

## I Am the Door [Slide 1]

John 10:1-10

Growing up I watched the Game Show, Let's Make a Deal. Toward the end of the game the winning contestant would be offered a choice of three doors. Something was behind each door. Usually one door hid a fabulous prize like a brand new car or an exotic vacation. Behind another door was some kind of clunker prize like a worm farm or fifty bags of concrete mix. One door led to an extraordinary reward. One door led to a wasted opportunity. You had to open the right door to receive the ultimate prize. The same is true with salvation. You have to go through the right door to get the ultimate prize.

We continue our sermon series this week on Jesus Selfies. These are word pictures Jesus provided about himself that illustrate who he is. This week our passage in John 10:1-10, where Jesus presents himself as the door. I invite you to turn in your Bible to John 10:1-10. John is the fourth book in the New Testament. I find four themes in this passage that I want to pursue.

[Slide 2] Let's begin with the first theme: Those who try to lead God's people apart from God's authorized way are not God's leaders. Let's begin with verses 1-2. Read.

Often the sheepfold was a square marked off on a hillside by stone walls possibly topped by briars. Within the sheepfold would be a single gate through which the sheep passed into the sheepfold. The gate would then be shut to keep out wild beasts and thieves. If someone attempted to enter the sheepfold without passing through the gate it would probably be because the shepherd of the sheep would not grant them entrance. If they tried to climb over the sheepfold at some other location they probably did so in order to cause some mischief or loss to the shepherd.

Jesus' comments here in chapter 10 are the result of what happened in chapter 9. Chapter 9 describes a blind man that Jesus healed. The Pharisees grabbed that formerly blind man to interrogate him. They wanted him to give God the credit for his healing and not give Jesus any credit. When the blind man refused to cut Jesus out of the story, the religious leaders became furious with him and demanded that he minimize Jesus' role in his healing. The blind man wouldn't do that and so they kicked him out of the Temple.

The religious leaders are the thieves and robbers who join God's people not through the door God has authorized, but through a different way. They are the false shepherds who mislead God's flock.

In verse 9 Jesus says that he is the door. So any leader of God's people who tries to lead without going through Jesus is a thief or a robber. The word "thief" refers to a sneak thief, one who steals by deception, whereas robber refers more to someone who uses violence or threats like a bandit. False leaders of God's people may resort to both dishonesty and violence.

False leaders of God's people do not submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. That was clearly true of the religious leaders in Jesus' day but it is also true today as well. Whenever religious leaders do not obey the Word of God and do not honor Jesus as their leader, they are not true shepherds. They are robbers and thieves who in some way use their position to benefit themselves. Like robbers and thieves they take from those they lead without providing anything valuable in return.

Conversely anyone who submits to the word of God and honors Jesus is a true shepherd of God's people.

[Slide 3] The second theme in this passage is that God's people recognize their true leader. Jesus primarily applies this theme to himself but it is also true for all those under shepherds who faithfully lead God's people. Read verses 3-5. Read.

Jesus describes a reality that is well-known to shepherds. Read illustration. Shepherds spend so much time with their sheep that the sheep learn to recognize the shepherd's voice and his call. Since he feeds them, waters them, and protects them, they follow him when he calls to them. They will not follow the voice of a stranger.

This all sounds good, but we have to ask the question: If what Jesus says is true, then how do explain the fact that most Jews did not believe in Jesus as their Messiah? How could they be the sheep of God and not recognize Jesus as their Messiah?

I suppose there are a couple ways to answer that question. We may explain that reality by saying that sheep are actually smarter than humans. They recognize their master whereas often we don't. I think the better conclusion is to say that most of the Jews were not God's sheep because they did not recognize their true Shepherd.

Paul made a similar argument in Romans 9:6-9 which I put on your outline. Let's read those verses. The true Israel are not those who are physical descendants of Abraham, that is Jews, but rather those who are children of the promise. They believe in God's promises. They trust in God. The true sheep of God are those who believe in Jesus whether Jew or Gentile. That is why they are God's people, because they listen to the voice of Jesus. The truth works both ways. You can tell who the true shepherd is because God's sheep listen to him. You can also tell who God's people are because they are the ones who listen to Jesus.

[Slide 4] The third theme in this passage is that Jesus is the only way to be saved. Let's read verses 6-9. Read.

Jesus claimed to be the door or gateway to the sheepfold. A person can only join God's people by coming to them with permission from Jesus. Elsewhere in John 14:6 Jesus said, "Read."

Jesus is both the shepherd and the gate.

