyes to linger on this beautiful picture of a baby in a mother's arms.

Anyone who has been around a baby or toddler, you KNOW there is something different about a mother's presence, a mother's embrace, a mother's loving arms. As Noelle gets older, oftentimes she will be unsettled by the presence of a stranger (have you ever made a baby cry? It's not because you're mean or ugly or smell bad! Ha! It's because they don't recognize you!). But when MOM shows up (or DAD - s/o Jon Tawfiq, amazing dad), when MOM shows up, there is a overwhelming calming effect that takes over.

Babies do not rest content when they feel vulnerable or disoriented, but the arms of love push out our fears and bring a sense of comfort and protection.

With this picture in mind, I want us to consider this morning how... “Love Secures.”

Give it up for Monica & Baby Noelle.

Last week, we considered how love says: “I am yours, and I'm not going anywhere.” Why? Because LOVE STAYS. Today, we hear love saying:

The Point: “I am yours, and I will protect you.”

Because LOVE SECURES.

We see this in John 10, perhaps a surprising Scripture for a series on relationships, especially romantic relationships, but perhaps the VERY BEST place to go, because understanding how God loves and relates to his people shows us how we should love and relate to one another.

Here, Jesus contrasts his loving leadership with the failure of the spiritual leaders in his day to care for God's people.

John 10... Pg. _____. Read John 10:1-18. (2 encouragements today...)

I. Rest secure in the comforting arms of love.

The Shepherd's loving presence brings great comfort to the sheep.

This comfort comes from two places. 1) A known Identity (Just like Baby Noelle — which leads to...) 2) Increasing Intimacy. First, lets consider our identity...

IDENTITY...

- Did you notice Jesus calls the sheep: “his own.” (In vv. 3 & 4)?
- We belong to him.
 - By Creation... and Redemption
 - He made us & for everyone in Christ, he has saved us.
- But then we also see that Jesus calls *his own* sheep by name (v.3).
 - Names identify. We know each other by our names.
 - Naming reveals personal awareness and interest. (Titus Storms)
- I'm beginning to believe that understanding your identity is one of the two most important things you can ever learn.
 - God: Tozer - “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”
 - You: Turley - “What comes into your mind when you think about you is the second most important thing about you.”
 - And one depends on the other...
 - Calvin: : “... true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”

So, who are we, then? WE ARE WHO HE SAYS WE ARE!

Listen: God has not hidden his feelings about you!! Let these words FALL DEEP WITHIN YOUR SOUL TODAY.

“Therefore if anyone is IN CHRIST, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

These are my favorite two words: IN CHRIST!

“In Christ” captures the essence of our identity and the WHOLE OF THE XN LIFE. Read Ephesians 1:1-14. We are faithful IN CHRIST, blessed with every spiritual blessing IN CHRIST, chosen IN X, accepted IN X, redeemed IN X, forgiven IN X, our trust is IN X, we have an inheritance . . . IN CHRIST... and we could keep going. :)

We are IN HIM. He is OUR IDENTITY. When God sees you, he sees Jesus! Now that we are IN CHRIST, what else is true of us?

“But you shall be called My Delight Is in Her... for the Lord delights in you . . . And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.” (Isaiah 62:4-5)

- We make God glad! He takes JOY in us!
- He rejoices over us ... even to the point of song!

“The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

- What?! GOD! sings over you?! Song is the overflow of the soul. We sing because simple statements are not enough.
- God sings over you, and he sings LOUD, completely UNASHAMED! He is really, really, excited about you!
- T: AND... on top of that, He puts a HUGE SIGN over your head...

“His banner over me was love.” (Song of Solomon 2:4)

- When you roll into work tomorrow... (LOVE!)
- Ace the exam or blow the presentation (LOVE!)
- Discouraging news comes your way... (LOVE!)

“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11)

- God is pleased with me. Because of what I do? No, because of who. I. AM! [God, give us faith to believe it!]
- My 4 year old, Jordyn, could do nothing else her entire life.... AND NOTHING would stop pleasure in her or my songs over her!
- WHY? Because she's mine. Don't you know that's how God is with us.

SO, TAKE COMFORT! REST SECURE! YOU ARE WHO HE SAYS YOU ARE!

AND this new identity brings increasing intimacy.

- Jesus knows us intimately.
 - Verse 3: The sheep “hear his voice.”
 - Verse 4: [the sheep] “know his voice.”
 - Verses 8 & 16: The “sheep listen to his voice.”
 - What is better than hearing the voice of God (in the Bible, AND as we move about our day hearing the Holy Spirit's (usually - still, small voice), prompting, nudging, leading, encouraging, comforting, & instructing us wherever we go?
- God wants that kind of intimacy with you!
- Let this sink in: Jesus says the relationship we enjoy with him is like the one he enjoys with God the Father. Look at vv. 14-15
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- And this... NOT BECAUSE WE ARE SPECIAL. SHEEP are actually very stupid animals. Sheep need constant attention and care. But this is also part of the wonder of his love.
- Jesus knows us through and through. He sees all of our flaws, AND YET, he STILL loves us.
- This is the beauty of love and the beauty of marriage:
 - **Tim Keller** puts it this way: **“When over the years someone has seen you at your worst, and knows you with all your strengths and flaws, yet commits him- or herself to you wholly, it is a consummate experience. To be loved and not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God.”**

T: What should the comforting love of God mean for our marriages/relationships? Let me set these thoughts in the form of a challenge.

