

OUR JESUS IS DOOR AND SHEPHERD

John 10:7-11 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Over the years, serving as a pastor, I have met many people who have told me they have doubted that God really was a concerned shepherd for them during tough times. I've heard some people say they view the Lord as a scientist dealing with them as guinea pigs or rats in a laboratory. The picture that comes to my mind is some years ago when a Boy Scout Troop volunteered to be "guinea pigs in a civil defense test, back when those tests were going on across America. A mock air raid was staged, and the scouts were all called to impersonate wounded persons who were to be picked up and cared for by a civil defense medical team. One scout was told to lay on the ground and await his rescuers coming with first aid and medical help. Strangely, no rescuers showed up for him as he was lying on an open road that was closed off. Hours later, the rescuers arrived at the spot where this teenager was told to lie still, as if wounded. When the rescuers arrived, where the casualty was supposed to have occurred, and he was supposed to be badly wounded, all they found was a penciled note that read, "Have bled to death, and gone home."

Beloved, maybe some of us today, like Jesus' hearers back then, do not understand how Jesus could be either a door or a good shepherd. We may well doubt that Jesus could ever be both the door to the sheepfold, and the good shepherd. Nevertheless, Jesus spoke these words expressly to prove to the Pharisees, He was not like them, a stranger, a hireling, a thief, a robber, or even a mad scientist playing with people as with guinea pigs. Jesus is both the door of the sheepfold as well as the good shepherd of the sheep. He never leaves us. He never forsakes us, and we are never the objects of his curious, inquisitive scrutiny to toy or play with us as a rat, a fish, or a frog in a laboratory. We are never the objects of God's forgetfulness, because it is impossible for God to forget His own.

In John 10:1-6, our Lord made it abundantly clear what He meant when He spoke of entering into the sheepfold of our lives. Those verses picture Jesus coming into our lives to abide in us. Now in John 10:7-11, Jesus began to speak of what it means for a man, woman, boy, or girl to enter into His life, and to abide in Jesus. We are given in these six verses a picture of how Jesus enters into our life, and today we are given a picture of how we enter into Jesus' life. And if you run on ahead to verse 20, not only did the crowd listening to Jesus not understand, but we read, "Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to Him?" Charged with demon possession and insanity back then is still a pattern today as millions of people do not understand Jesus and declare Him to be insane or demon possessed. We as believers who have come to know Jesus' voice and to follow Him, hear the world laughing, mocking, and saying, "No one person can be both the door of the sheep, and the good shepherd of the sheep." No earthly conclusion could be further from the truth. Today, I call us to discover how Jesus is both, both the door to us, His sheep, and at the same time, the good shepherd to us, His sheep. Let's examine two questions. (1) How is Jesus the Door of the Sheep? and (2) How is Jesus the Good Shepherd of the Sheep?

HOW IS JESUS THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP? Notice John 10:7 and 9. “So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, “I am the Door of the sheep. I am the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” How is Jesus the Door? For starters, we must recognize that there are different kinds of sheepfolds. In villages and towns of Palestine in Jesus’ day, and yet today, there are communal sheepfolds shared by many shepherds when the sheep return from pasturelands during the day. The folds are protected by a strong door which only the doorkeeper has a key to unlock. It is this kind of fold that Jesus spoke of in John 10:2-3. Yet, there is another kind of sheepfold when the sheep are out in the summer on the hills far from a village, when the sheep do not return to the village at night to the communal fold. Instead, the sheep gather into sheepfolds out on the hillside. These folds are crude rock walls with an opening allowing the sheep to go in and out. What happened then and now today with such folds is that there is no wooden door so the shepherd at night lays down across the entrance or opening. No wolf can get himself in past the shepherd except over this shepherd, or as we say it, over his dead body. In a beautiful way, the shepherd in these wilderness folds, literally is the door of the sheep and there is no access to the sheepfold except through Him. Jesus said, “I am the Door. How does Jesus serve as the door to His sheepfold? There is a 3-fold answer right here in verse 9.

