

**“IN GOD’S HANDS”**

John 10:22-30

“He’s got the whole world in His hands.” Remember that song? Do you believe the lyrics? You should. For Scripture is filled with references to the works of God’s hands in our world, our lives, our relationships, our problems, our salvation, our everything. **“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand,”** Isaiah 64:8.

The Psalms speak often of the hands of God. Psalm 16: **“You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.”** Psalm 31: **“But I trust in You, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in Your hands.”** Or Psalm 32, when David at first refused to repent of his adultery with Bathsheba: **“For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.”**

According to Scripture, God holds us up with His hand, Psalm 37. God holds on to us with His hand, Psalm 73. God envelopes us with His hand, Psalm 139. God feeds us with His hand: **“The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing,”** Psalm 145:15-16.

Consider how often Jesus Christ—true God from all eternity, who became true Man in the fullness of time—held, healed, hugged, and worked miracles with His two hands. When Jesus touched, God touched. With His hands, Jesus embraced the children that grownups had turned away. **“‘Let the little children come to Me,’** He said, **“and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them,”** Mark 10:14-16.

With His hands, Jesus touched lepers. With His hands, Jesus snatched Peter from the waves. With His hands, Jesus healed the deaf, blind, mute, and lame. With His hands, Jesus fed thousands from scraps; and took a dead girl by her hand and raised her to life; and broke the bread and distributed the wine when instituting His Holy Supper.

And those two hands of Jesus Christ were nailed to the cross; the same cross with which He atoned for our sins and accomplished our eternal salvation. After His resurrection, Jesus told Thomas, **“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands,”** John 20:27. Confronted by the undeniable evidence of Christ’s bodily resurrection and Christ’s true deity, Thomas confessed: **“My Lord and my God,”** John 20:28. And

when Jesus ascended victoriously into heaven, His two hands were raised in blessing. God's two hands.

Those who insist that Jesus Christ never claimed to be God should read carefully the last verse of today's text, John 10:30, and then the three verses beyond it. In John 10:30, Jesus said, **"I and the Father are one."** One in power. One in glory. One in essence. One in deity.

And the instant Jesus made that declaration, the Jews picked up rocks to stone Him. Why? We're told in John 10:31-33. **"Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from Father. For which of these do you stone me?' 'We are not stoning you for any of these,' replied the Jews, 'but for blasphemy, because You, a mere man, claim to be God.'"** Though these Jews did not believe it, they understood it—understood clearly that when Jesus said, **"I and the Father are one,"** He was claiming to be equal with the Father in all respects. He was claiming to be God. And His claim was true.

"You're in good hands with Allstate." Allstate Insurance Company adopted this slogan in 1950 and has used it ever since. And as advertising slogans go, "you're in good hands" is a memorable one. It suggests strength, support, stability, skill, guidance, protection, and above all, personal involvement. Hands touch, and touch is personal; as we all know from countless handshakes, hugs, and pats on the back.

Imagine all the circumstances in which you would welcome the words "you're in good hands." For example, when dropping the children off for their first day of school; or when scheduling a surgery; or when stepping onto a commercial airliner; or when investing hard-earned money, purchasing a home, depending on a defense attorney, or following a military commander into battle. "You're in good hands." You would welcome such knowledge, wouldn't you?

If so, you should welcome this knowledge: There are no better hands, no safer hands, no more powerful and comforting hands, than the hands which Jesus mentioned twice in today's text; namely, the hands of almighty God. **"No one can snatch them out of My hand,"** He said. **"No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand,"** John 10:28-29. As a dear child of God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, you are safe in God's hands. Based on the words of John 10:22-30, consider the reasons why.

***First, you are safe in God's hands, because God has laid His hands on you;*** that is, He has claimed you, chosen you, and set you apart as His very own. Just as Peter wrote in his first epistle: **"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light,"** 1 Peter 2:9.

When I was ordained into the public ministry in 1978, Pastor Elton Hallauer laid his hands on me as part of the ordination service. The same happened when I was

installed as the pastor of St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church. This 'laying on of hands' was not to instill me with mystical powers, but to designate me as one set apart by the Spirit of God for the work of ministry; a continuous practice since the age of the Apostles. For example, we read in Acts 13: **"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."**

In a far greater way, God has laid His hands on you—has laid claim to you as His cherished possession. You belong to Him, even as He said through the prophet Isaiah: **"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior,"** Isaiah 43:1-3. And this is why you are eternally safe in God's hands. God is with you. God is your Savior. God has made you His own.

Consider this blessed picture. Picture God in eternity, reaching forward to lay His loving hands on you—to designate you as His own and cradle you in His arms; and as a result of that eternal selection, bringing you to faith in Jesus Christ during your lifetime through the proclamation of the Gospel. Can you picture this? I hope so, because this is exactly what happened.

Paul wrote in Philippians 3:12, **"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."** Or as He said in Ephesians 1:3-4, **"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight."**

**"My sheep hear My voice,"** said Jesus. Conversely, despite all the times Jesus proclaimed that He was the Christ; and despite all the miracles Jesus performed to prove that He was the Christ; still, the unbelieving Jews did not listen to Him or accept His Word. And they did not accept His Word because they were not His sheep.

You are His sheep; and this is why you heed His Word. You are safe in God's hands, because God has laid His hands on you. And in a selfish, egotistical world in which we so often go unnoticed, unwanted, unappreciated, and unfulfilled, how comforted you should be by this reality: "God chose me. God wanted me. I am in God's hands, because God laid His hands on me."

