

A door is very important. What is the purpose of a door? A door is a means of access. In short, doors keep things out. And doors let things in.

Jesus made an amazing claim in John 10:7, and repeated it in v 9. He said, "I am the door." Why did Jesus call Himself "the door" (NIV uses "gate")? What did He mean by that statement? I want you to know His words have the power to change our lives.

Proposition: Jesus' claim to be the "door" in John 10:7-10 calls our attention to three critical issues.

- I. Jesus' claim calls attention to His Identity (7-8).
 - A. Who is the door?
 - B. Who are the thieves?
 - C. Who are the sheep?
 1. They listen to Jesus.
 2. They don't listen to the thieves.
- II. Jesus' claim calls attention to His Invitation (9-10).
 - A. Jesus gives.
 1. He offers salvation.
 2. He offers security.
 3. He offers sustenance.
 - B. The thief takes.
- III. Jesus' claim calls attention to the Implications.
 - A. We may enjoy.
 - B. We must enter the door.
 1. I must repent.
 2. I must believe.

I. Jesus' claim calls attention to His Identity (7-8).

Last week, we began a 4-week series on "Getting to Know the Good Shepherd" from John 10. I mentioned at the beginning that Jesus never intended this to be some quaint tale to entertain us. Actually, the story of the Good Shepherd occurred in a context of controversy. Don't forget that--it's key to our text today.

The controversy had to do with what happened in John 9. There Jesus healed a blind beggar on the sabbath, an act which ruffled the feathers of the religious establishment. The Pharisees eventually excommunicated the healed man (9:34), and criticized Jesus (9:40). Please don't forget this. The Pharisees were supposed to be the spiritual leaders in Israel--they were supposed to be shepherds of God's flock.

In that context, Jesus told a shepherd story (10:1-5)--a story about a common scene of a shepherd, his sheep, and a thief. But Jesus' audience didn't get it (6). The illustration went right over their heads. So Jesus continued.

***Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

Notice the connective word "then" in v 7 (NIV "therefore")--"Then said Jesus unto them again (since they missed the point the first time), Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them."

I want you to know the room started getting warm when Jesus spoke these words. What was He saying? He was calling attention to the truth of His identity.

There are three objects in Jesus' story we need to identify--the door, the thieves, and the sheep. The first object is easy to identify. Who is the door? Jesus said, "I am."

A. Who is the door?

Back in 1988, we engaged in a fascinating study of the "I Am" claims Jesus made in John's gospel. Jesus announced, "I am the Bread of Life (6:35), the Light of the world (8:12), the resurrection (11:25), the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), the Vine (15:5)." He also revealed Himself as the "I Am" in Jn 8:58. Here in John 10, we hear Him use two images to reveal His identity--I am the Door of the sheep (7), and I am the Good Shepherd of the sheep (which we'll consider next week in v 11).

Why does Jesus call Himself "the door"? John 1:51 portrays Jesus as a ladder connecting earth and heaven. In Rev 3:20, Jesus is said to be standing at the door knocking. Here He says He IS the door. What does He mean?

It's a shepherding metaphor. Jesus' listeners knew all about shepherds and sheepfolds, but since we don't, it's easy for us to miss the connection. Jesus' isn't talking about a door to a house. He's talking about a door to a sheepfold.

I read the story told by Sir George Adam Smith about a man who traveled to Israel (Morris, 507), "He was one day traveling with a guide, and came across a shepherd and his sheep. He fell into conversation with him. The man showed him the fold into which the sheep were led at night. It consisted of four walls, with a way in. Sir George said to him, 'That is where they go at night?' 'Yes,' said the shepherd, 'and when they are in they are perfectly safe.' 'But there is no door,' said Sir George. 'I am the door,' said the shepherd. He was not a Christian man. He was not speaking in the language of the New Testament. He was speaking from an Arab shepherd's standpoint. Sir George looked at him and said, 'What do you mean by the door?' Said the shepherd, 'When the light has gone, and all the sheep are inside, I lie in that open space, and no sheep ever goes out but across my body, and no wolf comes in unless he crosses my body; I am the door.'"

When Jesus announced, "I am the door," He didn't have in mind a 7' slab of wood with a door knob on it. He's telling us something about His identity and character.

Remember the setting. The religious leaders excommunicated a man. Jesus received him. They threw the beggar out of the synagogue. Jesus accepted him into His fold. What gave Him the right to contradict their actions? His identity. He is the door.

B. Who are the thieves?

Jesus said in v 8, "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers." Who would that be? Jesus certainly isn't talking about the Old Testament prophets who "came before Him." They sought the good of the people, even at great personal cost.

Who did Jesus have in mind when He mentioned these "thieves"? The verb "are" indicates they were still around. In fact, they were right in front of Jesus. They were the present religious leaders of Israel. Jesus called them "thieves and robbers." Strong words!

