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I AM THE DOOR: Entering Life Through Jesus



Part 6 (010826AM)

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Jesus is all we need. That is how He introduced Himself seven times. We are looking at the 3rd of His Seven I AM statements this morning. Each one is a way that He says to us, I AM all you need.

Have you found Him to be all you need? To help people understand that He was all they needed Jesus always used images people could grasp and hold onto. Our text this morning is one of the best examples of this. Here we find one of the most beloved picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Jesus takes the picture of the shepherd. Sheep and shepherds are inseparably woven into the language and imagery of the Bible from cover to cover. Even the very geography of the Land of the Bible makes sheep herding almost the only possible usage.

Most of Biblical Judea is a central plateau, stretching from Bethel to Hebron for a distance of about 35 miles and varying from 14 to 17 miles across. The ground is still rough and stony, so Judea was, much more a pastoral than an agricultural country. Thus in Christ's time the most familiar figure of the Judean uplands was the shepherd.

Jesus speaks of sheep and shepherds

In Christ's day, a shepherd's life was very hard. No flock ever grazed without a shepherd. No shepherd was never off duty. With little grass, sheep were bound to wander. With no fences, the sheep had constantly to be watched. On either side of the narrow plateau the ground fell sharply down to the hostile deserts. Unwatched sheep were always prone to stray away and get lost. Each shepherd's task was not only constant but dangerous. Not only did he watch out for accidents, he also was constantly on guard the flock against wild animals, especially against wolves. Two footed predators also prowled about because there were always thieves and robbers ready to steal the sheep.

Constant vigilance, fearless courage, patient love for his flock, were the necessary characteristics of the shepherd. That is what the 19th century commentator George Adam Smith, who traveled in Palestine, writes:

"On some high moor, across which at night the hyaenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, leaning on his staff, and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to their king, and made him the symbol of providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice."

The Bible makes frequent use of this analogy. Many of the great men of the Old Testament were shepherds (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David). As national leaders, Moses and David were both "shepherds" over Israel.

[John 10:1-10](#)

God's Word is filled with shepherding pictures

Do you remember how often God's Old Testament prophets described the Lord as the Shepherd, and the people of Israel as his flock? Here are only a few of them:

- "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want" ([Psalm 23:1](#)).
- "Thou didst lead thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" ([Psalm 77:20](#)).
- "We thy people, the flock of thy pasture, will give thanks to thee for ever" ([Psalm 79:13](#)).
- "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou who leadest Joseph like a flock" ([Psalm 80:1](#)).
- "He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" ([Psalm 95:7](#)).
- "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" ([Psalm 100:3](#)).

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Just a quick scan of the New Testament shows how this imagery flows into the New Testament.

- Jesus often has pity upon the people because they are as sheep without a shepherd ([Matthew 9:36](#); [Mark 6:34](#)).
- Jesus is the Good Shepherd who will risk his life to seek and to save the one straying sheep ([Matthew 18:12](#); [Luke 15:4](#)).
- Jesus calls His disciples his little flock ([Luke 12:32](#)).
- Jesus warns that when he, the shepherd, is smitten the sheep are scattered ([Mark 14:27](#); [Matthew 26:31](#)).

Peter declares that Jesus is the shepherd of the souls of men ([1 Peter 2:25](#)).

Jesus is promised by the writer of Hebrews as the great shepherd of the sheep ([Hebrews 13:20](#)). To understand Jesus as the Great Shepherd was a deeply cherished image in the church. One of the most comforting symbols usually found in the earliest known Christian art, are the Good Shepherd symbols along the dark passages of the Roman catacombs. The early church remembered Jesus as its shepherd, and applied Old Testament passages to him that pictured God as shepherd.

Christ's model leaders of His Church are called shepherds and the people are the flock.

Christ's last command to Peter that he should "feed his lambs and his sheep" ([John 21:15-19](#)). Paul urges the elders of Ephesus to "take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers" ([Acts 20:28](#)).

