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“I Am the Door”

(John 10:9-10)

There was a major change at the West Virginia capitol this year as security was tightened to allow access to the public through only two doors at the East and West Wings. Without a key card you must now pass through security and a metal detector and have belongings x-rayed before you can enter the statehouse. As you proceed into the building and seek to visit various offices, you notice that the security increases based on the “importance” of the leaders. You can walk right in to most House of Delegates’ offices. Senate offices, a bit more difficult as you must go through staff. Security is a great deal tighter with the Supreme Court. And you cannot just drop in to visit Governor Tomblin. When he is in his office, there is a state trooper or capitol police officer stationed at the door. Access is limited based on the rank of the official’s office. You must have an appointment to enter his presence. This may help us understand the most important of questions, how do we as sinful people, enter into the presence of our holy, righteous God? Jesus gives us the answer to this question when He says, “I am the door”.

John wrote his gospel, “...That we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we may have life in His name.” (John 20:31). To help us believe John records eight “I am” statements that help describe who Jesus is and all that He has done for us. In John 10 Jesus exclaims “I am the door...” and “I am the good shepherd...” This week we will at His claim “I am the door...” as He informs us that it is He alone who provides access to God for us.

The Background

In chapter ten Jesus uses what is referred to as an “figure of speech” (v. 6) of Middle Eastern shepherd life to further describe and define His claim to be God. Jesus is using an extended metaphor, simile, or object lesson to describe His identity as the Son of God. He refers to several different aspects of shepherd life: the sheep, the sheepfold, the shepherd, the door of the sheep, as well as thieves, robbers and hirelings.

As we consider Jesus’ declarations in chapter ten, we must first consider how His message is connected to the events of chapter nine. Jesus’ message follows the occasion of the healing of the blind beggar. After being questioned by the religious leaders, the man was cast out of the synagogue (excommunicated) when they refused to accept and believe this miracle was performed by Christ. It is to these events that Christ is alluding when He contrasts the care of a loving shepherd (Himself) with harm that the thieves, robbers, and hirelings (the religious leaders) would cause the sheep. In our next study we will study in

more detail the contrast between Christ (the Good Shepherd), and the religious leaders (the thieves and robbers).

The fold was a stone enclosure four to six feet high and topped with sharp thorn bushes to protect the sheep from wild animals or robbers. There was only one opening which was guarded by a watchman, either the shepherd himself or one hired to perform this task. The shepherd or watchman would himself lie in the doorway in order to keep the sheep in the fold and protect them from danger.¹

One of the shepherd’s principle duties was to provide food for his flock. As conditions changed throughout the season, the shepherd had to move the sheep from place to place in order to insure ample pasture. The sheep would be kept safe in the fold at night and then led out to pasture each morning. The shepherds may have had to construct a temporary fold from tangled thorn bushes if they were pasturing far from home.

Jesus uses three aspects of this pastoral illustration: the sheepfold, the shepherd, and the sheep. He is speaking of the sheepfold and its single opening when He proclaims, “**I am the door**”.

The Door Provides Access

The purpose of the door was to provide access and protection for the sheep. As “the door”, Jesus provides the only access to eternal life in the future and to abundant life here on earth.

Access To Eternal Life

The fold was a stone enclosure with only one opening. Here Jesus makes the claim to be the sole access to God. Notice He says **I am the door**. He continues, **“if anyone enters by me, he will be saved.”**

Jesus makes a straightforward assertion that He is the only way of salvation. The religious leaders taught that you were right with God by keeping the law and traditions in all their minute details. Jesus challenged this directly by proclaiming that He alone was the means to justification and righteousness before God. He would go on to share how this access would be provided; **“The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep”** (v. 11) and **“I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”** (v. 17-18) As sinners, we have no access to God or to eternal life. Jesus reveals that the only way to eternal life is provided through His suffering and death on the cross in our place. We enter this door by believing in Him.

Jesus describes the exclusive nature of this door elsewhere:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Matthew 7:13-14

And again in a passage we will consider in a future study:

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

John 14:6

Access to Abundant Life

Not only do we have access to eternal life, Jesus tells of the abundant life we can experience through Him. He says those who enter by Him not only will be saved, but that they “will go in and out and find pasture.” The shepherd provides for all the needs of the sheep. Jesus provides all we need for salvation, but also for finding true joy in our lives.¹

Jesus continues, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” The word “abundantly” speaks of great surplus or overflow. This sounds like the kind of life of which Psalm 23 is speaking: **“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”** (Psalm 23:5-6)

Certainly this is the kind of life to which we all aspire. While our motivation for choosing to follow Christ is not so we might have this abundant life, it is ironic that the very things for which so many people strive and struggle can only be found through faith and life in Christ.

Peter writes of how Christ’s **“Divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”** (2 Peter 1:3-4). Christ provides for us all that we need to live a victorious, joyful Christian life. We can experience this abundant life when we, like sheep, choose to trust Christ and follow His leading in our daily lives.

The Door Provides Protection

Jesus’ illustration reveals that the fold, the door, and the shepherd provide protection. He speaks of those that are “thieves”, “robbers, and “strangers”. There are many today who would seek to lead people astray and keep them from the true way to eternal life. These may come in the form of cults who travel door to door or TV “evangelists” who tout a works and prosperity gospel. There is much false teaching that may lead even true believers away from dependence upon the word of God for the abundant life God would have for His followers. It is faith in Christ and in the truth of the Word of God that will protect us from those who would try to deceive us and lead us astray.

God’s greatest provision for abundant life and for protection from false teachers is His Word, the Bible! We must make a commitment to study it, learn it, and apply it to our lives if we are to find the blessings of the “pastures” He has provided for us!

Have you entered the door to eternal life by believing in Christ and His work on the cross?

As believers, we can rejoice in the access to God which Christ provides for us:

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

8:00 AM Governor’s Conference Room (Sec. of State’s Ofc)

12:00 Noon Treasurer’s Conference Room (EB54,

Basement of East Wing)