45 Minute Challenge!

- 45 Minute **quality, meaningful, below the surface conversation** with your spouse or significant other: No phones. No screens. No music, well, maybe a little “Hey Siri, can you play that Al Green?” Lol!! “Let’s Stay Together...”
- Relational oneness takes effort. In those 45 minutes...
 - 1. Study your spouse (significant other).**
 - Are you *really* paying attention to your spouse *or* taking them for granted?
 - Do you *know* what excites them? *Do you know* what weighs them down?
 - Let me encourage you: Craft at least one, thoughtful question, that will help push the conversation below the surface! THEN...
 - 2. Be vulnerable, not just honest.**
 - Open your hearts before one another. Share your deepest thoughts and feelings.
 - Enter into the good, bad, and ugly. The security of love means there’s nothing left to hide.
 - Dating: be careful. (Why? Because you’re not YET - emotionally and relationally ONE. You may be moving in that direction, but almost is not there. If that frustrates you, do what Beyonce said: PUT A RING ON IT.)
 - 3. Speak words of affirmation.**
 - Words have unique power in marriage because as J.R.R. Tolkien once said: “The praise of the praiseworthy is beyond all reward.”
 - Be specific. Drop a little love note on them. Put a little something, something up in there (you know what I’m saying). BE ROMANTIC! Tell her how you really feel. [And not just on Valentine’s Day!]
 - And then if you want to take your intimacy and love’s security to the next level...
 - 4. Pray. Together.**

T: God’s comforting arms of love bring intimacy out of this new identity, but there’s more good news: His love will allow nothing to disrupt that intimacy..

II. Rest secure in the protective arms of love.

We see the protection of the Shepherd all over this passage...

- “He goes before them.” (4) He charts the path. This is proactive protection. You can follow me, because I will lead you to safe pasture.
- But the Shepherd also protects the sheep against any predators. We see this when he says: “I am the door of the sheep.”
 - We might be tempted to think Jesus is only saying, I am the way into the sheepfold (meaning “I am the way into a relationship with God.”). That is true, but not all he is saying.
 - When Jesus says, “I am the door of the sheep” (the 3rd of 7 “I AM” statements in John), he gives the picture sheep lodging in a sheep pen out in the open country.
 - Round stonewall, covered with thorns at the top to keep wild animals out, but the entrance was open. There was no door.
 - Well, then how could they be kept safe when, you know, a wolf came looking for a midnight snack?
 - The Shepherd secured the sheep pen by laying across the entrance. The Shepherd, himself, was their protection!
 - In contrast to the hired hand, who will run at the first sign of danger because they are concerned about two things: a paycheck and self-preservation... JESUS is willing to pay the price.
 - He says: “To get to them, you’ve got to come through me!”
- Many of you are probably aware that there has been a rash of break-ins across Medford the past couple of weeks, which means your boy has been operating with the mindset: “To get to them, you’ve got to come through me!” And it’s led to conversations at night:
 - M: Did you lock the doors?
 - T: You know it!
 - M: This is all unsettling.
 - T: Babe: I’ve got you and God’s got you.
 - M: I know God has me. It’s you I’m worried about.
 - T: I said, woman, I’ll go downstairs in prayer & JESUS NAME!

- But Jesus doesn't simply protect the sheep from wolves, 5 different times (in v. 11, 15, 17, & twice in v. 18), he says: I lay down my life for the sheep.
- By which he means... I will voluntarily give up my life through death on a Roman cross, so that you will be protected from your greatest enemy, the enemy of death.
- Jesus says: "I am yours. There is nothing I will not do to protect you. I will die for you!"
- Gospel: have you received this gift?

BUT it doesn't stop there. In the next section of John's gospel (a couple months later), Jesus continues teaching on the theme of the Shepherd and sheep.

Read 10:22-30

Do you see how secure you are? If you are in Christ, he's got you and the Father's got you! You are doubly secure, protected. Nothing can touch you.

Let's think about some implications for our relationships: What does it look like when two people rest secure in a love that protects like this?

1. Love frees us from our insecurities & fears.

- We all hear the refrain playing in our heads:
 - You don't measure up.
 - You don't do enough.
 - You're not good enough.
 - You're not as beautiful as them. (Quadruple takes in the mirror)
 - You're not as successful as them. (Comparison game/trap)
 - You don't have as much as them.
 - Your relationship isn't thriving like theirs.
- We scroll social media posts, comparing our lives to the posted lives of our friends, and before we know it... our insecurity CRIPPLES US.
- **"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4:18)**
- Love says: "You are enough. You don't have to be perfect." It's that whole unconditional and fully committed thing, about promises and not performance!
- Oh! to be FREE in Christ! Boston is an achiever's paradise, the perfect breeding ground for our insecurities.
- But we are saying: I don't have the smartest or most successful person in the lab. I don't have to make the most money. I don't have to have the sexiest body or esteemed in the eyes of others.
- BECAUSE I AM WHO HE SAYS I AM, and I AM WHO HE/SHE SAYS I AM.

2. Love frees us to move forward with confidence.

Because we are safe, we are empowered to move with confidence within the boundaries of their love. Let me show you how this works...

- When I move outside of finding my security in their love, I grow fearful and weak.
 - my appearance, it fluctuates with what outfit I choose to wear.
 - my performance, it fluctuates with my productivity.
- When I stay inside the knowledge and experience of their love, I find confidence and power! When I find my security in Christ, it never moves because HE DOESN'T MOVE.

Conclusion: Here's the really beautiful thing about SECURE LOVE.

- Secure people can fail.
- Secure people can take RISKS.
- Be HONEST.
- Humbly acknowledge their wrongs.
- Receive constructive criticism.
- Help others succeed, and then rejoice when they do! Why? Because my identity is not wrapped up in my achievement.
- Secure people move forward with confidence.

Secure people are free to love people which helps them find their security as well!

Are you resting secure in the love of your spouse?
Have you found your ultimate security in Christ?

YOU ARE WHO HE SAYS YOU ARE.

Prayer....