



from the desk of . . .  
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**#794**  
**4 March 2018**

**I AM - 3**

## **I AM THE GATE**

**John 10:7-10**

Couldn't God have thought of something better than sheep to compare us to? (Matthew 9:36)... (X) I mean, of all God's animals, sheep are the least able to take care of themselves. Sheep are simply dumb!

Have you ever met a sheep trainer? Have you ever seen sheep do tricks? Do you know anyone who has taught their sheep to roll over? Have you ever gone to a Ringling Brothers & Barnum & Bailey Circus & witnessed a sideshow featuring "Kathy & Her Acrobatic Sheep"? Of course not. Sheep are just too dumb to learn tricks.

In addition to that ... they're defenseless. They have no fangs or claws. They can't bite & they can't outrun a predator. That's why we never see sheep as mascots for sports teams.

We have the Chicago Bears, the Chicago Bulls, Chicago Cubs, Philadelphia Eagles, Detroit Tigers, Detroit Lions, Denver Broncos, Indianapolis Colts, but the Rolling Meadows' Lambs? ... Who wants to be a lamb?

We can't even stir up a decent yell for the cheerleaders  
... (X)

We are the sheep!  
We don't make a peep!  
You'll never see us leap!  
We just want to sleep!

So, you get my point. Sheep aren't real impressive. They're not known as fighters. They're pretty docile. They generally don't have much to brag about, which means that the world tends to overlook the Church ... because the Church is supposed to be filled with a bunch of "good sheep". We're not bulls, or bears, or tigers, or lions, or eagles, or broncos, or colts ... we're sheep.

The world wants excitement. It wants pizzazz & power. It wants to lead & get ahead ... & ... well ... sheep are generally followers by nature.

So why would we want to be compared to sheep? ... Well, actually we don't get much of a choice. God says ... "you're sheep, whether you want to be or not." (John 10:27)

That's how He made us.

He created us to be followers ... of something. (Luke 5:27)

And that's what we're going to be looking at this morning  
... & again, next Sunday.

Good News, from Jesus, as recorded by John,  
to you who have gathered for worship at C.C.R.M.

Within your hearing now comes the Word of the Lord ...  
(#15 ... begin 1:24:15 & end 1:25:25)

So Jesus said again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate for the sheep. All others who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Those who come in by me will be saved; they will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness." (John 10:7-10)

**May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen**

We're in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of a 7-part series ...  
 7 different names by which Jesus chooses to identify Himself. Each of these names pop-up in the Gospel of John, & each gives us a glimpse at who Jesus really is. And He introduces each of these names with the expression ... (X) I AM.

1<sup>st</sup> it was, "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35)

Then last week, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)

This morning, & next week, we're going to look at "names" that deal in some way with sheep.

Now if we lived in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine, we'd know a lot about sheep. But we're 21<sup>st</sup> century suburbanites. Most of us know something about dogs & cats ...

(well, nobody really knows anything about cats)  
... & maybe some of us have goldfish, but that's about it.

So, we're going to have to do a little background study if we want to understand what Jesus meant when He said, "I am the gate for the sheep." And then continuing with it next week, "I am the good shepherd."

So, what's Jesus talking about when He called Himself "the gate for the sheep"?

1<sup>st</sup> ... He meant that He was the **doorway to security**. "So Jesus said again, 'I am telling you the truth: I am the gate for the sheep. All others who came before me are thieves & robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.'"

The "gate" that Jesus was referring to belongs to the kind of sheep pen that shepherds used during good weather. (Presumably this is where the shepherds were keeping their sheep at the time of Jesus' birth when the angels appeared to them & invited them to Bethlehem.)

(Luke 2:8)

While the weather was nice the shepherds would stay out in the fields for weeks at a time. And once they found some good pastureland (X) they'd gather a pile of rocks & build a kind of make-shift corral that would have a single opening.

Then at night the shepherd would herd his sheep through that opening into the pen. He would then lie down across the opening (X) thus becoming the "gate" to the sheep pen. He was literally the sheep's protection. He was their security from thieves & robbers who wanted to kill, steal, or destroy the flock.

