

John 10: 1-10; “The Door of the Sheep”, Sermon # 56 in the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on March 29th, 2020, in the Morning Worship Service.

In this section of Scripture Jesus is continuing on in His conversation with the blind man whom He had given his sight back to, in chapter 9. He is still speaking to him, as well as to the Pharisees mentioned in verse 40, telling them that He had come into the world for judgment; that those who did not see may see, and that those who saw (or thought that they saw) may become blind. The Pharisees had asked Jesus – Well, are we blind also? And Jesus had to say to them – If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, We see. And therefore, your sin still remains. Jesus then begins to set forth to them a figurative saying in the form of what is called a Paroimia (παροιμιαν) in verse 6. A Paroimia is a figurative illustration. This is not exactly a Parable because the Gospel of John contains no Parables. The very term, Parable, (παραβολην) you will find, only occurs in the Synoptic gospels such as Matthew 13: 24, and in Hebrews 9: 9 and 11: 19. A Parable is an earthly story with a spiritual meaning and application.

Here in chapter 10 Jesus is using illustrative word pictures to convey the reality of His being the Spiritual Shepherd of all believers. He is using this illustration in relation to who really has eternal life, how you can be saved by entering through this Door, how His Church is a sheepfold, and how you can be led and guided by Him to heaven at last. This illustration, Jesus knew, would only be understood by those who have true spiritual discernment. And so, what I want to do at this hour is to open up these illustrative words by telling you, 1st of all – Of the sheepfold, the door, and the thief. (verses 1 and 2, and 7-10a) 2nd – Of the Doorkeeper who opens the door, and the Voice of the Shepherd. (verses 3-6) And 3rd – Of the Life that the Good Shepherd died to bring to the sheep. (verses 10 and 11) Let us pray to understand these verses better so that we will clearly be hearing the voice of the Shepherd, and not listen to the voice of strangers.

Let’s consider together, the sheepfold, the door, and the thief.

(verses 1 and 2, and 7-10a)

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” “But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” “Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.’ “All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.” “I am the door.” “If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” Our Lord Jesus Christ plainly declared Himself to be the door of the sheep. He is the only Way to eternal life. He is the Truth of God personified. He is the only Teacher, Prophet, Savior, and Lord possessing eternal life and giving it to those who believe in Him.

In John 9: 35 Jesus had heard that the Jews had cast this man out of the synagogue, whom He had given sight to. And so, He came to Him and the first thing that He said to him was this: Do you believe in the Son of God? And He answered and said – Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him? And Jesus said to him – You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you. And then this seeing man responded – Lord, I believe! And he worshiped Him. Faith in Jesus is the most important thing in this life, for faith in the Lord Jesus is the only way to enter the sheepfold. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” That is, all of us who will believe on Him for eternal and everlasting life.

For it says in 1st Peter chapter 2: verses 24 and 25 - “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.” “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd

and Overseer of your souls.” What is the sheepfold that Jesus is describing? It is the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, both Old Testament and New. The sheepfold is the place where the sheep are housed; that is, the church gathered, in every particular place. In the days of Christ, a sheepfold was a set of stone walls forming a circle or a square, and it always had a door where the sheep could be let in and go out. Sheep in our illustration are those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, or they will believe when they come in through the door; through faith in the promise of salvation. You come to Christ Himself, believing in the glory of His Person. You believe in His finished work of perfect obedience to God’s law. You believe that He suffered there on the cross for you, the sinner, for you believe that He has made satisfaction there for your sins. This is the only way to be forgiven by God; the only way to eternal life.

In believing in Him, in His life and death and resurrection, which were all for all believing sinners, you enter the sheepfold. He brings you into this sheepfold by faith, and you are now no longer a wandering sheep, or a lost sheep, because the Lord Jesus has spiritually laid you on His shoulders and He has brought you into His kingdom by the New Birth. He brings you into His sheepfold by placing you spiritually into His own spiritual mystical body which is the Universal Church. In this sheepfold you are cared for, you are fed and you provided for by this Good Shepherd. And you will go in and out and find pasture; that is good spiritual food, because you are feeding upon His word.

But sometimes this illustration that Jesus is giving is confusing to even Christians, because they do not know what is meant by the person climbing up by some other way; the person who is a thief and a robber. It is not just any unbelieving person who is being talked about here. So who is it referring to? This person, it says, climbs up some other way, and he is a thief and a robber. He doesn’t want to get into the Lord’s fold to be saved and be under His authority and care. Rather, he is trying to steal that which belongs to the Lord. It is true that in one sense all unbelievers are thieves and robbers. They try to climb up some other way into the kingdom of God; into heaven itself. Unbelievers are people, some of them, who like to steal, and kill, and to destroy, spiritually speaking. They take glory to themselves and God’s glory they despise.