What would warrant such a strong indictment of Israel's shepherds? Simply this--they didn't love the sheep. They exploited them. They used them for their own agenda. As you scan the gospel record, the evidence comes in against the majority of the religious rulers in Israel--They were covetous (Lk 16:14). They took advantage of poor widows (Mk 12:40). They turned the temple into a den of thieves (Mt 21:13). And in the end, they plotted to kill Jesus so that Rome would not take away their privileges (Jn 11:49-53; Wiersbe, 329).

By the way, please be aware of something. The thieves are still around. In the name of religion, impostors fleece the sheep to line their own pockets. More in a moment.

C. Who are the sheep?

Simply put, the sheep are those who belong to the Savior. How do you detect a true sheep, a genuine Christian? This passage identifies two characteristics.

1. They listen to Jesus.

Listen to what Jesus said of sheep in v 4b, "The sheep follow him, for they know his voice." A near Eastern shepherd doesn't drive the sheep. He leads them. So with Jesus. V 27 gives a practical litmus test for Christians. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

So true sheep are those who listen to Jesus. Did you listen to Him this week?

2. They don't listen to the thieves.

Probe v 8 again, "But the sheep did not hear them (i.e. the thieves)." Is Jesus saying that thieves don't dupe some people? No. It happens. The point is this. True sheep don't listen to strangers.

A few weeks ago, I took our dog for a ride out to Scioto Hills camp. I tied her to a post and went inside the dining room. Later, Gary told me he had gone over to the dog, spoke to her, and reached out his hand to pet her. She growled and even snapped at him! She didn't recognize his voice.

I grew up near several farmers who had cattle. One scene always used to amaze me. I'd watch the farmer walk over to the gate to the pasture. There wouldn't be a cow in sight, and he'd bellow out this strange sound, "Sic-calve, sic-calve." Then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, over the hillside a cow would come running. Then another. Finally the whole herd of cattle would be at the barn to eat. All because of the farmer's voice.

So it is for the Christian. True sheep respond to the voice of The Shepherd. They know His identity. He's the Door to them. There's a second issue linked to Jesus' words. If you'll notice, Jesus repeats His claim in v 9, "I am the door." The first time He identifies Himself. The second time He extends an invitation.

II. Jesus' claim calls attention to His Invitation (9-10).

Here's the invitation, "I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture..."

Don't miss the strong contrast in vv 9-10. There's a big difference between what Jesus does and what the thief does. What does Jesus do? In a word...

A. Jesus gives.

What does Jesus want to give us? I had one college professor (Dr. J.F. Prewitt) that called John 10:9 "the most comprehensive verse on salvation in the Bible." He

pointed out that this one verse teaches the simplicity that is in the gospel ("I am the door"), the exclusiveness that is in the gospel ("by Me"), the inclusiveness that is in the gospel ("if any man"), the condition of the gospel ("enter in"), the security of the gospel ("he shall be saved and shall go in and out"), and the satisfaction that is in the gospel ("and find pasture").

Jesus gives. In His invitation, He offers us three benefits.

1. He offers salvation.

"If any man enter in, he shall be saved." The word "saved" means "delivered safe and sound." The word was used to say that a person had recovered from severe illness, come through a bad storm, survived a war, or was acquitted at court (Wiersbe, 329).

Please don't miss those two little words "by Me" (NIV "through Me"). Becoming a Christian is a person to Person matter. It's also an exclusive matter. We're not saved because we're good enough. We're saved through Him. There is no other way.

God's Word says, "Through Him we have access to the Father (Eph 2:18)." "He is the new and living way (Heb 10:20)." "Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other (Isa 45:22)."

We have heard the joyful sound. Jesus saves! Jesus saves! It's true. Jesus offers salvation. But there's more.

2. He offers security.

"And shall go in and out." That phrase is a Jewish way of describing a life that is absolutely secure and safe. Some of you will remember the "good old days" when a person didn't bother to lock the front door, and could "go in and out" without fear. The phrase meant you felt safe and secure.

The Psalmist says in Psalm 121:8, "The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." Listen. If you know Jesus Christ, you are secure. You don't make yourself secure. He offers security. When He saves us, He promises to keep us (see Jn 10:28-29). But there's more!

3. He offers sustenance.

We see this in the words of v 9, "And find pasture." If a sheep is to be healthy, it must have a healthy diet. Our Savior takes care of that as well. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters (Ps 23:1-2)."

Please listen to Jesus' invitation today. He offers salvation, security, and sustenance. He gives. You say, "What other choice is there?" There's the thief.

B. The thief takes.

Notice v 10, "The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." Jesus' offer is threefold. The thief's activity is likewise threefold--he steals, kills, and destroys. Jesus gives. The thief does just the opposite. He takes.

It breaks my heart when I hear people say, "Oh, I don't go to church any more. I had a bad experience and haven't been back." Listen. There are thieves out there. There are church leaders who fleece their flocks, who beat their sheep. But Jesus isn't like that. He offers life! If you've been burned in the past, don't run from the One Who alone can offer salvation, security, and sustenance. Run to Him! He's the Door.