So, who are these thieves & robbers that Jesus is alluding to? ... Well, He gives us several clues. He said, "All others who came before me are thieves & robbers."

The key there is the verb "are" ... it's present tense. Jesus is referring to people who are presently on the scene. The thieves & robbers are contemporaries of His.

Now in the original text, the book that John wrote, there were no chapter or verse divisions. So, what we see as "chapter 10" was just a continuation of "John 9".

The #'s came 100's of years later.

So, since our chapter 10 begins with Jesus speaking about how thieves & robbers climb into a sheep pen without going through the gate (John 10:1-2) ... there's a good chance that He's referring to those people that He had just been talking to at the end of "chapter 9" ...

which were Pharisees. (John 9:40)

Remember, the video last week? ... The Pharisees questioned whether Jesus could be from God because He healed the blind man on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees had "stolen" the truth. In the case of the man born blind, they had robbed him of the true meaning of the Sabbath, the true meaning of the Law.

(John 9:18)

Jesus is saying ... "I am the gate to understanding the truth about life. And I am the barrier against the error of those false teachers, the thieves & robbers who would snatch away your faith. I bring you true understanding." (John 1:17)

In this our Scripture passage Jesus is talking about sheep & shepherds. He's tying into a word picture that would have been all too familiar to His Jewish listeners who knew their O.T.

Now, you & I, when we think about shepherds & sheep, theologically, it's usually in a positive sense.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need."

(The Psalms 23:1)

Jesus is "the good shepherd." (John 10:11)

The Psalmist writes, God is our shepherd & we are

"the flock for which he provides." (The Psalm 95:7)

But Jesus' listeners would also recognize that the term "shepherd" was used in Scripture as a description of bad religious leaders, who failed to nurture, who failed to protect, who failed to guide ... their sheep.

"They have led God's people astray." (Jeremiah 23:13)

"They didn't tend the sheep" ...  
but instead "treated them cruelly." (Ezekiel 34:2)

And at one point God announced ... "I have put a shepherd in charge of my flock, but he does not help the sheep that are threatened by destruction; nor does he look for the lost, or heal those that are hurt, or feed the healthy. ... That worthless shepherd is doomed.

He has abandoned his flock." (Zechariah 11:16-17)

Those bad "shepherds" were more concerned about themselves than they were in caring for the flock God had given them. (1 Peter 5:2) And in this particular situation, they were all about keeping the Sabbath laws,

but could have cared less about a man,  
who had been blind since birth, getting healed. (John 9:7)

For these Pharisees, the Law was more important than people, & Jesus wanted to protect His sheep from them.

So, the primary objective of the shepherd is to lie across the opening of the sheep pen to keep out thieves & robbers ... to keep out bad religious leaders.

In The Acts, the Apostle Paul deals with this very same subject. Paul is speaking to a group of Pastors, who he refers to as "shepherds" of their churches.

Paul teaches that the primary role of a shepherd is to **protect** the sheep.

And he refers to the enemies of the sheep as wolves.

But they're the same group of people  
that Jesus had been talking about.

"Keep watch over yourselves & over all the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he made his own through the blood of his Son. I know that after I leave, fierce wolves will come among you, & they will not spare the flock. The time will come when some men from your own group will tell lies to lead the believers away after them."  
(The Acts 20:28-30)

Now who are these wolves that Paul's referring to? Once again, they're religious leaders. They're false teachers who distort God's truth, & in doing so ...  
misled the sheep.

So, how does Paul tell the shepherds to protect their sheep from heretical teaching?

He says, "And now I commend you to the care of God & to the message of his grace." (The Acts 20:32) The message ... the Word ... is how pastor/shepherds are to protect their sheep from thieves & robbers, from wolves, from false teachers who attempt to take them away from God, by misrepresenting the Gospel.

That's why I put so much emphasis on Scripture.  
That's why I encourage each of you to read this Book.  
That's why I want you to take notes when God's Word is preached. This is your protection. This is your security.

