

Lunchtime Service - I am the Door

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Date: 15 September 2026

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[0:00] John chapter 10. 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.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him, the gatekeeper opens, the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him and they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, 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.

[1:13] Let's pray. Father, thank you for this time together. We ask that you would bless this, our meeting, our service together. We're grateful for another opportunity to be directed towards you, towards your word.

We pray that you would speak clearly through me, that your church would be edified, that you would be glorified. We love you, Lord God. We commit ourselves to you in this moment. In Christ's name. Amen.

How can the true church and true ministry of the gospel be recognized? How can you really be sure that you are a true sheep and recognize the voice of God himself?

How are we to draw near to God? These are some of the questions that might resonate with you or perhaps others that you know. Questions that perhaps you're unsure of how to answer yourself.

The very questions, though, that Jesus is addressing and answering here in John chapter 10. In John chapter 9, a man born blind was given his sight by Jesus, only to be cast out by the religious authorities.

[2:23] The very men called to shepherd his soul. And as this discarded man stands outside of the temple, Jesus steps forward and he denounces these under shepherds, the very men who had thrown him out and calls them what they actually are, thieves and robbers.

And then Jesus makes a further radical claim when he says, I am the door. Now, this whole chapter really is providing a series of observations on sheep farming, not as an end in itself, but as a vehicle to get across the desired message in symbolic ways.

So the message is controlling these symbols that are being used. One commentator notes that these parables, these words of Jesus are actually a divine pastoral to all church leaders.

Jesus hears defending his flock and demonstrating his passion for them as he's levying severe warnings and powerful encouragements to those who are hearing his words.

So what we have before us in these nine verses is a mixture of metaphor and allegory, saying and parable. But the common feature in all of these is that there's something enigmatic or cryptic in what Jesus is saying.

[3:44] And you and I need to be careful that we don't press this allegory parable too far, demanding that everything maps on to something else perfectly. Christ is using these symbols to convey various truths about himself, about us and about our shared enemies.

So very simply put, there are two primary things within today's text that there are certainly others, but two that I want to draw your attention to. And I would summarize them like this test and triumph, test and triumph.

So firstly, then test by way of divine warnings. Jesus's tone is one of open rebuke as he is exposing his and our enemies who are the thieves and robbers.

Jesus is speaking to the very shepherds of Israel as he says these words. He's denouncing these men who have thrown out the healed formerly blind men out of the sheepfold of Judaism. And Jesus here in his opening verses is teaching that true shepherds, however, distinguish themselves from false ones in the way that they enter the sheepfold by the door.

[4:57] Jesus utilizes this word door in a few different ways in these in these opening nine verses of chapter 10. Here, though, in the first three to five, he is marking out distinguishing qualifications of faithful shepherds, faithful under shepherds.

Only the true under shepherds of Christ enter into the ministry by and through Christ. These faithful men throughout history hold out Christ, Christ alone to those that are under their care.

All of their work is done to the glory of Christ as the one, as the door who has admitted them into the ministry. This is the way, says Jesus, to distinguish lawful shepherds from unlawful ones.

Is Christ himself the object, the beginning and the end of everything for them? A true under shepherd does all that he does with an eye to Christ, who is the door.

There seems to be a lot of direct reference here in Jesus's words to several places in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 34, Zechariah chapter 11.

[6:07] All of these places throughout the Old Testament where the shepherds of God's people are being condemned for their faithlessness and their self-centeredness.

They are abusing their God-given roles of authority and they have no real regard for the harassed and helpless sheep. The very sheep whom Jesus has unending compassion for.

Jesus is giving us, his people, a criterion, a standard for discerning who true under shepherds are and aren't.

And the door is the criterion. The door is the standard. Jesus, in other words, is saying there is no plague more destructive in the church than wolves disguised as shepherds.

And throughout the Gospels, and as we've just seen much of the Old Testament, he's levying his most severe rebukes towards false teachers. These men that have usurped authority that belongs exclusively to Christ, who isn't just suggesting a better way, but as the door is claiming and asserting his divine role over the sheepfold of God.

[7:17] Do you notice the intimate bond of trust, though, between sheep and shepherd? I'm looking at verses 2 and 3 right now. Faithful shepherds call out their sheep from the common fold by name, and they go before or lead their sheep, setting an example in their life and their conduct.

And God's voice is known and heard through them. The true church and its true leaders are made known and recognized by whether or not they have entered through the door.

Jesus Christ. The religious leaders of Jesus' time, and indeed countless more from them then to us now, are sadly more interested in fleecing the sheep than in guiding them and nurturing them, guarding them, providing for them.

