

“I AM . . . the Door!”—John 10:7-9

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “I AM . . . the Door!”, is John 10:7-9 → Jesus said, *Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

During our Lenten journey we are considering Jesus . . . the I AM. In the text before us Jesus used a *figure of speech* (cf. John 10:6) to describe the proper relationship which the leaders of God’s people should have with them.

Using this picture of the shepherd and his sheep to describe relationship was not only patterned after the example of the local customs of sheep herding but also a carryover from Old Testament imagery. One of the most familiar and cherished psalms for many Christians is Psalm 23. It describes Yahweh as *my shepherd Who makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters; Who restores my soul and leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of*

*the shadow of death, I need fear no evil, for He is with me, comforting and protecting me. With His care I shall not want for anything. I can be content!*

The Old Testament also describes those who care for God's people as shepherds with the responsibility of leading them to Yahweh. Since their nation was intertwined with their religion these "shepherds" included both the religious and civil leaders of Israel. Ezekiel prophesied against the shepherds of Israel because they took advantage of the sheep for their own selfish desires. (cf. Ezekiel 34:1-10) Within that context the LORD made this promise in Ezekiel 34:11,23 → *Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I Myself will search for My sheep and will seek them out . . . and I will set up over them one shepherd, My servant David, and He shall feed them . . . and be their shepherd.* The time had come as before the Pharisees in our text stood God's servant, Jesus, *the son of David*. (cf. Matthew 1:1)

As Jesus was talking with these "shepherds" amongst God's people in His day He used *a figure of speech* to reveal to them the true nature of their relationship to God's people. He contrasted *the shepherd* to *a thief and a robber* and their methods of getting to the sheep. The thief and robber *does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way* in order to *steal and kill and destroy* the sheep. (cf. John 10:1,10) *The shepherd of the sheep . . . enters by the door* so that he may lead his sheep to good feeding

grounds and care for them. (cf. John 10:2-5) Jesus was comparing the Pharisees to thieves and robbers who cared nothing for God's will for His people.

Apparently different flocks of sheep could be stored in one sheep pen for an evening, usually a stoned wall with only one entrance and a *gatekeeper* guarding that entrance to protect them. When a shepherd wanted to lead his sheep to pasture he went to the sheep pen, the gatekeeper would open the door for him, he would call his own sheep who recognized his voice and lead them out. I suppose the gatekeeper's job could be compared to the security people in our work places and public service buildings who allow the person to enter upon displaying the proper credentials. When people try to by-pass the security guard it is usually for dishonest reasons such as Jesus mentions —to *steal and kill and destroy*.

Thus, the religious leaders may actually look good, sincere and knowledgeable about God but are actually doing the work of satan. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 Paul describes men in the Christian Church who act in this way: *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.* While the Pharisees outright refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, let alone God Himself, the

men of whom Paul spoke were guys who combined faith in Jesus with works of the law in order to be saved. This is a direct denial of the sufficiency of the Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins. These "shepherds" were misleading the sheep by making them look to something other than Christ alone for salvation, thus leading them to hell instead of "green pastures."

This is the reason Jesus said in verse 7 of our text: *Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.* In other words, in order to shepherd God's people properly these "shepherds" needed to enter the sheep pen in the proper way—through the door. They must place their faith in Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and Savior of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Person & Work of Jesus was the whole purpose for the Scriptures. Being an expert and studying the Scriptures is to no avail unless it leads you through the door of your salvation, Jesus Christ. In order to lead the sheep properly they themselves, as the spiritual leaders, must enter the sheep pen through *the door*, that is, place their faith in God's plan for their salvation **in Jesus**, the Christ.

This was the basic problem with their shepherding. Since they refused to acknowledge Jesus as the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for His people they actually became "strangers" to the sheep. Their "pasturing" led the sheep further into despair by demanding performances of their laws which made

them feel the guilt of their sin more intensely. Jesus said of them in Matthew 23:4 that *they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.* They actually estranged God's people from God's relationship of love and grace for them.

In contrast Jesus describes what His work as the door for the sheep is like in verse 9 of our text: *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* Through faith in Jesus you actually have a restored relationship with Yahweh! Jesus kept Yahweh's laws perfectly for you and bore the guilt of your sins created from breaking those laws when He died on the cross. This is why Jesus could say to those people bearing those *heavy burdens: Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* (cf. Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus' work as the door to your salvation is what helps you distinguish the true shepherds from thieves and robbers of the faith. The true shepherd will always bring you to Jesus. He will hold up the Person & Work of Jesus as the great I AM—true God and true man—and the only way to enter eternal life. The true shepherd will be a servant of the written Scriptures as they reveal Jesus,

not a manipulator of those Scriptures for destructive purposes. The true shepherd will constantly hold out to the sheep the forgiveness of sins which comes through God's means of grace. He will lead people to the cross and resurrection of Jesus where they will experience the life that Jesus came to give—the abundant life in heaven.

Psalm 100:3-4 commands us: *Know that Yahweh, He is God! It is He Who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name!* We listen to the voice of our Shepherd, Jesus, and flee from those satanic voices which are trying to destroy our faith as we recognize that we belong to Him and praise Him. **The forgiven life is truly life abundant!** Amen.

*This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.*

*I thank You that You have . . . become my salvation.*

(Psalm 118:20-21)

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