Christ's obedient leaders are called to "feed the flock of God, to accept the oversight willingly and not by constraint, to do it eagerly and not for love of money, not to use the position for the exercise of power and to be an example to the flock" ([1 Peter 5:2, 3](#)).

Even the very word *pastor* ([Ephesians 4:11](#)) is the Latin word for *shepherd*.

So the word shepherd should paint a picture to us of the unceasing vigilance and patience of the love of God; and it should remind us of our duty towards our fellow-men, especially if we hold any kind of office in the Church of Christ.

The 1st century shepherd

The relationship between sheep and shepherd is quite different in Palestine. In Britain the sheep are largely kept for killing; but in Palestine largely for their wool. It thus happens that in Palestine the sheep are often with the shepherd for years and often they have names by which the shepherd calls them. It is strictly true that the sheep know and understand the eastern shepherd's voice; and that they will never answer to the voice of a stranger. W. M. Thomson in *The Land and the Book* has the same story to tell. "The shepherd calls sharply from time to time, to remind them of his presence. They know his voice, and follow on; but, if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. I have made the experiment repeatedly." That is exactly John's picture. Every detail of the shepherd's life lights up the picture of the Good Shepherd whose sheep hear his voice and whose constant care is for his flock.

The Judean shepherd had different ways of doing things from the shepherds of our country; and, to get the full meaning of this picture, we must look at the shepherd and the way in which he worked. His equipment was very simple.

1. He had his **□□□□□**, a bag made of the skin of an animal, in which he carried his food. In it he would have no more than bread, dried fruit, some olives and cheese.
2. He had his *sling*. The skill of many of the men of Palestine was such that they "could sling a stone at a hair and not miss" ([Judges 20:16](#)). The shepherd used his sling as a weapon of offence and defense; but he made one curious use of it. There were no sheep dogs in Palestine, and, when the shepherd wished to call back a sheep which was straying away, he fitted a stone into his sling and landed it just in front of the straying sheep's nose as a warning to turn back.
3. He had his *staff*, a short wooden club which had a lump of wood at the end often studded with nails. It usually had a slit in the handle at the top, through which a thong passed; and by the thong the staff swung at the shepherd's belt. His staff was the weapon with which he defended himself and his flock against marauding beasts and robbers.
4. He had his *rod*, which was like the shepherd's crook. With it he could catch and pull back any sheep which was moving to stray away. At the end of the day, when the sheep were going into the fold, the shepherd held his rod across the entrance, quite close to the ground; and every sheep had to pass under it ([Ezekiel 20:37](#); [Leviticus 27:32](#)); and, as each sheep passed under, the shepherd quickly examined it to see if it had received any kind of injury throughout the day.

Jesus is the door

He began by saying: "I am the door." In this parable Jesus spoke about two kinds of sheep-folds. In the villages and towns themselves there were communal sheep-folds where all the village flocks were sheltered when they returned home at night. These folds were protected by a strong door of which only the guardian of the door held the key. It was to that kind of fold Jesus referred in verses 2 and 3. But when the sheep were out on the hills in the warm season and did not return at night to the village at all, they were collected into sheep-folds on the hillside. These hillside sheep-folds were just open spaces enclosed by a wall. In them there was an opening by which the sheep came in and went out; but there was no door of any kind. What happened was that at night the shepherd himself lay down across the opening and no sheep could get out or in except over his body. In the most literal sense the shepherd was the door.

That is what Jesus was thinking of when he said: "I am the door." Through him, and through him alone, men find access to God.

"Through him," said Paul, "we have access to the Father" ([Ephesians 2:18](#)).

"He," said the writer to the Hebrews, "is the new and living way" ([Hebrews 10:20](#)).

