

Oct 24 - John 10:22-42 "Where do you locate yourself?"

1. What are some of the places we "locate" our sense of self, identity, worth and value as human beings? What impact does it have on us personally and relationally when we do so?

In our Western individualistic achievement driven culture we locate ourselves based on what we do, our jobs, titles, achievements, successes or lack thereof.

In more traditional cultures we locate ourselves in relationships, our role within the family or the community and how we and others assess how we are fulfilling that role.

We also locate ourselves on where we are from, visiting the country of our ancestry even if we have never lived there because somehow that place locates us.

We locate ourselves based on the words spoken over us, words that build up, words that tear down.

We located ourselves based on the key events of our lives, the highs and lows, the triumphs and the tragedies, without which we wouldn't be the people we are today.

As all of these things change and shift our sense of self, identity, worth, and value is constantly being tossed to and fro on the waves of circumstance, perspective, and opinion.

In particular if we root our identity, value, worth in achievement as we so often do in our western individualistic society there is an inherent competitiveness build in – I am better than – have more than – am recognized above – which erodes relationships.

Read John 10:22-42

2. Location plays a key role in understanding this text. Jerusalem is in the throes of celebrating the Feast of Dedication. In the feast they celebrated Judas Maccabeus' victory over the Syrian forces in 164 BC, his cleansing the temple from foreign idols, and the reconstituting of true worship. Israel is again under foreign rule, the holy city profaned by idolatrous images, the yearning for a messiah after the pattern of Judas Maccabeus would have been at a feverous pitch. How does this background shed light on the Jewish leaders' question of Jesus in vs. 24?

They are asking rather plainly if he will be a messiah after the pattern of Judas Maccabeus and lead a political, armed, revolutionary rebellion against their Roman oppressors.

While the question may be clear their motivation isn't. Are they asking as they hope to pick up arms alongside him? Or report him to the Roman authorities to try and get rid of him?

3. The Jewish leaders sought to locate Jesus based on their own terms of reference. Are there ways that we seek to locate Jesus based on our own terms of reference? What impact does that have on us?

This is a danger for every single one of us. So often we try and cast Jesus as a projection of our best selves. Jesus puts the God stamp on all the decisions that we make, cheers us on in all of our causes, takes our side in the hot button issues that divide.

But a Jesus of our own making is a Jesus who cannot love us, cannot forgive us, cannot change us, for we have not given him the space to tell us things we don't want to hear and as a result we can't hear from him the things that are too marvelous to hear.

4. The Jews are asking Jesus to join them in their vision of a nationalistic kingdom taken by power and violence. What does Jesus' response tell us about the kind of Messiah he is, and the kind of kingdom that concerns him?

He has nothing to do with a nationalistic vision of Kingdom where the Jew is in and everybody else is out.

He will not pick up a kingdom through wielding the tools of this world – that of power and violence.

He invites them to look at his works. His works tell us what kind of kingdom concerns him. We are invited then to reflect on the last 9 chapters of John and what they tell us about his kingdom. His kingdom is where the blind see, the lame walk, the captives released, the hungry fed, the spiritually thirsty satisfied, the one seen as morally, spiritually, racially, sexually impure is given grace-filled welcome.

5. **Read Matthew 3:13-17, Psalm 2, Isaiah 42: 1-4.** Jesus retreats to the place where he was baptised by John. In light of where the Jewish leaders sought to locate him how does returning to this place serve to reorient Jesus to who he is and why he has come?

In the face of rejection Jesus is certainly reorienting himself to the love and acceptance of his father.

The word that the father speaks over him is a prophetic word that combines two Old Testament scriptures. Ps 2 speaks of a David King who will flood the earth with justice and righteousness. Isaiah 42 begins the servant song where such a kingdom will come about by the work of a suffering servant who will carry our diseases, bear our sorrows, will be pierced for our iniquities, crushed for our transgressions, but by his wounds we will be healed.

He will not take a kingdom by power and violence but ultimately by a self-sacrificing death upon a cross.

6. Jesus beckons us to such a place. Whatever life throws at it, whatever others say of us, whatever seeks to define us and give us value and worth and identity we are being invited to locate ourselves in what God says of us in Jesus. Who are we in Christ and how does that provide for us a solid foundation and a transformative trajectory for our lives?

In the sermon Tim gave some examples that might serve as a starter for your conversation here:

When the past rises up to accuse and condemn – in Christ you are loved and forgiven.

When the inner dialogue of self-loathing drones on – the remembrance of hurtful words pierces still – in Christ you are a beloved child of the Father.

When despair grips, hope gives way, darkness chokes out light – in Christ there is a glorious future – a new creation – of which you are an heir.

7. The early church located themselves in this place, first beginning to worship in the colonnade of Solomon. In so doing they located themselves in these words of Jesus. What kind of church would we be or become more so if we grounded ourselves in Jesus' words in vs. 27-28 in particular?

In the sermon Tim gave some examples that might serve as a starter for your conversation here:

The early church beckons us to locate ourselves in that same place.

That we - vs. 27 – would hear his voice – be attentive to his word above every other word.

That we – vs. 27 – would revel in the reality that we are known – that Jesus knows us right the way down – and instead of the rejection we fear we are the treasure he most holds dear – for we are held vs 28 - securely in his hand – nothing and no one will be able to snatch us away.

That we – vs. 27 – would follow him – would do the works he did – living in anticipation of the fullness of his kingdom come - where the lame walk – the blind

see – the hungry fed – the spiritually thirsty satisfied - the captives released – the marginalized given gracious welcome.

That we – vs. 28 – would joyfully receive his gifts of grace – eternal life – the life of the new creation – the life that death cannot extinguish – the life of an eternal future.