You might ask how he can be both shepherd and gate? Sometimes those sheepfolds did not have a gate. In that case the shepherd would stand in the entrance, allowing his sheep to pass into the sheepfold and then he would lay down and sleep in the entrance at night, functioning as the gate. Jesus not only leads us into relationship with God and his people but he is also the one who protects us once we are in the sheepfold. Next week I'll talk more about how Jesus is our shepherd but today I want to focus on him as the door or gate to our salvation.

In verse 8 Jesus says that all who came before him were thieves and robbers but the sheep did not hear him. Those shepherds who did have a gate for their sheepfold would come at first thing in the morning to lead their sheep out to pasture. So if anyone came before the shepherd to the sheep they necessarily came in the dark, during the night time hours. Their arrival in the dark is symbolic that they are evil and not walking in God's way. I believe Jesus is primarily referring to the Pharisees and Sadducees when he says this, but it does also apply to all false teachers and false leaders since the time of Jesus.

In verse 9 Jesus says that anyone who enters through him shall be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. For the sheep, the pasture is everything. It represents full provision or the blessing of God.

Why is Jesus the way to God and the only way to God? This message is not attractive today in our pluralistic society where no one wants to be told they're wrong and they don't want anyone else to be told they're wrong either. Of course, if we are all right then why is this world

in such a mess? If there were no right answers then we would forever be stuck with what we have right now. Thank God there are wrong answers and there is a right answer.

Jesus is the only way to God. Islam is not. Hinduism is not. Buddhism is not. Daoism is not. The Christian cults like Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science are not. None of those other belief systems acknowledge Jesus as the one and only God. What makes Christianity unique is that it is the only religion that claims there is one God who exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the only way to God because he is God. If you reject Jesus as God the Son, you are rejecting God. Do you really think you are going to come to God and he is going to welcome you if you reject him? If Christianity is right about who Jesus is, then the only way you could come to God is through Jesus. Jesus is the only way to be saved.

[Slide 5] That brings us to our last theme: Jesus provides abundant life to his people. Read verse 10. We talked about this when we looked at Jesus being the Bread of Life. Jesus provides eternal life to all who believe in him. Eternal life is not just life that lasts forever. Eternal life is a quality of life. It is the life of God, a life of the fullest purpose and meaning, a life of blessed peace and harmony with God, a full satisfaction of the soul. Jesus intends for us to have that abundant life today.

When I say the words "abundant life," do not import the notions of absence of suffering and pain, absence of disappointment, or a life of perfect ease and comfort. Jesus experienced abundant life on the Earth but he suffered and died, he felt the disappointment of one of his disciples betraying him and the rest not understanding him half the time, and he certainly did not live a life of ease and comfort. But he had a life of no regrets. He had a life of joy in the midst of hardship. He had a life at peace with God. He had a life of certain hope of his future. He had purpose and meaning and the understanding that when he was done, he had accomplished everything the Father wanted him to do. His life was full of significance and satisfaction, qualities which were enhanced by the suffering and difficulty that he had to endure.

Are you ready to walk through the door that is labeled Jesus Christ? Are you ready to make use of God's authorized entrance? Because of sin we are all under God's judgment and headed to Hell, but no one has to go there. Behind one door is Hell. Behind the other door is Heaven. The Heaven door is clearly marked as Jesus. You don't have to guess which door is which. The Jesus door leads to Heaven. If you submit to Jesus and trust in him alone, you gain the ultimate prize. If you turn away from Jesus and choose the other door you endure the ultimate pain.

God sends people to Hell only in the sense that God is the only one with the authority to send people to either Hell or Heaven. In another sense it is not true that God sends people to Hell. People choose Hell because they reject Jesus with the result that God simply gives them what they choose. Hell is the only place that you can live forever without God and Jesus. If you won't receive Jesus then God gives you the choice you made. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He never makes anyone choose Hell, people choose Hell on their own accord.

I want to give you the opportunity to choose Heaven by choosing Jesus. You can decide that you will let Jesus be your boss from now on. You can decide to let Jesus' death on the cross pay for your sins. You can ask Jesus to forgive you and to deliver you from God's Judgment. Do you believe he is God? Do you believe he died paying for your sins? Do you believe that God raised him from the dead so that he is your living Lord? If you believe these things, I invite you to call upon him to save you.

I'm going to close in prayer. If you want to call upon Jesus to save you then I invite you to pray along with me. The prayer itself does not save you. It is the decision to trust Jesus that saves you. The prayer expresses the decision you are making. Let's pray.