Their tendencies and true motives are highlighted in Christ's words as he labels them for what they are, thieves and robbers and strangers. They have climbed in by another way.

They have built their own doors. Now, our modern culture doesn't really mind the concept of spiritual safety, does it? But what it insists on is that you and I, is that we build our own doors through achievement, through moral efforts, through self-actualization, even religious ritual.

[8:39] This past weekend, I was in an airport one or two times going to and from Aberdeen for Presbytery. And at every point in an airport, as you're trying to get to your gate, you come inevitably to security, don't you?

And you have to pass through a door, a gate. You stand in it and they scan you and they're looking for metal or something. But that is the only way through to your gate.

It would be utterly absurd and ridiculous and, well, it wouldn't actually get you through if you were to rock up to the airport with a big cardboard slab that you'd draw on a door on.

And you'd get there to security and you'd go, it's okay, guys, I've got my door here with me. I'll step through this and proceed to my gate. There's one door through to get to your gate. And when Jesus is speaking of another way, verses 1 and 8, it shows that these ministers, the ones that he is speaking to, are not centered on Christ.

And their thinking or their actions, their teaching, they have constructed their own doors. They have entered the ministry with self-serving motives. And they end up holding out other false doors to those who listen to their voices.

[9:52] It shows that the true door is absent in their ministry and thousands of ministers are thus condemned. And so the litmus test to ask in a church context is, where is the door?

Show me the door. What motivates these robbers and thieves is not the well-being of the flock, but it is their own desire for profits and gain.

They don't have the love of God in their hearts. They have not received Christ. And Moses is ultimately these men's accuser. For if they had believed in Moses, they would have believed in Jesus.

These are Jesus' own words in John chapter 5. Now looking back to verse 3, this speaks to us of the character of a true shepherd. One who is a friend to the sheep.

One who is recognized by them. The one who knows each sheep, promotes their well-being. A shepherd who never leads where he doesn't first go himself. And these words recall Moses' prayer to God in Numbers 27.

[10:55] That the Lord would appoint a man over the flock of Israel. And he prays, he asks a man who would lead them, bringing them in and leading them out. That the sheep might have a true shepherd over them as they enter into the promised land.

Jesus appoints for his church faithful ministers who, throughout the centuries, fulfill this prayer of Moses' again and again.

Another element to Jesus' divine warnings and test, remember the first point here, is to note the inability to distinguish between Christ's voice and the voice of a thief and a robber.

It actually shows that a person is truly dead, not part of the flock. John himself writes elsewhere in the New Testament that true sheep have the spirit of truth within themselves.

He says, he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. We are from God, says John. And so even the poorest of sheep has been given the ability to distinguish between Christ's voice and the voice of a thief and a robber and a stranger.

[12:03] You and I, we must cultivate spiritual discernment through diligent study of God's word. The church is to be conformed to the image of Christ.

And we are able to know, or excuse me, the true church is able to be known by and through the godliness of its under shepherds and the soundness of their teaching.

Do they hold out Christ as the door? And as immediate illustrative proof of Jesus's words, you'll notice there in verse six, the leaders of the Jews with whom Jesus speaks directly are unable to understand the same.

So how can the true church and true ministers of the gospel be recognized? They have entered by the door. Jesus is known to the sheep through the shepherd's speech and life and conduct.

And these men hold out the door to the flock and all that they do and say. Secondly, then point to triumph, test triumph. So now we turn to note the absolute centrality of Christ.

[13:07] While verses one through five served as a contrast between true shepherd and false ones, verses seven to nine is now a contrast between false shepherds and the door himself.

We're transitioning here from a qualifying test for under shepherds to Jesus declaring that he himself is the door of salvation for all.

We're moving from institutional rebukes to salvation and security. This door is not one of restriction, but of covenant protection. It's a door of relief, guaranteeing rich and ongoing spiritual nourishment, which is our true liberty.

So how can you and I be sure that we are true sheep, that we that we recognize the voice of God, that how can we draw near to God? Well, for those of us who are followers of Christ, how and when did you become a Christian?

How and why did you become a Christian? Christ called you. Christ called me by name, with his voice, by his spirit and through his ministers, through the church and with the word.

[14:16] We have been called out. So weeks ago, before I knew I was preaching this, a video came across my feed of a sheepfold, a really big one with dozens and dozens of sheep off in the distance.

And two people, one by one, step up to the edge of the sheep pen and call out to the sheep, trying to get the sheep to come in to respond to their voice. And absolutely nothing happens. The sheep just keep munching on their grass.

