

Looking for Something We Already Have

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



On May 27th and 28th we read the Gospel of John, 10: 17-38. In these verses Jesus responds to the pointed questions of the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees by telling them that the answers have already been given.

In earlier verses of this chapter, Jesus refers to Himself as the "good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep." He contrasts Himself to the hired hand who doesn't really care about the sheep. Then, in the verses we read on these two days, He also makes it clear that the giving of His life is an act of His free will. He tells the listening crowd that He has the power to lay down his life, and the power to take it up again. Anyone hearing and remembering these words would have a source of hope at the time of His crucifixion, knowing that He could rise from the dead and "take up" His life again. Without saying it in so many words, Jesus is telling His listeners that He is the Christ.

But there is a dispute among the people. Some say He has a demon, while others say that nobody who had a demon could open the eyes of the blind, as Jesus has done. So the Jewish leaders question Him: "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." These questioners want Him to declare His equality with God so that they can charge Him with blasphemy.

Now Jesus tells them that they are looking for something they already have. The answer to their question about His identity has already been given: "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me." Again, without saying it, He is claiming to be the Son of God. He is reminding the people of the miracles and healings He has performed. Nobody but the divine Son could do such things.

Jesus also tells them why they do not believe in Him. It is because they "do not belong to My sheep." His next words are a beautiful description of the trust His sheep have in Him, and the complete safety in which they live with Him: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand."

Now His hostile questioners, frustrated because they haven't trapped Him into calling Himself the Christ, take up stones to hurl at Him. Once again He refers to His miracles and healings: "I have shown you many good works of the Father; for which of these do you stone me?"

Some doubters claim that they could believe in God if only He would do miracles to "prove" Himself. But Jesus has done that. Those doubters, like Jesus' questioners, are looking for something they already have.