It's why we must come to know it.

"Your word I have treasured in my heart." (The Psalms 119:11)

I can't begin to even guess how many times ... at least 5,280 ... when I needed to hear a word from God, a Scripture verse would pop into my mind.

That happens because I've spent time in the Word.

Jesus wants us to be part of a sheepfold that's secure from error ... a sheepfold where His Word is used to teach & to protect & to nourish.

But we also have to be careful. John warns us ... "do not believe all who claim to have the Spirit, but test them to find out if the spirit they have comes from God. For many false prophets have gone out everywhere."

(1 John 4:1)

And he's not just talking about those who claim, "thus sayth the Lord." But false teaching can come from lots of sources: from peer influences, from marketing people who tell us that our life is incomplete unless we buy this or that; from best-selling authors, from radio talk show hosts that we may listen to.

It can come from any # of places. **God's Word** is our protection. Jesus wants us to be part of His **fold**. He's "lying down" across the opening to protect us.

He uses His Word to make the sheep pen **secure**.

Jesus says, "I am the gate for the sheep."

2<sup>ndly</sup>, Jesus is the **doorway to salvation**.

"I am the gate. Those who come in by me will be saved."  
What does it mean to be saved? ... Some, who are outside the bounds of Christianity, get uncomfortable when they hear people talking about "getting saved."

I have in my files this theological definition.  
"Saved is the comprehensive term for the whole process whereby people are delivered from the consequences of sin & brought into the blessing of God."

And Jesus is **the** doorway, not **a** doorway.  
(Definite article here) ... "the" doorway to salvation.

Again, this is something that really bugs skeptical people. They're fond of saying,  
"Oh, you Christians are too exclusive with your truth claims. ... You talk as if Jesus is the only way to God."

How do we respond when people say that? ...

Let me tell you how I typically answer that kind of accusation. I say, "Yes, Jesus is the **exclusive** way to God. And here's why I believe it ...

1<sup>st</sup>, because Jesus has asserted it for Himself."

(Now I understand that's a little bit of a dodge.  
But it's my way of saying, blame Him don't blame me.  
This is something that Jesus has claimed about Himself.)

Plus taking the imagery of a sheep pen indicates that.  
There was only one gate.

To have had multiple gates would have been disastrous for the sheep.

There was only one gate & the shepherd would lie down across it. He guarded it. He was the entrance ... & he alone was the entrance. (So, just the idea of the gate that Jesus uses here indicates that He's the only way.)

Now if that sounds too exclusive to you, listen to this cross reference.

Jesus said, (X) "Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide & the road that leads to it is easy, & there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow & the way that leads to it is hard, & there are few people who find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

Now, I didn't say that ... Jesus said it. In John's Gospel, when He's talking about this, Jesus uses the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun twice.

"I am the gate. Those who come in by **me** will be saved."

Jesus leaves no doubt what He's talking about. He is the exclusive access point to a relationship with God.

2<sup>ndly</sup>, Jesus is the one & only way to God because He did something that no one else has ever done for us ... & it's related to the gate theme.

Scripture tells us that our sin alienates us from a perfectly **holy God**. Our sin keeps God at a distance.

(Habakkuk 1:13)

This is dramatically portrayed in the 1<sup>st</sup> book in the Bible. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis we read how the 1<sup>st</sup> man & woman disobeyed God & were banished from the Garden of Eden. (X) And as they exit God posts an angel guard brandishing "a flaming sword which turned in all directions," (Genesis 3:24) as a way of saying,

"you can't come back in. You're on the outside now."

1,000's of years later when Solomon built the Temple, this idea was underscored in the design. There was an inner sanctum where God could be met, called the Most Holy Place. But only the High Priest could go there, & he could enter only once a year. (Hebrews 9:7)

Everyone else was kept on the outside. In fact, there was a curtain, actually several inches thick, which hung across the opening. It was another way of saying ... the gate is closed ... no access ... no entry.