You say, "I don't understand something. Why is Jesus so vivid in His warning about the thief? Who is a thief?" Don't miss this. A thief is anybody who claims to offer another way to God.

Before we leave this point, I need to say something about Jesus' invitation that won't settle very well in our day and age. We live in an age of tolerance. But listen. If Jesus' claim is true, then all roads don't lead to heaven. Any religious system that says we can do something to merit God's favor is wrong. This could never happen, but if Jesus came to earth and preached the message of John 10 on prime time TV, He would be crucified. Why? Because His invitation is very exclusive--By ME, you shall be saved.

III. Jesus' claim calls attention to the Implications.

There are two undeniable implications, two personal applications.

A. We may enjoy.

It was for this very reason that Jesus Christ came to the world 2,000 years ago. Listen to His staggering announcement at the end of v 10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." What an offer! Jesus came that you and I might have life--and not just any old life, but abundant life!

The life which the world offers doesn't satisfy, does it?. I buy a computer today--I've got to have a faster one tomorrow. The car I dream about today brings me nightmares tomorrow when the transmission flops. The house I scrap for today doesn't satisfy when my neighbor builds a bigger one. On it goes. The life the world offers doesn't satisfy.

But listen to Jesus' offer--He offers life, life that is abundant! He came to this earth, lived a perfect life, went to the cross, shed His blood to pay for our sins, died, and rose again. And why? That we might have life! You can't beat this offer--life that is both abundant and eternal! He invites us to enjoy life in Him. But some refuse His offer.

Phillip Keller is a man who grew up in East Africa, surrounded by simple native herders. Later he himself became a sheep rancher for about eight years, followed by some time as a lay-pastor of a church. He is well known as an author who portrays spiritual truths by drawing upon his vivid shepherding experiences. In one of his books, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, Keller talks about "fence crawlers," carnal Christians who want the best of both worlds (pp. 32-34).

"I once owned an ewe whose conduct exactly typified this sort of person. She was one of the most attractive sheep that ever belonged to me. Her body was beautifully proportioned. She had a strong constitution and an excellent coat of wool. Her head was clean, alert, well-set with bright eyes. She bore sturdy lambs that matured rapidly.

"But in spite of all these attractive attributes she had one pronounced fault. She was restless--discontented--a fence crawler. So much so that I came to call her 'Mrs. Gad-about.' This one ewe produced more problems for me than almost all the rest of the flock combined.

"No matter what field or pasture the sheep were in, she would search all along the fences or shoreline (we lived by the sea) looking for a loophole she could crawl through and start to feed on the other side.

"It was not that she lacked pasturage. My fields were my joy and delight. No sheep in the district had better grazing.

"With 'Mrs. Gad-about' it was an ingrained habit. She was simply never contented with things as they were. Often when she had forced her way through some such spot in the fence or found a way around the end of the wire at low tide on the beaches, she would end up feeding on bare, brown, burned-up pasturage of a most inferior sort. But she never learned her lesson and continued to fence crawl time after time.

"Now it would have been bad enough if she was the only one who did this. It was a sufficient problem to find her and bring her back. But the further point was that she taught her lambs the same tricks. They simply followed her example and soon were as skilled at escaping as their mother.

"Even worse, however, was the example she set the other sheep. In a short time she began to lead others through the same holes and over the same dangerous paths down by the sea.

"After putting up with her perverseness for a summer I finally came to the conclusion that to save the rest of the flock from becoming unsettled, she would have to go. I could not allow one obstinate, discontented ewe to ruin the whole ranch operation.

"It was a difficult decision to make, for I loved her in the same way I loved the rest. Her strength and beauty and alertness were a delight to the eye. But one morning I took the killing knife in hand and butchered her. Her career of fence crawling was cut short. It was the only solution to the dilemma.

"She was a sheep, who in spite of all that I had done to give her the very best care, still wanted something else."

Are you content with Jesus, or do you want something else? Jesus said, "I am the door." The implications of His claim couldn't be clearer. The first is that we may enjoy life that is abundant. But only if we deal with the second implication.

B. We must enter the door.

There's something very exclusive about a door. You're either on one side or the other. If you go through it, you're on the inside. If you don't, you remain on the outside.

All of us are faced with a decision in life--what are we going to do with the door, Jesus Christ? Jesus' invitation is clear. He invites us to enter the door. How do we do that? To enter the door, God calls us to take two very specific steps.

1. I must repent.

Acts 17:30 says that God commands all people everywhere to repent. Paul said this about the message he preached in Acts 26:20, "I preached that they should repent and turn to God." To repent means to change one's mind, to do a 180 in life. God calls us to repent of our sins. To enter through the door, I must repent. There's a second step.

2. I must believe.

Not generic belief, but a specific kind of belief. The kind Romans 10:9 identifies, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." May I ask you an important question. Have you ever entered the Door, and said, "I want to leave my life of sin. I believe in Christ. From now on, I want to follow Him"? If not, I invite you to do so today.