

One Tiny Passage, Ten Amazing Truths

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[0 : 0 0] Well I'd love us to turn back for a week while to John chapter 10. As I said we're picking up our study in John's Gospel again this morning and then we'll be taking a break for the summer coming back to it again in August. We've come to John 10 which is a massive and a very amazing chapter. Last week we looked at the first half of it, today we return to study the second half and again just like the first half this is a passage that's just full of wonderful teaching. We could spend weeks in this section and that means that just like last week we have to make a choice in terms of what we're going to focus on and what I want us to do today is spend time looking at what is one of the most beautiful, most comforting and most mind-blowing passages ever written. The words of John 10, 27 to 30 when Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them, 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.

Now these words are spoken in the context of the ongoing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders. This is the thread that we've seen kind of weaving its way all the way through chapters 5 through to 10. Jesus has been revealing who he is both by what he's been saying and in terms of what he's doing but there's a section of the Pharisees, the religious leaders who are resolutely opposed to accepting that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and the tension is building as you go through these chapters it comes to your head in many ways in this chapter in verse 24 where the Jews say to him look how long will you keep us in suspense if you are the Christ tell us plainly but Jesus immediately replies and says I have he says I told you but you don't believe in both his words and his miracles Jesus is revealing and verifying his identity but they won't believe they refuse to believe and as Jesus explains here that you do not believe because you're not among my sheep from that point Jesus then goes on to describe those who do believe and he does so in the verses that we read at the start 27 to 30 those who believe those who are part of his flock so that means that if you're a Christian today or if you become a

Christian then these words are talking about you and what Jesus says is utterly amazing in fact in this one tiny passage Jesus says 10 amazing truths about what's involved in following him so that's our title one tiny passage 10 amazing truths and so yes that means that this is a 10 point sermon but we're gonna be fast and we can do it so let's go together starting off with number one he says my sheep hear my voice we touched on this a bit last week and I wonder unpack it a wee bit more we saw that that the tool that the shepherd uses that's that both a shepherd in an ancient Near East context and Jesus as the Messiah the tool used by the shepherd to lead the sheep is his voice the shepherd speaks the flock follow and that's touching on a bigger and crucial theological point that runs right through the Bible the fact that God accomplishes his purpose by speaking by using his voice you see that right at the very start in creation God speaks and the universe is created you see it running through the whole of the Old Testament God speaks whether that's to Abraham to

Moses or to David whether it's speaking directly or whether it's speaking through the prophets God speaks and his purposes are accomplished you see it in Jesus John told us told us this at the very start of the Gospel it's the first thing he tells us about Jesus that he is the word the one who communicates and reveals God to us he's the one who's come to fulfill God's saving purposes he does that through his death and resurrection and the end result of it all is what a message a message of good news a message that contains the words of eternal life and it's emphasizing and bringing us back to the fact that everyone who is saved by Jesus is saved because we hear his voice now when I say that we hear his voice I don't mean like some kind of mystical experience where you're just walking along the road and you hear a voice I don't mean that at all that I mean that that's things like that do happen to people I'm not saying it can't happen but that's not what I mean here because that's not what happens to the vast majority of Christians it's not about hearing a voice out there it's about hearing his voice speaking to us in his word it's about reading the scriptures and hearing God's message spoken to us through the Bible Jesus is calling us he's teaching us he's making promises to us and if you are a Christian today or if you become a Christian today it is because you hear his voice now when I say that there is a crucial point that that I want to highlight when we say all that you know okay you know we hear his voice we follow what if you're here today and you're and you're maybe not a follower of Jesus or if you're listening online and you're not a follower of Jesus or if you're maybe and

I think this is probably more likely if you're in that kind of like I'm not really sure category where you think I'm not sure not sure where I stand with Jesus and that may be the case for people here today in the building online you're here today and and you can hear Jesus is called in his word but something is holding you back you're you're held back by something now maybe maybe there's just a reluctance you hear God's voice you hear the gospel and you're like no I know what it says but I don't want it and it's not it's not what I wanted this point of my life maybe later it's not for me just now whatever maybe there's something that makes you reluctant and resistant you think no no I don't want it maybe there's some people thinking like that maybe and probably more likely there's people who who hear that and think yeah I do want it but I feel like something's missing I I don't know I don't feel ready