Jesus opens the way to God. Until Jesus came men could think of God only as, at best, a stranger and as, at worst, an enemy. But Jesus came to show men what God is like, and to open the way to him. He is the door through whom alone entrance to God becomes possible for men.

I AM THE DOOR OF life to my SHEEP (10:7,9) - He INVITES us lost sheep back into God's Family, but apart from Him is only hopeless exclusion. In the ancient world there were sheep folds built of stones or made from caves, dotting the hills and valleys of Israel. The door was made so that the shepherd himself would lay down at night and become the door so that no sheep could wander out without stumbling over him and no predator could slip in without stirring him. So Jesus says I keep you safe from harm and secure from wandering away from my salvation! This is the third of 7 "I AM" statements of Jesus ([see 6:35](#); 8:12). Here, He changes the metaphor slightly.

Notice that in vv. 1-5 Jesus was the shepherd, now in v. 7-9 here He is the gate.

And in vv. 1-5, Jesus the shepherd led the sheep out of the pen, here He is the entrance to the pen (v. 9) that leads to proper pasture.

This is Christ's explanation of His words in [14:6](#) that He is the only way to the Father. The point is that He serves as the sole means to approach the Father and partake of God's promised salvation. As some Near Eastern shepherds slept in the gateway to guard the sheep, Jesus here pictures Himself as the gate. [1]

Jesus explains in v. 27-28 what we as believers would experience:

1. The DOOR that leads to Christ's family—"My sheep"
2. The DOOR that opens Christ's Word—"My voice" Mary Jn20, Emmaus opened
3. The DOOR that opens Christ's fellowship—"I know them"
4. The DOOR that opens Christ's guidance—"They follow me"
5. The DOOR that opens us to everlasting life—"I give unto them eternal life"
6. The DOOR that leads to deliverance from judgment—"They shall never perish"
7. The DOOR that leads to strength and security—"Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"

Jesus is the secure door

Jesus opened His sermon with a familiar illustration ([John 10:1-6](#)), one that every listener would understand. The Middle Eastern ^[2] sheepfold was very simple: a stone wall, perhaps six feet high, surrounded it, and an opening served as the door. The shepherds in the village would lead their sheep into the fold at night and one of the shepherds would sleep at the opening of the fold and actually become "the door." Nothing could enter or leave the fold without passing over the shepherd. . In the morning, the shepherds would come, call their sheep, and assemble their own flocks. Each sheep recognized his own master's voice.

Christ points out that the true shepherd comes through the door (v. 1), calls his sheep by name, which recognize him (v. 3), and leads the sheep, which follow (vv. 4-5). False shepherds and strangers, who are thieves and robbers, try to get into the fold some subtle way, but the sheep will not recognize or follow them. Jesus Christ is the door, and as such He leads the sheep "in and out." The blind man in chapter 9 was "cast out" (excommunicated) by the false shepherds because he trusted Jesus, but he was taken into the new fold by Christ.

Our True Shepherd ^[3] described ([John 10:1-6](#)). In Israel sheep were not herded with dogs or by men who walked behind them. The shepherd of the Middle East led his sheep. He knew each one by name, and the sheep recognized his voice. At night several herds of sheep might sleep in the same fold. In the morning, when the one door was unbarred, each shepherd could unerringly pick out his own flock. And each member of that flock would be able to distinguish his shepherd from the others because the sheep would know the shepherd's voice, just as God's people would recognize Jesus as the living Word of God.

Jesus is the perfect door

Our true shepherd offered ([John 10:7-17](#)). Now Jesus condemned the leaders of Israel, saying, "All who ever came before Me were thieves and robbers." Such men care "nothing for the sheep." Jesus, on the other hand, is the Good Shepherd.

