

## “Jesus: The Door?”

John 10:1-10

<sup>1</sup>“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup> This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (ESV)

As a kid growing up in South Florida the thing that I enjoyed doing more than anything else (maybe) was fishing. I would wake up in the morning, every morning that I could, and just go out. I lived about 100 meters away from the intercoastal waterway and about a half-mile away from the beach. I just loved fishing. In fact, some of my fondest memories are when I got into high school and I could drive, especially during the summers. My buddies and I would drive to the beach about 4:30 in the morning with cast nets and rods and we’d cast for grainies (those are little minnow-type fish) and we’d stand in the surf, wearing nothing but shorts, and fish for snook and watch as the sun came up. That was awesome. Then we moved out here. Out here I thought I’d like to fish again. Where do you start? First of all you have to wear a lot more clothing. About two years ago Judy chartered a boat for my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and she took the girls and me. We went salmon fishing in Canada off the coast of Victoria. It was interesting to me, especially given my background, because (at least the way our guide did it) we went out into these channels fishing. There were only two things that needed to happen to catch the salmon. One, you had to set the hook, and the second thing is that once the hook was set, you could not release tension on the line. Part of that, I assume, was because they made us use barbless hooks. I remember thinking to myself, “What’s up with that?” The guide said, “It’s to give the fish a chance.” I said, “He’s got a home court advantage, man.” Anyhow, you have a barbless hook and the fish comes by and nibbles, you set the hook and it is completely up to the fisherman to keep tension on the fish. If you release tension, don’t hold on tight, then the fish will get away. That’s exactly how the Gospel works.

Jesus is the great fisher of men. We come along sort of nibbling at the Gospel but unless Jesus, the great fisherman, actually sets the hook, you won’t be caught. Unless He is the one who holds on tight to us, you’ll be let go. You’ll get off of the hook. But the promise of the Gospel is that once He has set the hook, He’ll never let you go. What does that have to do with our text today? Well, that same principle applies in our text today, except instead of Jesus being this great fisher of men, He’s a shepherd. But He does the exact same thing.

We’re going to look at three things from this text this morning. There’s a lot in it. It’s a very familiar text. We’re going to look at three doors today. There’s a door out, there’s a door of, and there’s a door in. There are also two different sheepfolds, two different kinds of thieves, and of course a shepherd. But we’re going to build this whole thing around the three different doors. The first door is the door out. Let me read to you the first line of that. Jesus said,

<sup>1</sup>“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. (ESV)

As you’re reading through John and you read chapter 9 and then you get to chapter 10, it seems like all of a sudden Jesus changes gears. If you understand the context, He’s not changing gears at all. In fact he’s elaborating on something. To understand John 10 you have to understand first a macro context and what I’m going to call a micro context. The macro text for John 10 is Ezekiel 34. It’s the passage that I read during the Call to Worship. I actually

read to you the good part. Let me read to you just a few verses of Ezekiel 34. This is basically God rebuking those who should have been shepherding Israel.

<sup>1</sup>*The word of the LORD came to me:* <sup>2</sup> *“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?”* <sup>3</sup> *You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.* <sup>4</sup> *The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.*

He’s pretty serious, and then later He goes on to say, “I Myself will shepherd My sheep.” He said in fact, “I myself and my servant David.” Everyone would have understood that to be one of David’s sons. One of David’s sons will come and He will be the true shepherd of the sheep. That’s the macro context: God is frustrated with Israel’s shepherds (generally) of the flock. He says, “One of David’s sons will come and be the true shepherd of the flock.”