[7 : 25] I don't feel like I know enough I don't feel like I don't feel like it's whatever needs to be there is there yet and I'm I'm just yes I wanted but I just don't think that's whatever needs to happen hasn't happened yet so I can't follow Jesus I can't say that I'm a Christian if you're in either of those categories today you are in danger of missing something massive and I really want to press this one to you you're in danger of missing something massive if you are hearing Jesus is called today you're hearing it and if it is pressing past your ears and pressing onto your heart but you are reluctant or hesitant or stumbling or just a bit stuck what is that telling you what is that telling you so telling you that you're not ready is it telling you that you're not good enough is it telling you that you're not suitable no it is not telling you any of those things it's telling you that you can hear it is telling you that you can hear and if you can hear Jesus is called pressing into your heart what's that telling you it's telling you that you can hear and what does that mean you are who can hear who is it that can hear if you're hearing his voice it's telling you that he's calling you that he's drawing you in that he wants you to follow him and so just go for it just say Lord I can hear you I need your help with every single step that I'm gonna take but I can hear you and I'm gonna follow you that's the first thing he says second thing he says is I know them now those are three outstanding words I know them these words are spoken by Jesus about you by Jesus about you Jesus knows us Jesus knows you now these three words tell you two massive things first of all it speaks of knowledge and this is so crucial Jesus knows every individual he knows each one of us no wonder he does he is our creator so he knows every detail of your life everything that you're going through everything that you need he knows all about us so that knowledge of you is comprehensive knows it all as we're saying to the kids we can't surprise them but that knowledge of you is also careful knowledge of a person is a little bit like a nuclear reactor the more you deep go into the depths of it the more dangerous and terrifying it becomes and and we don't want people that depth of knowledge in our lives at all and that's why in life if there are people who know stuff about us that is is much more private whether it's teachers or NHS staff or solicitors or accountants they're very careful with that knowledge and rightly so the point that that I want us to see is that Jesus knows us but he's careful he knows you but he's careful and so he's never gonna use his knowledge of you to be cruel to you like other people might and this is the amazing thing there's no media leaks from heaven so often we see in life just now if anyone has got anything they can leak they're gonna leak it if it'll make for a good

story you do not get leaks from heaven Jesus is careful and the amazing thing is that in Jesus we find the one where we can be completely exposed and yet completely safe he's always careful in his knowledge of us so his knowledge of us is comprehensive knows it all he's careful with that knowledge and his knowledge of us is also compassionate so this is just amazing Jesus knows you but that knowledge is never ever separated from his abundant incredible compassion in other words what he sees in you does not repel him and make him think no thanks what he sees in you draws him in love and mercy so that face speaks of of his amazing knowledge but that's only half of it it also speaks of relationship when the Bible speaks about knowing someone it's talking about relationship and we do exactly the same if you say you know I know them it doesn't just mean that you know their name or you know about them it means you know them they're your friend you have some connection with them Jesus is saying that about you if you are a Christian if you become a

Christian then Jesus looks at you and says I know them and that's two of us as individual believers there's that beautiful relationship between us and our Savior whereby the King of Kings exalted over all actually knows and cares about you and it's also true of us as a collective flock of God's people together with his he knows us we share this beautiful relationship together number three Jesus says they follow me now what I want us to notice here is the order of what Jesus says here it's very very easy for us to get that order the wrong way around we think okay if we follow Jesus and if you're really good at following Jesus if you're an excellent Christian then then you'll be the one that Jesus really knows so you think okay well you know if I'm really good at this being a Christian then that brings me into a better closer higher standard of relationship with Jesus and so you look at you know the people who you think are really good at being Christians and you think oh yeah there's that they're the ones that Jesus really knows because they're following him so well that's not true that's the wrong way around it starts with him knowing us and from that point we follow him in other words from step one as a Christian even if you take that step today from step one you are utterly his he knows you completely he loves you entirely there's no promotion from there you are his known by him loved by him and it's because of that we follow him because his commitment to us is already at the highest level because of that we want to follow him in our lives and that means listening to him it means praying to him every day it means striving to apply his word to our lives and that's just very obvious it just makes it's just a sensible thing to do when we hear somebody we want to respond to what they're saying and not responding it's just bizarre my poor wife has lost count of the amount of times she asks me to do something and I say yeah no problem and she comes home and says did you do this