But this illustration is talking more specifically about the unbelieving leaders of the nation of Israel, and anyone all through Church History who tries to take Christ’s sheep away from Him and use them for his own purposes. It is talking about all the false prophets and teachers who were stealing authority away from God, and robbing Him of His glory by their hypocritical and deceitful thoughts, words, and actions. They were never appointed by God, they were never chosen by Him to be in authority over the people of God, or to shepherd them as pastors. “The difference between a thief and a robber, with the Jews, was, that the former took away a man’s property privately or secretly, the latter did it openly.” (Gill on John 10: 2)

This was what the scribes and Pharisees and leaders of Israel were doing with the Old Covenant people of God. They led them away from the truth of the word of God by adding to God’s word things which were never commanded. They turned the people away from Christ Himself, when He came to them in His public ministry, preaching salvation through faith in Himself, as the Son of God and their Messiah. They believed that salvation was based upon the works of the law, and their supposed ability to keep God’s law. They lorded their authority over the people and they forced them to believe in this false system of works-righteousness as the basis of salvation. This is why Jesus said – All who ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, in verse 8. Many who were false prophets and false teachers in the history of Israel would not believe that they needed the Christ who was promised to them. They would not go through the door of salvation in Christ, and they would hinder those who tried to do so.

This was especially true in the days of Christ’s ministry. As a thief is determined to take away the property of someone else, and the robber is a person who would use force and violence to take away a person’s goods, so would these Pharisees and the scribes. They would not go

through the door of Christ but they climbed over the wall of the sheepfold because the door was locked to them. Matthew 23: 14 – “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” “For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.” “Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.” You see, these men were sheep stealers! They took away the property and the spiritual lives of people by their unkind and unloving ways; deceiving people into thinking that they were so spiritual, and yet inside, they were full of hypocrisy!

How can we apply this to ourselves? First of all, let us see that the Lord Jesus is the door of the sheep. He alone can give you entrance to salvation, and to His Church, and to eternal life. And second, let us see what kind of men deserve to be undershepherds to our souls. It is not those who climb over the wall and who won’t go through the door. It is not those who believe that their own sacramental or moral works will bring them salvation, or get them to heaven. It is not those who act in unkind and unloving ways toward the sheep, to somehow steal them away from good influences of Christ’s truth and His grace, and then try to gain authority over them to use them for their own purposes. It is those who bear the good fruit of the Spirit, and show love, care, and thoughtful consideration in their attitudes, their words, and their actions, as they communicate the word.

Jesus says in Matthew 7: 15 – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” “You will know them by their fruits.” “Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?” “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” “Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” If this is the case, then let us only appoint those to authority in the church who will show forth by good conduct that their works are done in the meekness of wisdom. (James 3: 13)

2nd – Of the Doorkeeper who opens the door, and the Voice of the Shepherd.

(verses 2-6)

“But he who enters the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” “To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” “Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” “Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.” So, we have seen that Christ is the door and the Shepherd of the sheep; that is, He is the door for all who believe in Him.

We have also seen that there are false pastors, false teachers and leaders, who do not go through the door into the sheepfold, the Church of Jesus Christ, but they try to climb over the wall, and they try to steal the people’s hearts away from Christ, and from their being saved, from their being taught, their being led by the truth of the word, and spiritually provided for. This being deceived by the devil and false teachers can be prevented by anyone, if they will believe in the word of God as it is taught by faithful undershepherds in Christ’s Church. When Christ brings His sheep out of the sheepfold, out of the gathered church, and into the world to serve Him and to live for Him, to work for Him, He goes before them in and through His teaching of them by the faithful pastors of a particular local church.

We are told here in verse 3, that faithful pastors are those who have gone through the door which is Christ, themselves, in order that they might assume the proper authority over God’s people in the sheepfold of a local church. To them, the doorkeeper opens. There is a double meaning here in verses 2 and 3; to both pastors who are raised up to do the faithful work of the ministry and also to Christ the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Who does the doorkeeper represent? Well, first of all, I believe that we can reasonably conclude that in respect to His own beloved Son, that God the Father is the Porter or the Doorkeeper who has ordained Him to His

office, as the only Mediator between God and Man. He opened to Christ the door of His building His Church, this whole spiritual sheepfold. He opened it for Him to redeem the sheep, to rule over them, to watch over them, and to provide for all of their spiritual needs. He opened it so that having saved them, that His dear Son would protect them from all of their spiritual enemies, by laying down His life for them. The Father has opened the Door for Him to do this in His raising Him from the dead, in His having Him to ascend to rule at His right hand, and in His giving all judgement in heaven and earth to Him.