The micro context is in John 9. Many of you know from John 9 the story of the man who was born blind and he’s healed by Jesus. Jesus heals this man who has been born blind and he immediately goes home and his neighbors say, “What happened to you? You used to be blind and now you can see.” He said, “I don’t know. This guy came along and he put some mud on my eyes and told me to wash it out. The next thing you know, bam, I could see.” His neighbors apparently ratted him out to the Pharisees because the Pharisees then come and they can’t dispute the fact that his eyes have been opened, but they can ask, “How can this man who is a sinner have healed you? How can He have done that? He did it on the Sabbath of all things. How can He have done it?” The man says, “I don’t know.” So they ask his parents for evidence. “Was he born blind?” They say, “Yep, he was born blind, but he’s an adult so you can ask him yourself.” It says they said that because they were afraid of being excommunicated or cast out of the synagogue. The Pharisees go back to the man again and say, “So tell us the truth. How could this man, a sinner, have healed your eyes?” You get the idea that the man is tired of dealing with these guys. He says, “You know what? Whether He’s a sinner or not I don’t know. But what I do know is that I was blind and now I see.” They keep coming after him. Eventually he asks them, “Why do you ask so many questions? Do you want to be His disciples, too?” The Pharisees say, “You were conceived in sin.” And they cast him out of the synagogue.

The Pharisees were the shepherds of Israel. They were the under-shepherds under God. The Pharisees were the ones who were supposed to be taking care of the sheep, not using the sheep, not feeding upon the sheep, not casting out of the flock. So here they’ve taken this sheep, one of the weak, one of the wounded, and given him the boot, if you will. So the man goes and finds Jesus. Listen to this dialogue. I love this.

<sup>9:35</sup> *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* <sup>36</sup> *He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”*

This next verse is one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible. This man was born blind, Jesus has healed him and then asks, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man says, “Where is He that I might believe in Him?” Notice how Jesus responds. He says, “You have seen Him.” Get it?

<sup>37</sup> . . . *“You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”* <sup>38</sup> *He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.* <sup>39</sup> *Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”* <sup>40</sup> *Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?”* <sup>41</sup> *Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.*

Then immediately Jesus says, “Truly, truly.” It’s the same conversation that He’s having with the Pharisees. We’ve talked about when Jesus says, “Truly, truly” it’s “Amen, amen.” He’s basically confirming His own word. But also when Jesus begins and says, “Truly, truly” it’s a demarcation. Whenever you see “Truly, truly” what that means is

you have made a switch from dialogue to monologue. It's Jesus' way of saying, "Pssst." When my kids are going back and forth and they want to talk back or something, everyone has their own way, but mine's sort of like, "Ehhhp." "Pssst." "I'm getting ready to talk now." When Jesus says, "Truly, truly" what He's saying there among other things, is that the dialogue is over. "What I'm going to say to you now is what matters. You've said your piece." What does He say to them? That's the first point. The first thing He talks about is the door out. Let me read that to you.

<sup>1</sup>"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him . . . (ESV)

Jesus has just told them what everyone knows. In the Ancient Near East, there are two different kinds of sheepfolds. For the sake of discussion I'm going to call one of them the city fold and the other one the country fold. The city fold is basically this: If you went into a village in the Ancient Near East typically there would be a large sheepfold, a large enclosure in the middle of the village. In that large enclosure, there would be ten or twelve-foot walls, it would be very big. It would be a place where every family kept their sheep. So each family might have ten sheep or twenty sheep, so there might be a hundred or a thousand sheep in this thing. But it was a conglomerate. Everyone would keep their sheep in this one place. No big deal.

The true shepherd enters by the door where a thief would have to climb over the walls. Everyone knew that. What everyone else also knew is that when the shepherd went to the gate, the gatekeeper recognized him and lets him in. It's not rocket science. "Shepherd Allen, I recognize you; I've seen your ID. You can come in and fetch your sheep." Then what is interesting to me is that the shepherd literally called his sheep by name. In a flock of a thousand sheep the shepherd could walk in and had his particular signal that he would whistle or do something. His sheep and only his sheep would gather to him. It's pretty amazing if you think about it because sheep are pretty stupid, but they know that. Everyone would have known that. You can imagine the Pharisees looking at their watch and saying, "Tell us something we don't know." The shepherd comes and calls his own sheep to himself. When the shepherd goes in he doesn't call all the sheep, the only sheep that he calls are his own. His own recognize his voice and they come to him and once his sheep come to him, then he leads them out. He says that when a stranger comes and calls them, not only will they not come but they'll run from a stranger. That's true. Everyone would have known that. So the question is, "why in verse six does it say:

<sup>6</sup>*This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. (ESV)*

Everyone in the Ancient Near East at least knew that. The shepherd calls; only his sheep respond. Once his sheep respond they walk out. Why didn't they get it? The problem is they understood what Jesus was talking about, but they didn't understand who He was talking about. That's what they didn't get. Jesus is talking about Himself. He is this great son of David and He is the true shepherd. The true shepherd comes to seek His sheep and enters the fold by the gatekeeper. He's validated, if you will. Who validated Jesus? Who was the gatekeeper that said, "This is the guy"? It's either one of two things. It could be the Holy Spirit, but I tend to think it was John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the gatekeeper for all of Israel. Jesus, the true shepherd, comes and John says, "You're the man. Come on in."

What does Jesus do? Jesus calls His sheep. Let me make that more specific. Jesus doesn't just call any sheep, Jesus calls His own sheep and only those sheep. When Jesus calls, only those people who are His sheep respond to Him. In John chapter 6 Jesus says, "All whom the Father has given me will come to me." What Jesus is talking about here, on one hand, is His ministry. He goes about and calls people. On the other hand, very specifically, doctrinally speaking, he's talking about the doctrine of "effectual call." What does that mean? According to most theologians the effectual call is this: The call of the Gospel goes to everybody. Every week I tell every person in this room, "Trust Jesus. Put

your faith in Him. Believe in Him.” The effectual call is that call which those whom Jesus has chosen actually hear. Jesus comes and He calls His own sheep by name. He doesn’t call all sheep. It’s not up to the sheep as to whether they come, it’s whether or not they know the shepherd. If they know the shepherd they come. Once they come and follow Jesus, He leads them out. In the specific context here He’s probably talking about Judaism and that He has come to Judaism to call His flock out. He has His first candidate in chapter 9, at least in this book. This blind man that now sees is one of Jesus’ sheep. He is now out of the synagogue. He is out of Judaism. Jesus calls His own out and it says He leads them out.

Where does He lead them? He leads them to His flock and His fold, and into His enclosure. On one hand Jesus is the door out of wherever you are now. Whether it’s Judaism or whether it’s a lascivious life, or whether it’s just this mundane life that you don’t know what to do with yourself. The question is, “Is Jesus calling me out of where I am now to follow Him to where he is going?” Only you can answer that. Will you answer it? Because to not answer it is to say, “No.” So Jesus is calling. On one hand, Jesus calls his own sheep out. But the flip side of the doctrine of Jesus calling His own out is that once Jesus has embraced you, once Jesus has called you and made you one of His own, He will never let you go. You can never ever escape from His loving care and protection no matter how bad it feels. That’s the next point. On one hand He calls sheep out, and on the other hand, He protects them forever.

It says, “They didn’t understand what He was saying in this figure of speech.” Notice as we talk about the door “of” next in verse seven.

*<sup>6</sup> . . . they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. (ESV)*

They didn’t understand that Jesus was apparently referring to Himself, so Jesus makes it a little bit more clear. What He says is, “I came to call My own sheep out.” But then the next thing He says is, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.” There’s an important distinction between Him saying, “I am the door of the sheep and I am the door, period. What does He mean when He says, “I am the door of the sheep”? There’s a sense of geography here. Remember in His parable He has called His own sheep from this great mass of other sheep. So now He calls them out and leads His own sheep out into pasture. Now we move into what I’m going to refer to as the country fold.