I'm like no I forgot and I do that all the time because I hear but I don't respond and it's just foolish as Christians we want we want to make sure that we are we are putting into practice every day what we are hearing in Jesus's voice and that doesn't mean that we're perfect we're all stumbling followers but we absolutely want to follow him every day one other crucial point though arises from that word follow and that's and it's this the word follow is teaching all of us that being a Christian is not about standing still it's so easy to think that that if you become a Christian if you follow Jesus then that kind of locks you in this kind of frozen time what where you just you're just kind of rigidly confined to this certain way of living that's not true because at the heart of being a disciple is two things repentance and learning repentance just means turning around where we turn around for my life that's got no interest in Jesus we turn around and follow him and learning is just what the Greek word for disciple means it means to be learning and both of them repentance and learning both of them are impossible if we stand still and never change and the truth is following Jesus takes you on an amazing journey it's a journey of growth whereby we are learning and maturing together it's a journey of serving where we get roll up our sleeves and get stuck into serving him according to the opportunities that he gives to us and it's a journey of discovery as we learn more about him as we get to know one another as we get to know our church family as it stretches across the world that's part of what makes being a Christian so utterly brilliant we're on a pathway of learning and growing and thriving whereby the Holy Spirit transforms us more and more into the people that he wants us to be so my sheep hear my voice I know them they follow me I give them eternal life three amazing words here first one is give give that gift eternal life is a gift never ever earned just given by God in his grace second key word is life in other words not death through Jesus death has been defeated that shadow that we're so used to because everyone experiences it that that shadow is actually lifted through what Jesus has done he's come to giving us life but it's not just life the life's qualified by an adjective it is eternal life nothing below the maximum nothing less than the very best nothing short of forever he's come to give us eternal life number five and they will never perish that's just the other side of this coin from the same truth that he said I've come to give it that's a corresponding truth to the gift of eternal life all who trust in Jesus will never perish now I just want to think a wee bit about what lies behind that word perish behind that word lies all the awful stuff that we experience in life we think of fragility we're all vulnerable we're all exposed we're all weak we all tire utmost to prolong death we can never escape it all fragile whether whether we believe that or not

it is an indisputable scientific and theological fact there's the reality of pain the physical pain of aging of illness of suffering and all that all the stuff that so many of you experience on a daily basis and there's the emotional pain of separation where where relationships are broken in our experience in life and ultimately we lose the people that we love the most and the emotional pain of that is agony and way worse than anything physical so there's fragility there's pain there's fear fear of dying fear of losing loved ones fear of what happens after we die and so you've got all that that running through through you we've got the reality of fragility we've got pain we've got fear Jesus is here that if you are a Christian you can stamp the words never perish across all of that so yeah these things are real your fragility is real pain is real fear is real but through trusting in Jesus you can stamp the truth that you will never perish across all of that and you can press that truth into your heart and I tell you that this would give you peace for those who trust in him they will never perish and why is that possible because of the sixth thing that Jesus says no one will snatch them out of my hand that's such a beautiful description of the security we enjoy as believers if you're a Christian if you become a Christian you are in his hands now I just want you to dwell on that truth just think about that truth if you trust in Jesus even even if you're like if you feel you're a million miles from what you want to be as a Christian even if you think there's still tons I need to learn you really think I'm only taking baby steps in terms of my faith you're still in his hands you are safe in his hands and that is not changing no one will snatch you out of his hands and the reason that no one will snatch you out of his hands is because his hands have got nail holes in them the hands that were nailed to the cross are the hands that will never ever let you go and then it gets even more amazing Jesus starts talking about his father and he says my father who has given them to me my father who has given them to me Jesus starts talking about his father he says something utterly astonishing he says that you have been given by God the Father to God the Son and that word given is just amazing it's telling you that you're a gift from God the Father to God the Son so often we think of this the other way we think of the fact that God has given his son we think of John 3 16 God gave his only son so that we might be saved and so our minds so often tend to focus on that how often do you think of the fact that you have been given you must think about that because it's beautiful you've been given by the Father to the Son often we take huge comfort in the fact that as