He opened the Door to Him based upon the fact that He knew that His Son, His Lord Christ, was worthy of this Office as the Shepherd of all of God's sheep, because of the blood of the everlasting covenant. Hebrews 13: 20 – "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you complete to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever." "Amen." The Father, also then, opened the Door for Him on the day of Pentecost, so that His Son might begin to see the travail of His soul; that is, what He worked for at the cross, and died for on the cross, and be satisfied. The Door was being opened by the Father for His Son to be established upon His throne, and be satisfied in the conversion of many who formerly were approving of His being put to death.

But the Porter who opens the Door should also be understood by us as referring to the Holy Spirit. For it is the Holy Spirit who opens the everlasting doors of the hearts of men, of Christ's sheep, and He is the One who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and He glorifies Christ, for He took of what was Christ's and He declared it to the apostles first, and then through them, to all the people of God through their word. And so it is by His opening a door in the hearts of all who believe, that God's truth is applied to us, and we learn and grow in Christ. Since Christ is the Door of this sheepfold, His church, He is assisted by the Porter, the Holy Spirit in the gathering in of His sheep into this fold. We who are Christ's sheep, we hear Christ's voice in this wonderful way of the Holy Spirit's opening the door of our hearts, and in His speaking peace the peace and pardon of the Father and the Son to our souls when we first believe the gospel. He speaks comfort and blessing to us in all of our difficulties and distresses, when Christ hears our bleatings and our prayers.

We hear His voice speaking to us in and through the written word of God; we remember His precious promises of grace, and His presence being with us always, not only in our corporate worship with other believers in the church, but also in our personal walk with Him on the path of righteousness each and every day. A relationship with Christ is being cultivated. We hear His voice in the word, and we know the instruction, the guidance, and the real spiritual help of the Holy Spirit because He is the Spirit of Christ. Christ is the Good and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, and His rod and His staff they comfort us. We hear Christ's voice as He leads us into the green pastures of His word, and by the still waters of His gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, the waters of life, which we drink deeply from.

This is why true believers will not follow a stranger. Christ has gone before us and shown us by His Holy Spirit the difference between truth and error; to be able to tell what is true from the lies and falsehoods that strangers, people who do not know us and who do not know Him, do not know or understand. Over time, through our study of the Bible and the preaching of the word, we come to understand what false prophets look like spiritually speaking. We come to understand what misrepresentation and what bad treatment we are to expect from the people of the world, and from people who promote false religions.

But in the process of it all, Christ gives us His peace. The Holy Spirit opens the Door for this to happen. John 14: 22-28 – "Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?'" "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and

make Our home with him.” “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.” “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.” “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you,” “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

So, it is truly amazing what we read here in our text in verse 3; that our Lord calls His own sheep by name and He leads them out, and goes before them, and we follow Him. This is how we should view our experience of living our Christian life; one of understanding that our Lord knows us by name, and that He is leading us through this life. He has gone before us, and He is going before us, and this is how we follow Him, all through this life, and all the way to glory where we shall meet Him. We know His voice speaking to us in the word of God. But we also know His voice experientially, in connection with His blessed word in our heart, confirming His blessed word. It is not an audible voice, but it is the still small voice in our heart and mind, in connection with our thoughts, leading us to the right conclusion about the things that we think and having a real and powerful impact upon us, even though the Spirit’s working is imperceptible to us in this regard, in so many ways.

Listen to Thomas Goodwin – “But yet let me add this, that together with the indefinite promise to save, God, where He works faith, *He* conveys a secret hint, to the soul whom He draws to believe, of His mind, and good will, and inclination towards it.” “Christ doth some way or other break His mind to it, and God gives the heart a special ticket of favour from Himself, over and above that indefinite revelation in the word, ere the soul will come at Him, which is part of that teaching of the Father meant in John 6: 45 and 46 – “He that heard and learned of the Father, comes unto Me.” “God whispers in a man’s ear that which doth specially encourage him, and so Christ also doth by His Spirit.” “Thus it is said, John 10: 3, that Christ calleth His own sheep by name, and they hear His voice.”

