

I AM: The Door

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[0 : 0 0] Please be seated. This morning we're going to continue our series, or the series that I've been doing every time you've seen me during Matthew's sabbatical, through the I Am statements of Jesus.

And this morning we come to John 10. It's a familiar one, but we're going to be talking about a kind of unfamiliar statement of Jesus. So if you have a Bible, you can turn with me to John 10. If you have a bulletin, you can turn there as well. The text is printed before you.

John 10, verses 1 through 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 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, for 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.

[1 : 1 5] 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, and if anyone enters by me, he will be saved. He will go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word.

We ask for your spirit. Give it more and more measure, even now. May we see the glory of Jesus through this text.

And may we worship you through Christ, your son, because of it. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. I don't know if you've heard this.

[2 : 1 2] I've become recently fascinated with this idea, this part of Colorado culture, that we have castles in Colorado. It's kind of bizarre.

But they're not just any castles. We have one here in the Springs, up by Garden of the Gods, and there's one that's south of Fort Carson, down towards Pueblo. Now, I don't want to insult anyone, and chances are there's somebody in this congregation that knows one of the owners of these castles, and I don't mean this with any malintent.

But they're not castles. They're lacking one really important feature, because none of these castles, either the one north of us, or the one down towards Pueblo, or the other ones all around the state, none of them have walls.

So they're not castles. They're missing the critical components. And if you have watched a documentary, I think there was a castle documentary, or you've visited around Europe, or even been to Asia, you will see castles that have walls.

If you watch Frozen, Elsa's house has a wall. If you visit Disney World, you'll see what I'm talking about. Castles have walls.

[3 : 32] They're fortified. They have moats. Some even have a drawbridge. And that's the genius of them, because they're fortified in a way, they're made and structured in such a way that there's one way in and one way out.

It keeps the people inside safe. That's the purpose of the castle. It's to keep intruders out, and keep the people safe inside.

And there's one way in and one way out. Whether it's a castle, or Robert Frost, who reminds us, the only way out is through it, or a gate to your backyard, or a bridge across that, the one bridge across the river, or a tunnel through the mountainside.

There's one way in. One way. It might be a castle. It might be a bridge. It might be in architecture.

It might be in literature. It might be in nature. We see that idea that there's one way in in this text this morning. The only way into the sheepfold is through the door.

[4 : 39] Jesus is telling them, and he's telling us, there's one way into the sheepfold. There's one way, and it's through that door. There are no side doors.

There's no cracks. There's no alternate plans to get inside. There is one way, and he's really clear about it. Now, whenever we hear something like that, some of you, and I might be one of you too, I think in my mind, because I'm maybe an outside-the-box thinker, or I'm a contrarian, you tell me the sky's blue, I tell you, no, it's pale blue.

If you're one of those, let me be really clear to you. This morning, Jesus says, in the realm of eternal life, in the spiritual realm, there is one way.

There is one way in. And as we look at that this morning, we're going to contrast two big themes. One big theme is that there are thieves and robbers, and the other big theme is there is one door.

One door. Now, this morning, we read a larger chunk of John 10, and if we did so, we're going to focus really on verses 7 through 10. Verses 7 through 10.

[5 : 48] And we're doing that because we're walking through the I am statements of Jesus. It's really important to look at somebody's life's work, or what other people have said about them, but it's even more so important when we come to the figure of Jesus to figure out what has he said about himself.

And that's why we're looking at the I am statements. And in verses 7 through 10, he says very clearly, very plainly, I am the door. Now, what's confusing about this is often overshadowed by this more dominant theme of John 10.

We have this idea of the shepherd, the sheep, the thieves, the robbers, but he says here that I am the door. And we're familiar with that theme of shepherds.

It's idyllic. We see it even on the walls of nurseries. We see it in pictures, in modern pictures, of what the good life looks like.

It's pastoral. It has those warm, fluffy sheep. Who doesn't love warm, fluffy sheep? Right? But Jesus is focusing our attention here on the fact that he is the door.

[7 : 02] Now, if you've been around Christianity for any amount of time, this is something that we're familiar with. Even if you didn't grow up on a farm or around any kind of sheep or any kind of livestock, we know, because we've heard at some point, that sheep are not very smart and they're smelly and they need a shepherd.

And if they don't have the shepherd, they're going to run and go kill themselves. Now, we all know that. But why is that such a perpetual, persistent theme throughout Scripture?

Because it's not just here that we see it. We see it in all the Old Testament. Remember, Moses is the great shepherd of Israel. And what happens when Moses isn't there?

The sheep scatter. They're like sheep without a shepherd. This idea of a shepherd is not anything new to us and it's not anything new to them.

So Jesus begins in John chapter 10 with this idea of sheep and a shepherd, thieves and robbers. They know the voice of the shepherd. But then he figures out really quickly in verse six.

[8 : 04] Look at it with me. The figure of speech that Jesus was using with them, they did not understand what he was saying to them. It's the great peril of any preacher, right?

We're talking, we're talking, and all of a sudden you realize blank faces and nobody knows what you're talking about. Or if you're a parent or you present at work, you realize at that point, I have to reattack.