What is the country fold? A particular shepherd would lead his sheep out and take them out to pasture; at night he would pile up rocks into a big circle high enough that the sheep couldn’t get out, He’d leave one place where there would be entry and egress, where you could go in and out. Then the shepherd would lead his sheep into his own particular fold and when the night came, the shepherd himself would lie down in front of that opening in the rocks in order to keep two things from happening. It would keep the sheep from getting out and it would keep wild animals and predators from getting in. When Jesus says, “I am the door of the sheep” that’s what he’s talking about: “I have not only called My own sheep out and made them into My own particular flock, but now once I’ve made them into my flock, I lay down in front of the door so that nothing can harm them. Nothing can get through that door that doesn’t come by My hand.” In fact we’re going to find out next week that the shepherd is so serious about being the door that He will be the door even at the cost of His own life. The sheep are more important than Himself. So the shepherd lies in front of the door.

What is Jesus talking about? He’s talking about what theologians might call the perseverance of the saints. Once Jesus has called them unto Himself and has made you part of His flock, He will never ever let you go and will never let any harm come to you that is not for your own good. If you don’t have an understanding of the sovereignty of God or the fact that God is in control of all things including your salvation, then you are going to be a very worried person. What is the basis of your not being able to worry? What’s the basis of your not having to fear? If nothing else, then you know that the Shepherd is constantly, consistently watching over you. If you don’t know that you have a Shepherd who is constantly lying in front of the door and keeping the predators away, and you know that there’s not a

Shepherd that's doing everything in His power (which is incredibly immense) to make sure that you make it to the end safely, how could you not worry? That is a prescription for worry. If you don't have a Shepherd, if you're not sure that there is not someone who is going to take care of you and cover your back all of the time, then you should worry. Let me just leave it like that. You should be worried because Jesus said, "You either have me as a Shepherd or you have two other people, thieves and robbers." What do thieves and robbers do? He says,

<sup>8</sup> *All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. (ESV)*

On one hand, by thieves and robbers, He's probably referring to the Pharisees and those false shepherds. But for the sake of our discussion, I want to talk about two different thieves that you and I probably have much greater struggle with than just the zealotry of the Pharisees. What are the two thieves of the Gospel? In fact Tertulian said it back in A. D. 400 plus or minus. Tertulian said, "Just as Jesus was crucified between two thieves, so the doctrine of justification is also constantly assaulted and crucified between two thieves." What is the doctrine of justification? The doctrine of justification is that Jesus comes and lives the life you should have lived and dies the death you should have died. In that death God, for those who trust Jesus, not only takes all of your sin but He gives you all the righteousness of Jesus. He promises He'll never fail you or forsake you and never let you go. What are the two thieves that Tertulian says the Gospel is constantly being crucified between? The answer is pretty simple. Tertulian said it was moralism, and in his language, liberalism. Or another way to put it may be legalism and relativism. The Gospel is always assaulted and crucified by either legalism or relativism.

What is the difference between the two? On one hand there are tremendous differences. On the other hand they both take you to the same place. What is legalism? A legalist basically wants truth without grace. All that matters is that you follow the letter of the law. A legalist seeks to save him or herself by virtue of his obedience of the law, which tells you right off the bat that the legalist really doesn't understand the law very well because God is much more holy than the most ardent legalist could bear. On the other hand you have the relativist. While the legalist might say, "I want truth but not necessarily grace," the relativist would say, "I want grace but not necessarily truth." In other words, "all truth is the same." Or, "nothing is true." Of course both of those statements are self-defeating. It's impossible to be a relativist ultimately. But the relativist says, "Yeah, I think God loves everybody and it will all pan out in the end." He wants grace but not truth. What is the truth? The truth for both the legalist and the relativist is this fact: neither one of the them really understand the depth of their sin. The legalist thinks that somehow if you work hard enough you can actually achieve God's standard. Let me give you a news flash. You can't. If you're honest, think about it. Go through an hour and think about whether you've done something wrong in thought, word, or deed. You can't do it. The relativist on the other hand says, "It really doesn't matter if I'm sinful or not. God is still going to take me in and love me." Well, that's not true either.