When Jesus died on the cross, one of the things that happened was that this curtain (X) in the Temple was torn from top to bottom, ripped in 2. (Matthew 27:51) It was a symbolic way of saying that something took place that has opened the access to God that people never had before. Our sin had been dealt with.

The **penalty** which we deserved to pay for our sin was paid on the **cross** by Christ. (1 Peter 2:24)

"He opened for us a new way, a living way, through the curtain - through his own body." (Hebrews 10:20)

Now there's a warning that comes with this too ...  
the gate will not stay open forever.

Jesus said, "Do your best to go in through the narrow door; because many people will surely try to go in but will not be able. The master of the house will get up & close the door; then when you stand outside & say, 'Open the door for us, sir!' he will answer you, 'I don't know where you come from!'" (Luke 13:24-25)

So, the opportunity is now. (2 Corinthians 6:2) The door is open,  
& we don't know when it will close. (Mark 13:32)

Have you ever been frustrated by a too narrow door? I remember once buying a sofa for a house that I lived in. I called a friend of mine who had a truck. (He was a friend.) Anyway, we went & picked up the sofa, drove it home, uncrated it in my driveway & carried it over & put it up against the door frame ... & sure enough, we couldn't get it in. We turned that stupid sofa (the sofa was stupid!) ... we turned that stupid sofa every which way, & after about 35 minutes realized that it wasn't going through the door.

We've got to go in through the door/gate.  
Have you gone through that door/gate?

Jesus is the only way. (X) "Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us." (The Acts 4:12)

That's what Jesus claimed. He said "no one goes to the Father except by me." (John 14:6) So, He's either who He claimed to be ... the only gate ...

or He's crazy, or He's an out & out liar.

I've often quoted C.S. Lewis here. (X) "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say.

A man who was merely a man & said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, & is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him & kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet & call him Lord & God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.

He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

3<sup>rdly</sup>, Jesus is the **doorway to satisfaction**.

"They will come in & go out & find pasture. ... I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness."

I've told you before, eternal life is not just a **quantity** of life ... it's more than just a life that goes on forever & ever & ever ... it's a **quality** of life.

Jesus describes it as "life in all its fullness." It's something way beyond what people normally experience.

So, are you enjoying life in all its' fullness? ...  
In other words, where are you turning for satisfaction?

Well, the spiritually correct answer to that question is ... "I'm turning to God. He's giving me life to the fullest." But practically speaking, I wonder, if that's true, or are we trying to fill-up on other things? ...

Someone has said that **theologically** many of us are Christians, but **practically** we're atheists.

In other words, we believe it up here ...  
Jesus gives life to the fullest, but practically speaking ...  
we seek to meet our needs in every other way imaginable.

When was the last time you chose to spend time with Jesus, rather than spend time in front of the TV? ...

Rather than spend time on your i-phone? ...

Rather than spend time reading a book? ...

I want to get real practical here with some suggested applications that hopefully will stimulate your thinking.

How do I get life in all its fullness from Jesus?

- Consider doing less of something you're doing too much of right now so that you can spend more time with Jesus. Maybe you could spend less time on the internet, or exercising, or watching TV ...

what do you spend most of your time on?

- How about this? Let me suggest that you come to church 10 minutes earlier on Sunday morning. Rather than rushing in seconds before we begin ... imagine being here to be able to take a deep cleansing breath, spending a moment in prayer, realigning your spirit, so that you can get the most out of our time together.
- How about recommitting yourself to our daily Scripture reading? How about taking the sermon outline home with you & making it a part of your prayer life? Today we're talking about Jesus being the gate/door. Pray this week ...

"Thank you, Jesus, for being the gate so that I can come through you into God's presence. When I had no access to God, you made a way for me."

- Start talking to Jesus spontaneously during the day.  
Talk to Him about the traffic.  
Talk to Him about whatever you're working on.  
Practice the presence of God.

We all live busy lives. What Jesus wants for His sheep is to "come in & go out & find pasture" ...  
to feel protected & be nourished.

So, let's make a conscious effort to spend time with Him.

"Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, & I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

**MARANA THA**