I have to figure out some other way to explain this to these people so they understand. And Jesus is no different. So in the midst of this big, grand idea of him being the great shepherd, he says, instead, I am the door.

He says in verse seven, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. Now before we get to that door, let's look at that other big theme, the one of thieves and robbers.

We're going to look at who they are and what they do for each of them, who they are and what they do. If the robbers are supposed to be there, how did they get there? Well, they're not supposed to be there at all.

[9 : 07] They kind of enter in like mice. They find any crack or way to get through, but they don't come through the front door. You don't invite mice through your front door. They get into your house through another way.

Same with a robber. You don't invite him through the front door. Keep that in mind because often we think about thieves and robbers in contrast to Jesus.

We'd think they're misguided or misinformed. If they just knew better, it would be a little bit different. But you don't think about that when a robber's in your home and grabbing all your stuff.

You don't think that he's misguided or misunderstood. You just say, I want my stuff. Don't take my stuff. It doesn't matter what their intentions are because the effects are devastating.

Who are they? Verse eight tells us really clearly who they are. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

[10 : 08] All became before me. Does that mean every person before Jesus' time was a thief and a robber? Was it all those faithful men of scripture?

Was it all the judges, all the prophets, all the kings? Was it John the Baptist? Is he a thief? Is he a robber? No, he doesn't mean that. He means something a little different.

How do we know that though? How do we know he's not talking about all those Old Testament saints? Because he talks very positively about someone that we just talked about earlier, Abraham.

When those opponents of Jesus came to him, he said, Abraham, they asked him, is he greater than you? Are you greater than Abraham?

Are you confused? And Jesus answers very clearly to what they asked him. Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. And then they get even more confused and say, how do you know that?

[11 : 04] Like, you guys didn't cross paths. You're young. He's old. And he answers with the scandalous, I am. And then they get really angry and they try to kill Jesus.

The thieves, the robbers, are not the ones who came before in scripture. They're the ones he's talking to now. They're the ones who should have been the shepherds of Israel.

They're the ones right there, right now. Think about this. Who are the Sadducees? What are they doing during Jesus' time? They're profiting off of God's people and their worship.

Who are the Pharisees? Mark reminds us that they do this. They walk around in long robes. They liked greetings in the street.

They want the best seats in the synagogue. They want the places of honor at feast. All the while, they're devouring the widow's houses. Luke reminds us the Pharisees were lovers of money.

[12 : 07] Those are the thieves and the robbers. They should have been shepherds, but instead, they're preying on the very sheep they were supposed to protect, supposed to feed, just like Ezekiel reminds us.

The opponents that John's speaking about, the thieves and robbers, are those people that in John 9, immediately before this, if you have a Bible, got angry that Jesus healed a blind man.

And Jesus responds and reminds them that they are blind. They can't see the true picture, the true beauty of the gospel. They don't know as much as they think.

They are the thieves and robbers. The emphasis is on are. They are the robbers. Not they were the robbers. They are present.

They are active even now. But what do the robbers do? The robbers do this. Verse 10 tells us, the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy.

[13 : 09] They don't seek out the best interests of the sheep. They don't care for them. They don't care about the people of Israel. They don't feed them.

Their motivation is their own profit and their own desires. That's who the thieves and robbers are. If you've ever had a babysitter when you were a kid or you've been a parent, the babysitter is supposed to put kids down to sleep at night.

That's what we pay you for, right? But then, when you show back up, the babysitter has invited over her boyfriend. Another man has entered your home. They've neglected what they were supposed to do, put the kids to sleep, and then you come home to find a stranger in your house.

The babysitter is probably not going to work for you again. But their responsibility is to care for their children. The responsibility of these shepherds is to care for the sheep of Israel, to care for the people.

And they've actually only concerned themselves with themselves. They've used the sheep for their own gain. It's a tale as old as time.

[14 : 22] This issue is of false shepherds, Ezekiel reminds us. They prey on the sheep. The thief only comes to kill and destroy.

All of us know the story of Little Red Riding Hood. And so, anytime that you talk about a story, you risk, like, ruining the story for everyone.

But everyone knows the grandma gets eaten by the wolf. Okay? I didn't spoil it for you. And Little Red Riding Hood doesn't recognize that the wolf has eaten the grandma because with all the gleaming teeth she's wearing, or the wolf is wearing the grandma's clothes.

that's often what we think of when we think of these people that are thieves and robbers. But the picture is not that. It's instead the grandma herself has turned on Little Red Riding Hood.

She was supposed to take care of her. She was supposed to protect her. But instead, she eats Little Red Riding Hood just like the wolf. That's the picture that we have in John.

[15 : 23] That's the picture that we have in Ezekiel. the grandma has turned on the little girl. These images are both in view in John 10 and Ezekiel.

The thieves and the robbers are charged to protect God's people and they don't do it. And these people that now speak to Jesus don't recognize that they are the ones doing it.

They don't recognize the great shepherd of the sheep stands before them and they're talking about how they're such great shepherds. Do they model the true shepherd?

Or are they like Little Red Riding Hood's grandma that has eaten her? How does that apply to all of us? Well, one, we have to be aware. We have to be on guard and recognize that there are thieves and robbers.