- Jesus as our door opens to us security. The Judean shepherd commonly slept in the single opening to the fold through which wild animals might attack. As "the door" Jesus protects His own, by placing His body between the sheep and their enemies.
- Jesus as our door opens to us salvation. Jesus v. 11 as our door leads us to salvation. How deep is the commitment of the Good Shepherd to His sheep? "The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."
- Jesus as our door opens to us satisfaction. Christ the Good Shepherd guides His sheep to pasture, concerned not only that they have life, but that they v. 10 "have it to the full." This life is abundant in the sense that it is inexhaustible. It never runs out. And it is never-ending because it comes from the eternal, inexhaustible God. Therefore it may be superior to the unbeliever's life in that it is full of hope and of the blessings of God. We have victory over sin because of the "super-abundance" of God's grace ([Rom 5:20](#)). There is a sense that living the God-directed life is akin to following the instruction manual rather than rebelliously making our own way. Eugene Peterson has aptly rendered this final phrase of verse 10 as "more and better life than they ever dreamed of."
- Jesus as our door opens to endless joys. Jesus ^[4] claims that he came that men might have life and might have it more abundantly. The Greek phrase in v. 10 used for *having it more abundantly* means to have a *superabundance of a thing*. To be a

follower of Jesus, to know who he is and what he means, is to have a superabundance of life. A Roman soldier came to Julius Caesar with a request for permission to commit suicide. He was a wretched dispirited creature with no vitality. Caesar looked at him. "Man," he said, "were you ever really alive?" When we try to live our own lives, life is a dull, dispirited thing. When we walk with Jesus, there comes a new vitality, a superabundance of life. It is only when we live with Christ that life becomes really worth living and we begin to live in the real sense of the word.

- Jesus as our door opens to us real victory. Finally ^[5] as the Door in v. 9, Jesus delivers sinners from bondage and leads them into freedom. They have salvation! This word "saved" means "delivered safe and sound." It was used to say that a person had recovered from severe illness, come through a bad storm, survived a war, or was acquitted at court. Some modern preachers want to do away with an "old-fashioned" word like "saved," but Jesus used it! When you go through "the Door," you receive life and you are saved. As you go "in and out," you enjoy *abundant* life in the rich pastures of the Lord. His sheep enjoy fullness and freedom. Jesus not only gave His life *for* us, but He gives His life *to* us right now!

Jesus is the only door

In this case the **gate** is not so much an armor-plated security door as it is a limited, unique entryway. Jesus says "**whoever enters through me** (the gate) **will be saved.**" The important verb translated "save" is used relatively infrequently in John. Here it is a future passive form (□□□□□□□□□□, □□□□□□□□□□ from the verb □□□□□□, □□□□□□). The future tense indicates a promise for Jesus' hearers and for John's readers. For a sheep "salvation" is characterized by the idyllic state of safe passage and ready pasture. For the believer "salvation" is to be under the perfect shepherding care of God, to trust him for every need. In John, Jesus is presented as the only true way to gain access to this matchless relationship with God.

The image of Jesus as the gate or door contributes to a controversial aspect of John's Gospel: the exclusive claims of the gospel. It is fashionable today to speak of many ways of accessing God. In our age of tolerance as a virtue, many want to say that all religious roads end up at the same place. Buddhism, Islam, Native American Spirituality, African Traditional Religions, Mormonism; all of these are spiritual journeys that sincere seekers may travel to find God. To think that one religion is superior to others smacks of the social error of intolerance. And to even suggest that one religion is true and others are false is narrow-minded bigotry that has no place in our postmodern ethic. Yet that is precisely what is going on here. Jesus is not just a new way or a better way to God. He is **the gate**, the *only way* to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). It is this truth ^[6] that makes his statement the "Gospel in miniature."