(1) **Jesus is our entrance into eternal salvation.** We read in verse 9, “If anyone enters by Me, **he will be saved.**” Jesus is telling the crowd and the Pharisees that through Him is remission or forgiveness of sins, thus Jesus was saying, “I am God.” Jesus becomes more pointed in John 14:6, saying, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, but by Me.” Jesus is the Door to all the blessings of salvation, but notice in John 14:6, there is exclusivity and restriction. Jesus is the only Door. Every blessing of salvation is through Jesus. Think of five of these blessings in Romans 5-6. Romans 5:1-2—“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.” Romans 5:9 – “Since therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved from the wrath of God.” Romans 5:11 – “More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” Romans 6:11 – “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” Jesus is our only Door of entrance into eternal salvation from eternal self-destruction—saved from the coming wrath of God.

(2) **Jesus is our access to freedom, peace, and protection.** We read in vs 9, “**and will go in and out.**” You ask, “What does “going in and out” of the fold through Jesus, the Door have to do with freedom, peace, and protection? The answer is—a lot. To go in and out is a classic Hebrew phrase, well known to the Jews, and John borrows it here. To be able to come and go out unmolested is the Jewish way of describing a life that is absolutely secure and safe. When a man can go in and out without fear, it means that his country is at peace. A few passages in the Old Testament are Numbers 27:16-17, “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in

before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” Deuteronomy 28:6 declares God’s blessing to the Israelites if they will obey Him. “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.” Solomon used these words in his humble prayer as a young king, saying, “And now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or how to come in.”

In Psalm 121:1-8, the 2nd Song of Ascents, we read, “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life/soul. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.” Jesus is our only access to relaxation in our work, freedom from tension, anxiety, and fear. There is no our Door to freedom, peace, and security. A godly lady named Avis Marguerite Burgeson Christiansen in 1920 wrote a hymn that says it all in the chorus. “Only Jesus, only Jesus, only He can satisfy. Every burden becomes a blessing, when I know my Lord is nigh.”

(3) **Jesus is our gateway to spiritual nourishment, joy, and service.** John 10:9 adds “**and he will find pasture.**” This matter of going in and out and finding pasture is not the picture of sheep coming and going at leisure or pleasure to and from the fold. No sheep does that. Sheep are led into the fold by the shepherd and led out to pasture by the shepherd. Never are the sheep out seeking for good pasture. That is not the job and business of the sheep, but of the shepherd. As Psalm 23 declares, our Shepherd of love “leads us into green pastures where we enjoy nourishment and beside still waters where our thirsty souls are fed without fear.” Besides these green pastures and still waters are pastures of service.

Palestinian shepherds keep sheep they call bellwethers, neutered rams named wethers with a bell around their neck. The term derives from Middle English belleweder, referring to placing a bell around a lead wether. A shepherd can note the movements of all his sheep by hearing the bells, even when the flock is not in sight. When sheep go astray, the shepherd never rounds them up with horses, helicopters or Hondas. He just goes walking with a number of his trusted bellwethers with bells around their necks. He heads out into the hills, hollows, and back country. As he walks, he scatters the bellwethers one to a valley or hill with their bells. Then as evening comes, the shepherd walks back home and by now, the lost and scattered sheep have heard one of the bellwether’s bells and they follow the bellwethers who follow the shepherd back to the fold. Jesus not only leads us to pastures of nourishment and joy but to paths of service. Just as Jesus sent out His twelve disciples to the lost sheep of Israel in Matthew 10:6, so Jesus sends us out through Himself, the Door. We are sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves, Mt. 10:16, but the Lord gives us safety and joy in being used of God to call many lost and scattered sheep back home to God and His fold. What a door is my Lord!

HOW IS JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP? Notice John 10: 8,10,11. We read, “All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them...The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.” Jesus’ words explain to us two ways that Jesus is our precious, good shepherd.

(1) Jesus sacrificed His own life for us, rather than robbing us as a thief from safety and life itself. John 10:10-11 illustrates the contrast between Himself and the Pharisees. John 10:8 tells us that the thieves and robbers came before Jesus came. John 10:10 continues the theme explaining the thief’s coming is with a purpose to stop at nothing. His main purpose is stealing, but the thief will also kill and destroy. Jesus clearly exposed the character of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:13-15 saying, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widow’s houses and for a pretense, you make long prayers; therefore, you will receive the greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte/convert, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.” False shepherds have no morals. They will kill a bleating sheep in the fold to stop the bleating. They will push over a wall to steal, kill, and destroy.