We're reminded in the first part of John 10 that there are sheep and they must know the voice of the shepherd. We have to know the voice of the shepherd.

[16 : 27] We have to know God. If you want a tangible, practical checklist of how to prevent thieves and robbers from coming in and devouring and destroying, I can't give you that.

But I can give you this. Remember that whether it's me or Matthew or the elders of this church, the thing that we can give you that point you to more than anything is not a checklist against thieves and robbers to validate whether we're doing things or not doing things.

If we are pointing you to God and giving you more of him and away from yourself and away from us, that is the only checklist that we need.

We need more of God and more of him and less of ourselves. That's the test of thieves and robbers.

We're also to know our own hearts. Last week we were reminded from Galatians that the law doesn't bring life because the law we could never perfectly fulfill but it shows us our need of Christ.

[17 : 35] In this picture that Jesus has set up of these walls and the door and only going through the door, we often think through the wall we can climb over the wall and we can get eternal life.

We can do it ourselves but Jesus is reminding us the only way in is through himself, only through the gate. Beware of your own heart, beware of the thieves and robbers.

That's one theme. The second theme is this, there is a door and that door is Jesus Christ. He tells us that very clearly and then he doubles down on it.

He says it in seven, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep and then he says in nine, I am the door if you're confused. He's the only entry point for salvation.

Jesus is speaking of himself saying you cannot have eternal life, you cannot have these great and glorious pastures unless you come through me. If that doesn't excite us, if that doesn't stir our hearts, what will?

[18 : 44] we can't climb over the fence. Christ is calling each of us to enter through that door, to have this abundance, to have life, to have pasture, to have life to the full and if we do not enter through that door, we cannot have it at all.

That's what he's speaking to us. Now, in our day and age, we like to think that there's lots of ways that we can have this good life, whether it's pursuit of success, worldly success, whether it's pursuit of the good life, of eternal life, through some other means, but those are all false.

They can only come through the door that is Jesus Christ and he is really, really clear about it. And so the call for each of us this morning is to come through Christ, come to him because we cannot have life or have it to the full unless we have Jesus.

And he invites all of us. That might sound pretty exclusive to say, hey, there's only one gate into this sheepfold. There's only one gate into this pen.

There's no other gate. And it is exclusive. But it's because it was purchased with the precious blood of Jesus himself. But it's inclusive in the sense that he has asked all of us to come through Christ and to come to him.

[20 : 17] The former's got that right. They said, in Christ alone. But they're just repeating back this idea of scripture, this idea from John 10, that there is one gate, there is one door, there is no other.

Some of you might be familiar with the famous minor league baseball team, the Durham Bulls. There was a movie made about them. I can't recommend it. But the Durham Bulls stadium is in downtown Durham.

Now, it's a great stadium. It's built off of Fenway Park, which is the Boston Red Sox. It's an exact replica. But there's one interesting fact about this stadium.

And it's not anything in the stadium. It's what lies across the street. Immediately across the street is the Durham County Jail. people. And so if you're a resident, part-time or full-time of the Durham County Jail, and you start moving up the floors, you're able to watch all of the Durham Bulls baseball games.

Now, obviously, this angered much of the Durham County government, but they didn't do anything about it for a really, really long time.

[21 : 28] You see, those inmates up a couple floors could watch all the baseball games. They could see the numbers on the back of the jerseys, and they could see the names. They could hear the game.

Didn't matter if it was night, day game, they could see all of it. And they had a perfect view, because it was right out of center field, and it was right across the street. There wasn't a better seat in the house to see all of the game.

But even though they could watch, they're really different than a fan who comes and has a ticket and gets a hot dog, peanuts, and can smell the grass, and is in the stadium.

They can see dimly what that fan in the game sees clearly, because beyond the bars on his window, he is not at the game.

He is not in the stadium. He is not participating as a fan. He cannot see all the glory. And when we think of that prisoner in the jail looking out onto the baseball field, we think of ourselves, or we should.

[22 : 37] Because when we think of eternal life and what's promised in John 10, we think that God gives to us his greatness. Not really.

We think so little of God. We think that he gives us something that we view through the bars of the jail across the street. When he's invited us in to the glory that's in the arena.

We see so clearly. We experience the abundant life, and we have it to the full. But we think so little of God. We think so little of heaven that that's not attractive.

We esteem it not. We think that God is stingy and miserly. But instead, Paul reminds us that he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

All of it is ours in Christ Jesus. We all, we experience it all, and it all turns on the door that is Jesus Christ. We've all been invited to have life and have it abundantly.

[23 : 51] We've all been invited in through this door, but we're called to be on guard against thieves and robbers, but we are promised through the door of Jesus Christ to have life and have it to the full.

He's the only door through which to enter. Let's pray. Amen. Lord, we thank you for the clear reminder that Christ is the only door by which we might have life and have it to the full.

We ask that despite the words and voices in our day and even in our own hearts that say we can do something else, that there is another way, may we stand on guard against robbers and thieves.

And may we find our way into the pasture through Christ our Lord. We ask in his name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.