They don't even lift their heads. And then the third man who steps forward, obviously being the shepherd of this flock, he stands and he calls and he calls. And with each subsequent call from the

shepherd's voice, you see in the video that the little sheep's popping up their head, stopping their munching on the grass, turning their ears flick up and then some bleeding.

And then one by one, they start galloping towards. And all of a sudden you've got this little this wave of tiny white bums just dancing down the down the hill towards the shepherd who was called them.

Look again at verses three and four with me. And we see that the unity that the unity that the true sheep and the true shepherd have is by the presence of the spirit of God. God's God's true voice can be known through these lawful under shepherds who have entered by the door and admitted by the gatekeeper, which can be taken to mean the prophetic witness of the scriptures.

[15:39] Because the Pharisees don't understand, Jesus now strips away any ambiguity that exists. And he doesn't just say that there is a door to be entered by.

Now he says, I am the door. Verses seven and nine, Jesus is repeating and simplifying that true sheep and true shepherds alike must all pass through the door.

This speaks of the exclusive mediation of Jesus Christ. Soulless Christ. The scene has shifted now in verses seven to nine.

We're out in the countryside as opposed to verses one to five. The door is a little bit different. We were in the village. There's a common fold. But at that at that time, shepherds out in the fields when they're calling the sheep in at nighttime, they would have acted as the physical door themselves to the pen that the sheep have been called into.

The shepherd would lie down in the entryway and literally become that door so that nothing could get into the sheep or out without having to go through him.

[16:44] And this expression in and out, you'll notice verse nine in and out. This is a Semitic expression. So it's denoting habitual communion with Christ.

Whoever enters by Christ has security and enjoyment. And one's whole life is under the purview of Christ. Your goings out and your comings in. An encouragement that we're all hopefully seeing here is that Jesus is the one alone who mediates entry into God's family and how a true sheep comes to belong to the sheepfold of God.

Through Christ as the door, we are enabled to draw near to God. And by calling himself the door in these various ways, Jesus is revealing himself to us as the one whom our relationship with God Almighty has its its point of concentration, both from the side of God, capital S shepherd, and from that of of us, his flock.

It's a it's a double sided coin. And yet it all pivots around the exclusivity of Christ alone as the door. To find pasture means that your soul stops scavenging in the dirt of worldly approval.

You're admitted through the Christ as the door as opposed to the doors that you've you've tried constructing. We're not just merely protected from ultimate destruction, but we're blessed with intimate care and oversight of the creator of the universe.

[18:13] So true sheep are perennially safe and find real food and nourishment as they feast at Christ's table prepared before them in the presence of their enemies.

So what does your going in and out and finding pasture mean for you and I this afternoon tomorrow? It means freedom from anxiety of self-preservation.

When you enter into that hostile work environment or challenging family dynamic, we no longer have to enter into those situations through those flimsy doors that we've tried building ourselves. We go out under the watchful eye of Christ, the door who shepherds us, who protects us, and we return to rest in his unshakable peace. The psalmist in Psalm chapter 18, I'm going to paraphrase a little bit here, the preceding verses to some very well-known ones.

But he says, The righteous enter through the door of the Lord to give thanks to him. We thank him that he has answered our prayers and he has become our salvation. Indeed, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

[19:22] This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. So in conclusion, false teachers throughout time are addressed and divine warnings are issued.

Test. Christ presents himself as the door of the Lord through whom alone the righteous enter in and give thanks to the Lord who has become their salvation. This one who was to be rejected by the false shepherds of his time has become the centerpiece of God's marvelous plan in which we rejoice and are glad.

Triumph. He has given us his word and his spirit and the power through them to distinguish his voice and who his true ministers are. And for now, this door, the door of Christ is open. But it will not always be the case. The writer of Hebrews pleads when he says, Therefore, while the promise of entering into his rest still stands, take care.

For those who have believed have entered that rest. Today, says the writer, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Let us strive, therefore, to enter that rest.

[20 : 40] One day, that door will be closed. Forever. So heed the call now to enter into his rest. To be saved.

Don't linger in your examination of the door's construction, its hinges, its frame. Step through it and find immediate rest and relief as you're carried across the threshold.

Give up the worthless and fruitless pursuit of seeking to construct your own doors to enter into so that you might stand before God. Take Christ and know the joy and security of his salvation and the blessing of going in and out and finding pasture under his care and protection.

Who alone is the door. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your words to us. Once again, we have had this opportunity to pause and to hear you speak to us.

We are grateful that you, Jesus, are the door, the point of contact, the mediator and redeemer between us and the Father. And we can come in and out and find pasture under the watchful eye of your care.

[21 : 52] We're grateful for this reminder to us this afternoon. And we pray that you would fill us with encouragement and send us out in the power of the Spirit. Now we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.