

Sermon Notes – May 11, 2025
The Holy Gospel of St. John 10: 22-30
Peace Lutheran Church
“Those Who Hear His Voice!”

In a world marred by suffering and death, God's eternal life in Christ has the final word.

The reading from Acts features Tabitha, the only woman in scripture explicitly identified as a “disciple.” As one abounding in “good works and acts of charity” (9: 36), she parallels the piety of Cornelius - an upstanding Gentile at the center of a climactic event in Acts. The raising of Tabitha has significant parallels with other resurrection stories associated with Elijah (1 Kings 17: 17-24), Elijah (2 Kings 4: 18-27), and Jesus (Luke 7: 11-17; 8: 41-42, 49-56). These parallels make clear that the church is enlivened and prophetically empowered by the Holy Spirit. Many readers today struggle to make sense of the abundant miracles in Acts. Their point is not merely to impress or amaze, but to confirm the validity of this newfound, fledgling faith so that “many believe[d] in the Lord” (Acts 9: 42). Such miracles would elucidate more mixed responses today among people in Western individualistic, scientifically minded societies.

The reading from Revelation depicts the eternal reward of the saints, who form “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation from all ...peoples and languages” (7:9). The color of the robes (white) symbolized purity and holiness. Today we have more nuanced associations with the colors white and black. The “great ordeal” (7: 14) is a time of distress envisioned by several New Testament writings (Re. 3: 10); 13: 5-10; Mark 13: 7-20); 1 Cor. 7: 26). The vision is a word of promise to the faithful who now endure earthly hardships, and they will be richly rewarded by God.

Tensions are high in the gospel reading as conflict between Jewish leaders and Jesus continues to build, here focused on Jesus' identity. The setting of the temple areas only elevates the interaction's significance. The “Festival of Dedication” (10: 22) is the only New Testament reference to Hanukkah. Throughout John, depictions of “the Jews” are nearly always negative. This reflects first- and second-century hostilities between two religious movements that extends far beyond objective history. It is helpful to clarify that “the Jews” here are a particular narrative portrayal of certain religious authorities, and not of Jews or Judaism more broadly. Jesus' words of exclusion (“You do not belong to my sheep” v.26) aim to comfort hearers who identify with his “sheep.” The good shepherd metaphor paints a picture whose beauty and personal significance are unmatched by abstract theology alone. The phrase, “They will

never perish" (v. 28) is emphatic language, using a double negation formula in the Greek language: "In no way will they will ever perish" (*ou me apolontai eis ton aiona*). In John's gospel, hearing, following Jesus is part of being his "sheep." The statement, "The Father and I are one" (v. 30) gives certainty to Jesus' promises by confirming His authority to issue them.