“The meaning is, that whereas there is a general invitation goes to men’s ears to come to Christ, and a general indefinite proclamation, which all men living in the church do hear or may hear, – and this is the voice of us ministers, and God’s voice in and by us, – yet on their hearts whom God means to save, of special mercy towards, them; which voice only His own sheep hear, whom also He is said to call by name, to shew it is thus particular, it being a special intimation, as if a man were called by name, as Cyrus was called by name; and as of Moses God says that He knew him by name, i.e., took special notice of him, so doth Christ of those whom He calls by name, and that makes them follow Him.”

A little later, he says – “Now, concerning this secret hint or ticket give, which I make to be in faith, let me add this to prevent mistakes.” “I do not mean that it is always so loud a voice as shall quell and prevail against doubts in a man’s sense, so as to triumph with assurance that Christ is his.” “No that is not the extent of it; for we should ‘condemn a generation of righteous men,’ if I or any other should teach so; but it is such a special intimation as really gains the heart, and encourages it to come to Christ, and carries it on against discouragements, and it doth the deed so prevalently, as that they follow Christ wherever He goes, and will never leave Him.” “To explain my meaning further, you must consider, that in the speaking of a Spirit in and to our spirit, though the voice be entertained, yet it is not always distinctly discerned to be from another.”

“Satan, when he works effectually on the children of disobedience, 2nd Thessalonians 2: 9 and 10, so as he make them believe the lie of popery, yet their souls perceive not a voice of Satan distinct from their own thoughts, for then they would not believe the error; but their hearts close with the suggestions of the devil, and as soon as cast in they are entertained as their own thoughts, yet upon Satan’s effectual working.” “Thus when the Spirit of Christ from Christ

speaks the mind of Christ to the soul, to cause it to believe in Him that is true, it follows not it should discern that voice distinct from its own thoughts in its own sense, but his own thoughts from it effectually entertain such an apprehension so as to carry him on to Christ.” “And the reason is, because every thought in a spirit, such as a soul is, is a kind of speech; it is called λογος, and therefore the very speeches of the Spirit cast in are often not discerned from the man’s own.” (Taken from Vol. 8, P. 248 and 249 of Goodwin’s Works; the Objects and Acts of Justifying Faith) I would say – It is thus, however, that we hear the voice of Christ speaking to us in relation to the Scriptures in our very own spirit. We are not always able to distinguish our own thoughts from His blessed impressions made by the Spirit upon our souls. But we rejoice in knowing that we are hearing His voice, and we have it confirmed for us in and by the Scriptures of truth.

3rd – Of the Life that the Good Shepherd came to bring to the sheep. (verse 10)

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” I think that we can now understand how this is, can’t we; from what I have explained to you thus far? It is because Christ’s life in our life give us a life far more abundantly blessed than the life lived in the flesh, the life lived to ourselves; a life which is separated and alienated from God, living only for the passing pleasures of this world, and our own false ideas of what the meaning of life is? It is all meaningless ultimately; it is all vanity ultimately, without Christ. Christ came and He lived and died so that He could bring us infinitely more by His life being in our life, than we could ever have established for ourselves apart from Him.

And this ought to convince us that what Christ came to bring to us is far more than what we would have had if Adam had not fallen in the garden from his original righteousness. Adam had natural concreated original righteousness. His heart was inclined to God to do His will. He had the law of God written upon his heart as a part of the very image of God that he was created in. But he was created mutable; that is he was created with the possibility that he could change. He could fall if he disobeyed God’s command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And he fell. The reason that he fell was that he chose to act independently of God’s command, breaking it by listening to the voice of his wife, encouraging him to eat. What I want you to see that law of God written in his heart, as good and as perfect as it was in his very nature, could not give him the life that he needed to overcome that temptation to disobey God on that occasion. He needed a stronger life force than his own thoughts and his own free will in order to make the right decision and eat only from the tree of life.

This is why Christ had to come, if any man was ever to be saved. If ever a man was placed in the most ideal conditions to obey God, it was Adam. He had an upright nature with the law written upon his heart. But he could not do it. Christ came and He did do it, as the perfect Man. By the force of His sinless and perfect life, He fulfilled all of God’s righteous law, and died for our sins on the cross. He rose for our justification, and His life is now in our life in all of its radiant glory, in seed form. And His life is growing in us through the abundance of His grace; grace upon grace, so that we might live for righteousness and put sin to death; that we might joy and rejoice forevermore that we are united together in the likeness of His death and resurrection. We have live, not only physical life, but spiritual and eternal life in our soul if we have believed in Christ. Therefore, let us see that we have far more than Adam ever had, or would have had if he had stood and been confirmed in his own righteous. We are one spirit with Christ, and we have the mind of Christ. Let us glory in this fact as we live our lives to Him.