What you need is something that can join both of those things. Remember what the Gospel of John says about Jesus? Moses came with the law, but Jesus came full of grace and truth. Jesus is the place where God's grace and God's truth intersect. He's the place where God's justice and God's mercy intersect. God is completely just for punishing sin. He must because of His justice. He does it on the person of Jesus at the cross. But because Jesus bore our sin and not us, we're able also to experience God's mercy. What's interesting about the Gospel of John is that John wrote his whole Gospel that says, "I wrote this thing so that seeing Jesus, you might believe on Him and have life in His name." The end of this text talks about it. He says, "I came that you might have abundant life." You can't have abundant life until you first have just "life." Period. John says, "I wrote this so that you might believe and have life." What I love about the Gospel of John is John has this great tension between the doctrines of grace. The fact that God has a certain number of sheep that he is calling to himself on one hand. On the other hand John says, "I'm writing to everybody so that you may believe." With the doors we've looked at so far, you have a door out and a door of, and the last Jesus talks about is that, "I am the door in." Let me read that to you.

<sup>9</sup> *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* <sup>10</sup> *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (ESV)*

So Jesus says to the Pharisees, “Hey, boys, have you got it yet? I didn’t just enter by the door, I didn’t just become the door of the sheep, but I’m the door, period. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.” Saved from what? Saved from his sins. Saved from his self-righteousness. Saved from himself. Jesus is making a very bold statement saying, “If you want a relationship with God there is but one way to have it. If you want to be in the flock of the true God, there is but one way to enter and that’s through Me. It’s not through following My example. It’s not through following My teaching, and it’s certainly not by being good. It’s through Me. You have to come in and through me.”

How do you do that? If you want to enter in, if you hear Jesus calling, the only way you can enter into this flock through Jesus is you have to be like a Terminator, like Arnold Schwarzenegger. Have you seen the movie? I don’t recommend it, it’s a little violent. But the only way you can enter into Jesus’ flock is that you have to enter in like the Terminator travels through time. When he enters through a portal to travel through time, he can only go through naked. So you’ll see Arnold Schwarzenegger, you’ll hear the zzzzzz, zzzzzz, and lighting flash, and then you’ll see Arnold Schwarzenegger (who is a very large man), naked, huddled down because you can’t pass through with anything of your own. You have to go through naked. If you want a relationship with Jesus, if you want to enter His flock, much like that, you have to enter naked. What do I mean by that? You have to leave everything of your own behind, and more specifically you have to leave your sin behind, but you also have to leave the thing that is killing more of you than just your sin, and that’s your self-righteousness. You cannot enter in by Jesus if you’re still willing to hold onto your self-righteousness. If you’re a Christian and you have entered in and you’re miserable, that’s why. Because Jesus has brought you in. He said, “I told you to leave that stuff outside. You don’t need it here.”

I’m re-reading Charles Spurgeon’s autobiography. He had more great one-liners by the age of sixteen than I will have in my whole life. He’d just become a Christian and he goes to church and someone immediately begins to berate him and ask him, “My son, what have you given up for Jesus?” He said, “What do you mean?” He says, “Have you left your family, home, possessions? What have you given up for Jesus?” Spurgeon at the age of sixteen says to him, “Well, my friend, apparently I’ve given up the one thing that you haven’t.” He said, “What would that be?” He said, “Well, my self-righteousness.” Think about it. Spurgeon gave up the only thing that mattered.

Everyone in here, if you’re honest, you know that you’re a sinner. You’re willing to admit that. But the bigger thing, are you willing to admit that you are self-righteous? I don’t mean just snooty and snotty and self-righteous, but do you rely on yourself for your own salvation or are you relying on Jesus, this great shepherd? Are you willing to let Him take you in? Because if you are, you have to come naked. Some of you have been Christians for years and what I’m telling you is that you have to get rid of some of the stuff. Think about it.