Jesus is the only door we ever need

Twenty-three times in all we find our Lord's meaningful "I AM" (□□□□□□□□, Gr.) in the Greek text of this gospel (4:26; 6:20,35,41,48,51; 8:12,18,24,28,58; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1,5; 18:5,6,8). In several of these, He joins His "I AM" with seven tremendous metaphors which are expressive of His saving relationship toward the world. IN other words, the Christian life may be described in these seven declarations of Jesus. The Christian life is:

1. **I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE** (6:35) - He FEEDS OUR STARVING SOULS, but apart from Him is only unsatisfied hunger. The internal gnawing pain that hunger brings is the illustration of our condition apart from Christ. He alone feeds our soul and satisfies our hungers, all else is emptiness, hopelessness and empty mirages. *Jesus said I am your food that satisfies, I am the Bread you need. I have settled the longings of your soul, I can satisfy all the hungers of your life. What do you really hunger for? HUNGERING FOR JESUS AS MY BREAD OF LIFE. "I AM the Bread of life" (6:35,41,48,51).*
2. **I AM THE LIGHT OF WORLD** (8:12) - He LIGHTS OUR DARKENED SOULS, but apart from Him is only impenetrable darkness. Jesus said I am the Light, I have settled the darkness of fear, the darkness of death, the darkness of dying, it is all settled by Me! **WALKING WITH JESUS WHO LIGHTS MY PATH OF LIFE. "I AM the Light of the world" (8:12).**
3. **I AM THE DOOR OF life to my SHEEP** (10:7,9) - He INVITES us lost sheep back into God's Family, but apart from Him is only hopeless exclusion. Jesus said I am the Door of Life, all your security and access needs are settled, by Me! In the ancient world there were sheep folds built of stones or made from caves, dotting the hills and valleys of Israel. The door was made so that the shepherd himself would lay down at night and become the door so that no sheep could wander out without stumbling over him and no predator could slip in without stirring him. So Jesus says I keep you safe from harm and secure from wandering away from my salvation! **ENTERING THROUGH JESUS WHO IS MY DOOR TO LIFE. "I AM the Door of the sheep" (10:7,9).**
4. **I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD** (10:11) - He LEADS US HOME, but apart from Him is only aimless wandering. Jesus said I am the Good Shepherd who died, I have settled the issue of the unknown. I am your companion through life and death. Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live and how to die! **FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF MY LIFE. "I AM the Good Shepherd" (10:11,14).**
5. **I AM THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE** (11:25) - He pours upon US endless LIFE, but apart from Him is only endless dying. Jesus says I am the Resurrection, I am the Life. I have settled the issue of Hope, you can count on me, hope in me all through life and into death! **RESTING IN JESUS WHOSE RESURRECTION GAVE ME ENDLESS LIFE. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25).**
6. **I AM THE WAY, TRUTH & LIFE** (14:6) - He secures us in the way of endless life, but apart from Him is only endless lostness. Jesus said I am the way, I have settled the issue of your home. I am making it, your very own room, and the minute that it is ready I am coming to get you! **FOLLOWING THE WAY OF JESUS, BELIEVING THE TRUTH OF JESUS, AND LIVING THE LIFE OF JESUS. "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (14:6).**
7. **I AM THE TRUE VINE** (15:1) - He NURTURES us through life, apart from Him is only continual withering. Jesus says I am the Vine, your source of life and health. The state of your health is all in my hands. I will provide for you living grace, enduring declining life grace, and dying grace. Each just when you need them! If the vine speaks of all of life as one growing season, then we should get more fruit filled the older we get (ala Psalm 92), if it is many seasons then life is a succession of growing /pruning /bearing /resting and then growing/pruning... **ABIDING IN JESUS WHO IS MY SUPPLY OF ALL I EVER NEED. "I AM the true Vine" (15:1,5). Psalm 92**

[1] John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

[2] **Warren W. Wiersbe**, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

[3] **Richards, Lawrence O.**, *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

[4] **Barclay, William**, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John - Volume 2 Chapters 8-21 (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

[5] **Materials from Larry Richards; Wiersbe, Warren W.**, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[6] **Bryant, Beauford H.; Krause, Mark S.**, *The College Press NIV Commentary: John*, (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company) 1999, c1998.

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