[23 : 01] Christians we can say Jesus is mine and that's such a comforting thing to say Jesus is my Savior my Lord my Shepherd and all of that is true all of that is brilliant but it gets even better because the fact that you are given means that we don't just say Jesus is mine we can say we are his but please think about that think about that if you've been rejected in your life think about that if you feel like your self-esteem is crumbling feel think about that if you feel like everybody else has got something that you don't have think about that if you just feel like you are nowhere near where you want to be you are his you are his that means that you're safe that means that you're precious that means that you're useful you can serve him and above all it means that you are loved utterly loved by him that's not the only thing he says about the Father though he then also says that was just I love this is one of the things you see in the Bible and very often that right there just that sentence which is utterly amazing such a just a kind of thrown in supplementary piece of information so cool just bits that just get dropped in and yet they're so rich the main point he's making a sentence here is he's saying my father is greater than all so who's flocker you in if you're a

Christian or if you become one who's flocker you and you are in the greatest of all and that phrase greater than all is brilliant what what is greater than all in other words what is ultimate reality and you've got to remember this that when we talk about the gospel we're not talking about just some kind of nicey-nicey thing that is like here to cheer us up on a Sunday morning as we just head back into another grind week of grind and this is just some kind of you know whatever positive thinking is it we're not remotely interested in positive thinking we are interested in ultimate reality this is about ultimate reality the gospel is about ultimate reality what is the foundation for everything what is the destiny of everything what is the reason for everything in other words what is your greatest of all what is the greatest thing of all what is ultimate reality and the world around us today has got so many depressing answers whereby you peel back everybody's world view and what you find at the heart of it is something like a force or a power or fate or chance or nothing or something gospel is just is just way better the gospel is telling us that ultimate reality is the God who is good and wise and pure and strong and loving he God he is the greatest of all Jesus is reminding us of that and he's telling us that that greatest of all is doing something what's he doing he's holding you and no one is able to snatch you out of the father's hand I absolutely love the fact that Jesus repeats himself but he adds a little bit more information so it's worth just recognizing that that that you've got the first statement here at the end of 28 and Jesus more or less repeats it but he adds two pieces of information first it's now the father's hands that he's speaking about so this is really interesting okay so here and you've got Jesus's hand here you've got the father's hand so which will is it is it the Jesus's hands is it the father's hands and the answer of course is just an utterly magnificent both and this is this is just this beautiful image of double hands holding you I think that is just so cool held in Jesus's hands held in the father's hands double hands holding you and that's the first piece of additional information the second piece of additional information is this word able no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hands I love that phrase because it's telling you that in terms of your security in these divine double hands holding you no one is able to snatch you out no one has the ability no one is strong enough no one is capable it is not possible no one no one can do it not even yourself and I don't know about you but I I think that is just so incredibly comforting

because if I think about my life as a follower of Jesus and for you I'm sure you think the same whether you are following Jesus or not sure where you stand or not following him yet I'm pretty sure that for almost all of us here we think well there's only one person who's gonna stuff that up and it'll be me and that verse is telling you impossible impossible impossible you're not able to do it you are not able to do it Jesus hands the father's hands are holding you and it all concludes in this magnificent statement at the end where Jesus says I and the father are one this is one of the deepest theological truths revealed to us in scripture the father and the son are one emphasizing the great unity of God father God the son God the Holy Spirit one God John's been revealing this to us all the way through the gospel he's gonna continue revealing it as we carry on through the teens chapters in the autumn that one

God that united father and son has a unity of will they want the same things they have a unity of power they share that the inexhaustible resources of God himself there's a unity of glory the glory of the father is the glory of the son you see it displayed and revealed through Jesus God the father God the son God the Holy Spirit are one they are one and they are doing something what are they doing saving you holding you loving you and that is incredible I can't really describe it just just the God who is the foundation destiny reason explanation of everything the God for whom the massive universe is not big enough to declare his glory that God has come to save you to hold you to love you forever in one tiny passage there are ten absolutely amazing things but I want to just conclude by looking at what happened next do you know what happened next okay that is that is the coolest paragraph I think ever written what happened next the Jews picked up stones to stone him and you think that's unbelievable now you might not have anything like the hostility of the Jews towards Jesus and

I don't think anybody here if Jesus was standing here would pick up stones to stone him but as we think about following Jesus today and as you think about what your life is going to look like for all of us and I'm sure there's nobody here who wants to pick up stones to stone him but I am probably certain that there are some people who would like to walk out here and not really have to think about it and just to kind of put it all to one side again and get into another week that's bonkers and just Jesus instead is just in look just follow me I'll look after you I'll never let you go and I can tell you following him is that word right there