

“What Do You Think Will Happen To You When You Die?”

John 10:11-18

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

This past weekend, when we had the Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ with us, I was able to go out canvassing the neighborhood with them on Saturday morning. When people answered the door, we asked them to take a survey. Now, I have seen enough national survey results over the years to know that the results were going to be bad. I just didn't realize how bad it would be.

Let me preface this: We do not have “bad” neighbors. It's not like they were greeting us with horns and cloven hoofs, pitchfork in hand. What startled me was the response to the question of why you think you will go to heaven when you die. With the people my team visited, among those who took the survey, only one person began their answer with Jesus Christ being the reason they will be in heaven.

We heard “I don't know”; one person said, “It's personal”; several began by saying that they hoped they were good enough; one said “if there is a heaven” they hope they are good enough to be there so they can see their loved ones; and some of these were people who were regular (life-long) church attenders. One

person, when we asked her why she was confident that she will be in heaven when she dies, she went into a litany of the good things in life she had done and how she fears for this generation, because they don't do the things the way she did growing up.

We then asked, "Would you like to know why I am sure that I will go to heaven?" They each said, "Yes." And we said, "We can know we have eternal life because of what Jesus Christ did for us. God requires perfection, so that even one sin could separate us from Him forever. Because of that sin, even if we live "good" lives compared to our neighbor, we deserve God's punishment. But He sent Jesus Christ to live the perfect life that we cannot live. Then He took the punishment for all of our sins when He suffered and died on the cross. Finally, He rose from the dead guaranteeing our life with God forever."

Now, each of them, upon hearing those words said, "Well of course, I believe Jesus is the reason I'm going to heaven." One guy said, "That's a better answer than I gave." He was absolutely correct. It is a better answer, because, as Peter said in our first reading, "there is salvation in no one else." There is no other god; there is no other light in the darkness of this world; there is no other shepherd who will lay down his life for the sheep. And sheep without a shepherd are nothing but food for the wolves.

What startled me was that, except for the one young lady, Jesus Christ was not at the forefront of their minds when considering why we would have life after death. I really

appreciated the simple way in which the O AFC was able to get to the heart of the matter. Do you look to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shedding His blood on the cross as the only way your sins are covered? He is the only One who has the authority to lay down His life. And He is the only One who has the authority to take it up again.

Last week, I said how we each have different spheres of influence, but we all start in the same place. We all start with the Word of God and our personal need to receive it and grow in our understanding of that Word of Life. The Word of Life is Jesus, our Good Shepherd, laying down His life and covering our sins in His blood – then taking His life up again. Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

Understanding this Word of Life and how it truly is a matter of “life and death,” I encourage you to ask your family (start with the most inner part of your sphere of influence) and ask your family (do it this week – ask your spouse, your children, your parents, your brothers or sisters, your cousins) ask them, “what do you think will happen to you when you die?” If they say they believe they will go to heaven, ask them why they believe this.

Be prepared for a variety of answers – even among the ones who come to church. Be prepared to give a good answer. Be prepared to share why you are sure that you will go to heaven. Be prepared to speak of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and His blood covering your sin.

There are many in our neighborhood; there are members of your family; there are people you love who live their lives like sheep without a shepherd. And they are in danger of being food for the wolves.

Share with them the Word of Life. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for you, the sheep. Your Shepherd knows you, and cares for you, and calls you by saying, "Follow Me." In so many cases, the sheep wander off never hearing the Good Shepherd's voice. And most of them would not recognize it if they heard it anyway. Our world is filled with more Bibles now than at any point in time, but knowledge of Scripture seems to be near an all-time low. Every single person we spoke to while canvassing the neighborhood had a Bible. There is just so much noise drowning out the voice of the Good Shepherd and His message that He has already laid down His life – for you.

And He has already taken it up again. Christ is risen!! And He is the only reason, the only way, that you and I will one day join our Lord and all the saints in heaven. But even more importantly, He is the only reason, the only way, the only one with authority to raise you up from the grave. Rising from the dead is our ultimate goal. Which is why we boldly proclaim, "Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!! Amen.