**Second, you are safe in God's hands, because God is always leading you with His hands.** This too is a blessed picture, isn't it? I can imagine no greater, more comforting reality for our personal lives or daily headlines—wars, crime, corruption,

deception, persecution; Satan prowling about like a roaring lion, looking for someone, anyone, to devour—then the reality that Jesus is always leading us; that our hands are always in His hands. If He said **“no one can snatch them out of My hand,”** then our hand is always in His hand, and He is always leading us. Which reminds me of another song, recorded by Anne Murray, Elvis Presley, Bing Crosby, and many others: “Put your hand in the hand of the Man who stilled the water. Put your hand in the hand of the Man who calmed the sea.”

Do you remember holding your parents’ hands as a child? Or if you’re a parent, do you remember clasping your own child’s hand in yours: guiding, protecting, reassuring, comforting; teaching him to walk; leading her across busy streets; holding on to him in crowded airports; helping her up when she fell? If you have such memories, aren’t they filled with love, joy, and gratitude for those hands?

Some years ago, I worked as a Para-educator at Jean O’Dell Learning Center in Bartow, Florida; a school for severely disabled children. Part of my responsibility was to take students to their assigned buses. Those who were extremely disabled, whether physically or mentally, I always led by the hand. I held their hand in mine to ensure that they wouldn’t stumble and fall or wander away or step into traffic or board the wrong bus. One young woman named Amber, mentally disabled because was violently shaken as an infant, always kissed my hand when we reached her bus. That kiss was Amber’s simple way of expressing what her words could not: “Thank you for keeping me safe. I trust you and the destination to which you are leading me.”

One day, you and I will be able to kiss the hand of the Savior who so patiently and faithfully led us through life, and to kiss His hand for all the same reasons of gratitude and trust: “Thank you for keeping me safe, Lord. I trusted You, and You never failed me. Not once.” But even now, we can kiss that sacred hand through faith. For in that single sentence of Jesus—**“My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me”**—lies all the closeness of a deep, abiding, personal relationship; of a divine leading and confident following; of walking hand-in-hand with the Savior through all the problems and heartaches of life.

And the Lord Jesus leads us as the One who truly knows us. **“I know them,”** He said in John 20:27. The Greek word for “know” in this verse is not simply intellectual knowledge, but a complete and personal knowledge. A knowledge that comes not only from Christ’s omniscience, but His living with and within us. A knowledge of exactly who we are, exactly what we need, and exactly where to lead us. The type of knowledge described in Psalm 139: **“O LORD, You have searched me and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely, O LORD.”**

My friends, is there a person here today who has not cried out in a moment of despair or anger: “Isn’t there anyone who truly understands me? Isn’t there anyone who knows the real me? Isn’t there anyone who can see what’s on the inside, not just the outside?” Yes, there is such a One. And His name is Jesus Christ. And no one, absolutely no one, knows you like He does. Trust Him. Put your hand in His, knowing that He will always lead you in the right way; knowing that He will never let you go.

**Finally, you are safe in God’s hand, because no one and nothing can snatch you out of His hand.** This lesson is so vital for us to learn that Jesus taught it twice in consecutive verses. Verse 22: **“No one can snatch them out of My hand.”** And in verse 23: **“No one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”**

When I was a boy, I often played a game with my father in which he would clench his fist tightly, and I would try to open it. Oh, I would use one hand, then two hands; then try to wriggle my fingers between his fingers. I would target his thumbs or little fingers, watching for any indication of weakness; and all while giggling and grunting and using my legs for leverage. Only, nothing worked. My father’s hands were too strong.

But the same hands too strong for me to open were also the same hands that went on providing for me and protecting me, even protecting me from myself. And that took a lot of protecting. Like the time I was two years old, unable to swim, and still raced off a dock into the inviting blue water of Lake Howard. Or the time I stuck a screwdriver into a wall socket. Or the time I jumped from a tree and broke my arm. Or the time I shot myself in the hand with a high-powered BB-gun. And yes, if you’re curious, the BB is still there.

I could go on and on and on about my self-inflicted injuries and boyhood stupidities. But my dad never gave up on me. With those two strong hands of his, he picked me up when I fell. He disciplined me when I did wrong. And he hugged me when I did right. At times, he hugged me for no reason at all other than fatherly love. I was blessed to have such a father. For in him, God gave me a glimpse of what it means to have a Father in heaven.

My friends, is there anything more encouraging or heartening than to know that nothing can snatch you out of God’s almighty hands; that nothing can interfere with His love and purposes for your life, or the inheritance that He has freely given you, or the eternal life that He has waiting for you?

Nothing can come between you and your God. Nothing. Not terrorist bombings. Not destructive weather. Not petty dictators with nuclear missiles. Not pandemics or natural disasters. Not aging or health concerns or financial worries or hospital stays.

Not your mistakes, failings, or self-inflicted folly. Not even death itself. Nothing can change God's glorious plan for your life, because you are safe in His hands. And as Jesus promised: **"No one can snatch them out of My hand;"** and, **"No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand."**

That is a promise; not from the good-hands insurance people, but from the Good-Hands God. Promises like Psalm 20:6, **"Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; He answers him from His holy heaven with the saving power of His right hand."** Promises like Psalm 136:12, **"With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, His love endures forever."** Promises like Isaiah 49:14-16, **"But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.' Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has born?"** **Though she may forget, I will never forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands."**

Surely, there is no better commentary on being safe in God's hands than the glorious words of Romans 8: **"No,"** said Paul. **"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Perhaps the best summary I can provide about being safe in God's hands is this: The hands that claimed us; the hands that saved us; the hands that bless us, protect us, uplift us, enclose us, hold us, and feed us; the hands that created the entire universe and even now are controlling all things, all governments, and all circumstances in our lives—these two hands, the hands of Jesus Christ, will forever bear the wounds of the crucifixion; the wounds by which we all were healed. And that's really all we need to know about God's hands, isn't it?

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