What a contrast is Jesus as the good Shepherd. He risks His life to give us life. He said, in John 10:10, “I came that they might have life.” The shepherd has to do more than risk his life: sometimes he has to lay it down, Dr William M. Thomson in his classic 1881 description of Palestine, entitled, “The Land and the Book,” wrote: "I have listened with intense interest to shepherd’s graphic descriptions of downright, desperate fights with these savage beasts. When the thief and the robber come (and come they do), the faithful shepherd has often to put his life in his hand to defend his flock. A faithful shepherd last spring, 1881, between Tiberias and Tabor, instead of fleeing, fought three Bedouin robbers until he was hacked to pieces with khanjar daggers, until he died among the sheep he was defending."

Unfaithful shepherds—What a difference! Real shepherds are born to this task. They are sent out with the flock as soon as they are old enough to go. The sheep became their friends and companions; and it becomes second nature to think of them first, before thinking of themselves. Many false shepherds come into the job, not as a calling, but as a means of making money. They are in it simply and solely for the pay they can get—a hireling. Jesus' point is that the man who works only for reward thinks chiefly of the money; the man who works for love thinks chiefly of the people he is trying to serve. Jesus is **the** good shepherd who so loves His sheep that for their safety, He would risk His life, and one day He gave His life for you and me. One translation says, “a good shepherd.” No, Jesus is the good shepherd, the only one. Before Jesus came, born of a virgin, and died on the cross, under the old covenant, sheep died for the shepherds, even for the high priest and everybody else. Jesus laid down His life, as the Good Shepherd died for the sheep. Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd. There are two Gk. words for good.

There is **agathos** which describes the moral quality of a person; there is **kalos** which means that in the moral goodness there is also a quality of winsomeness which makes a person lovely. When Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd, the word He used was **kalos**. In him there is more than moral goodness, efficiency and fidelity; there is loveliness. Sometimes people speak about a good doctor. They are not thinking only of the doctor's efficiency and skill as a physician; they are thinking of the sympathy and the kindness and the graciousness which he brings with him, which make him the friend of all. In the picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd there is loveliness, as well as strength, power, and moral goodness. I spent a little while in my Greek New Testament looking at the word shepherd, **poimen**, which means a shepherd or pastor. To read the Greek, “**Ego eimi** – I am, **ha poimen**,--shepherd, **ha kalos**,--good, (Repeat) **Ha poimen ha kalos tane psuche**—his own life, **tithysin**—puts or places or lays down, **uper**—on behalf of **probatown**—the sheep.” Think of Jesus saying to these Pharisees, in contrast to them. Isn't He more than wonderful?! Picture yourself now as in Jesus' fold. Picture Jesus carrying His cross outside Jerusalem. He did not lose His life. Freely, He tithysin—He laid down His life for you and me on Calvary's cross. Isaiah 53:12 tells us, “He poured out His soul to death. Lastly, Jesus did more as a good shepherd than give His life in our place. John 10:11.

(2) **Jesus came not only to give us, His sheep life, but what's more, to give us life abundantly, literally more abundantly.** Listen to John 10:10,11. “I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. This word life, **zoe**, in v. 10 means life in the absolute sense, as God has life, eternal life, and this **zoe** includes God's mercy in saving us from hell and giving us the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven. When we read “lays down His life, this word life is **psuche** and it means spirit, breath, or the breath of life that enlivens our bodies. But now added to our eternal life, Jesus says He gives us life abundantly or more abundantly. This word is **perissos**. It means beyond measure, exceeding all imagination, superabundant. Jesus promises us His divine surplus, His overflowing measure, something more than just life eternal, something added to fill our lives with joy. What is this super addition? What is this all about? What is God's super-addition to abundant life?

Jesus gives the miracle of leading us to a Christian spouse. He gives us a Christian home—with the miracle of children. He gives us peace in the midst of life's storms, a kiss from my wife when I walk in the door. For years, when my children heard my boots walk up the steps, they ran back to the bedroom and they ran down the hall, through the living room to the fireplace, where they jumped into my arms, a job we enjoy for His glory, and tears of joy as He uses us to lead a lost soul to turn to Jesus for new life in Christ. When we searched in the late seventies and early eighties, God gave us 4.67 acres of land and later turned it into 6.3 acres so we could build here for Him. On and on it goes, God gives children, grandchildren, and great...to hold us and say, “I love you,” clean clothes in the closet when we need them, the best meals on earth at home, a congregation of teachable brothers and sisters who yearn for the truth. Make your own list. Are you without Jesus? What are you waiting for? Jesus is waiting to be your door and shepherd. Amen.