

Jan 5th 2014 Between the Hands of God John 10:22-30

This morning we stand on the brink of a new year which is both exciting and a little un-nerving, for not one of us knows what this year holds for us. Almost everything ahead of us is tinged with uncertainty except for one fact that holds true for every believer in Jesus. Whatever happens we are safe between the hands of God.

This is the promise that Jesus makes in our reading this morning from John chapter 10 and it is a powerful one. Jesus is speaking to a group of men who were extremely vigorous in their opposition to Him, and yet they were the religious leaders in the land. The Pharisees, scribes, and chief priests. They were accepted by the people as God's appointed leaders. Under shepherds, commissioned by Him to look after His sheep.

But about such men Jesus had spoken in John 10:12 when He said:

The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ 'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me

These leaders knew that Jesus was referring to them and they were not happy. He was undermining their position before the people and the only way He could ever have the authority to do that was if He claimed to be the Messiah. The coming one chosen and appointed by God. And they were certain that Jesus was not the Messiah.

So they approached Jesus when He was walking in the Temple area and they surrounded Him. The rocks and stones were at hand, for they intended to hurt Him badly that day if not kill Him. But first they needed Him to blaspheme. So in 10:24 they asked Him a leading question.

Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

And this is how Jesus answered: v29-30

'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.'

Straight away those Jewish leaders picked up stones to stone Him for blasphemy because Jesus as a mere man to them, had claimed to be God. But they couldn't do it. Verse 39 says that though they tried to seize Him and drag Him to the stoning pit He escaped their grasp. Though they had Him surrounded He, as God the Son would chose the hour when He would be battered and killed, and that was not the hour.

But it was the time for Jesus to give those who chose to follow Him this most wonderful promise. To those He owns as His sheep because they listen to Him and follow Him.

The Jewish leaders did not want to listen to Jesus. They had too much invested in themselves and their way of life to do that, and we know people like that today who are too absorbed in what they want out of this life to get serious about following Jesus. But for those who belong to Jesus the promise is clear. Not only will they have eternal life and never perish, but they will be kept secure within the hands of God. Look again at v28 and v29.

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In His coming God the Son revealed to us that Almighty God is so much greater and bigger and more involved than we could ever have known. He is One God in three persons.....Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And this wonderful promise for us as we move into 2014 is that believers are kept within the grasp of the hand of God the Son and the hand of God the Father. We are between the hands of God for God is One, yet within the awesome Trinity that is our God, both the Father and the Son have their strong hands upon our lives.

I read in a devotional book recently about the times that as a parent we take hold of our child's hand in a place of possible danger. And we say to them, "hold on tight", but we know that it is not the tightness of their grip that will keep them safe, but ours. For there is no way we will let them go until we are sure it is safe to do so. And God's hands will never let go of us. No one can pull us from His grasp...not even ourselves.

This assurance is a very practical one for us to take into 2014. And because it is so practical I want to share with you some real life stories that I believe God has given me for you today. I believe that each story has a special message for at least one person here this morning. Short stories about God's hand being with His people all taken from STORIES FOR A KINDRED HEART by Alice Gray and Barbara Baumgardner, Multnomah Publishers Inc, Oregon, USA., 2000.

The first was written by Max Lucado and it's called Your Abba's Arms...p309

The second was written by a widow, Margaret Baumgardner, and it's called An Ice Cream Solo...p307

The third, written by Walter Burkhardt is called, An Empty Chair....p280

Practical and true stories that encourage. But we also need to know that God's hands are upon us so that He can use us to show His love and Grace to others:

This story is You Don't Bring Me flowers anymore...p158

My final story was written by a wife of a Christian man: Honey I'm Proud of You by Lydia Harris...p291