

I AM The Door Of The Sheep

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[0:00] That's good to be able to come together and gather round God's word. For those that are visiting, we are currently going through a series of the seven I am sayings! of Christ in the Gospel of John.

And this week we're looking at I am the door of the sheep. And we pray that God will indeed bless us as we come and gather around his word and see what God has to teach us through it. We read in John chapter 10 and just as we come to the passage, it's maybe better just to get a wee bit of context around how this passage starts.

We didn't have time to read the whole of John chapter 9, which recounts the healing of the blind man on Sabbath day. And we see that as Jesus passed by, he saw a man that had been blind from birth.

And his disciples asked him whether this man had sinned or was it his parents? And it says that it was not this man that sinned or his parents, but that the work of God might be displayed in him.

[1:17] And as we carry on through the passage, we see that the man was healed, but the Pharisees weren't happy.

They weren't happy that the man had been healed on the Sabbath day. They took the man in. They wanted to investigate what had happened. They questioned the man as to whether he had been born blind and who it was that had given him back his sight.

Not only were they not happy with the answer that the young man had given to them, but they called in his parents to find out, was this their son and had he been born blind?

They said, yes, this is our son. But being afraid of the Pharisees, they weren't prepared to tell how he had received his sight.

So again, they brought in the man for a second set of questioning. And they weren't again happy with the answers that they were given. Then, the man actually questioned the Pharisees, asking, why are you asking me these questions?

[2:37] Do you also want to become one of his disciples? At which point the Pharisees got angry. They hurled insults at him and told him that they were disciples of Moses.

And they were that angry in the end with the young man that they threw him out of the synagogue. And then we come in the passage, in the next slide there, we see that Jesus went and found the man that had been put out of the synagogue.

And he questions the young man with the question, do you believe in the son of man? And the man answered, who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?

And Jesus reveals himself to the man that was once blind and says to him, you have seen him and it is he who is speaking to you. And then he goes on to say, for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind.

And the Pharisees who were near at hand asked the question, are we also blind? And Jesus says to them, if you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say we see, your guilt remains.

[3:54] So that's the context in which we enter into chapter 10 of John's Gospel. There's been this discussion, there's been a healing, and then there's been some discussion with the Pharisees around why Jesus had come and were the Pharisees actually still blind.

So with that context, we'll take for our text this morning, verses 7 to 9, from John's Gospel, in which we read, and we see there, 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. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

Our heading for this morning is quite simply, I am the door of the sheep. And instead of the usual three points, we'll have two.

We'll look at the protection that the door provides, and we'll look at the promise of the door. As we go on, we see that Jesus is teaching through a figure of speech.

[5:18] He's teaching about sheep and a sheepfold, and he's teaching about thieves and robbers. Firstly, why does Jesus teach about sheep? We read in Ezekiel about the shepherds who weren't tending the sheep of Israel, i.e. the people of Israel are referenced at various different points throughout the Old Testament, not as people, but as sheep.

And we see there where it says, you led people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. We looked at that a number of weeks ago. Psalm 95, 7 and 8, for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

Numbers of times throughout the Old Testament where the people of Israel are referred to as sheep. And then in Isaiah, behold, the Lord God comes with might and his arm rules for him. Behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young.

The picture of a caring shepherd tending the flock. But then we find that just as there are references in the Old Testament to the people of Israel being sheep, we see within the text here references to thieves and robbers.

[6:52] And the protection that the door provides is from these thieves and robbers, but it's also from the voices that so often seek to call the sheep away from the sheepfold.

If we take first of all the thieves and the robbers, why the thieves and robbers is significant here? Well, we looked at the context that came before in chapter 9. The Pharisees were against those that were seeking to follow Jesus. The Pharisees who were supposed to be leading the children in their religious worship, we see in the Old Testament again that they're referred to as robbers and as thieves.

We see there in Jeremiah has this house which is called by my name become my den of robbers. And we know that Jesus quoted that when he cleansed the temple. And then in Hosea 6 verse 9 as robbers lie in wait for a man so the priests span together.

They murder on the way to Shechem. They commit villainy. It's not a pleasant thing to be called a thief or a robber. Not in jest or not to actually end up going to court and be known as a thief and a robber.

[8:24] But here we have the priests and the Pharisees are referred to as thieves and robbers. What does that actually mean for us as we go on in the passage?

The passage doesn't open telling us directly that Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees. Certainly in the translation in the ESV it says truly, truly I say to you the NIV translated slightly different starts very truly I tell you Pharisees and points it right in the direction of the Pharisees.

But we also read that Jesus taught them in this way in a figure of speech but they didn't actually understand what Jesus is saying. The passage that we read in Ezekiel gives a stark picture of how the priests and leaders of the Jewish people had behaved towards the people and how having been supposed to lead and guide them and feed them spiritually we see that verse 4 here the weak you have not strengthened the sick you have not healed the injured you have not bound up the strayed you have not brought back the lost you have not sought and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

I don't know how many of you keep sheep here but I know from my own experience that if a sheep had a sore foot the shepherd would have been out tending it binding it up putting ointment on it if it was sick it may even have been in beside the radiator getting fed from a bottle tended and looked after the shepherd had a real care for it but here we see those that were charged with looking after the spiritual welfare of the children of Israel were seeking to build themselves up and robbing the people of the very things that they should have been given to them and trying to oppress them in so many different ways and Ezekiel's prophecy goes on therefore you shepherds hear the word of the Lord as I live declares the Lord surely because my sheep have become a prey and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals since there was no shepherd and because my shepherds have

not searched for my sheep but the shepherds have fed themselves and not fed my sheep therefore you shepherds hear the word of the Lord thus says the Lord

God behold I am against the shepherds and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves I will rescue my sheep from their mouths that they may not be food for them the promise of a rescue the shepherd in biblical times was a lowly position but we see here that in the prophecy the position of the shepherd has been elevated the one that's to lead and guide the people lead and guide the people and feed them spiritually we saw in the passage in chapter 9 that the Pharisees were guilty of elevating themselves their own importance driving their own agenda and the people were left and even when they saw a miracle they were that blind to what had happened their focus was on the day that the healing had taken place they couldn't see the miracle that had taken place that this man who had been born blind could now see all they could focus on was that this man had been healed on the [12:29] Sabbath they were so caught up in their own rules their own regulations that they were unable to actually worship God and encourage the people to worship God because of what had happened instead they cast the man out of the synagogue they didn't want to have anything to do with him they didn't want the people to be able to associate with him to find out more about what had happened but there is that promise I will rescue my sheep from their mouths I don't know if you saw in the readings or in the slides that we've had up already who was it that was to prophesy the son of man what did Jesus ask the man healed blind do you believe do you believe in the son of man that's a question for each and every one of us here this morning do you believe in the son of man the son of man that came to rescue each and every one of us from our sins man the man was asked the question and he immediately responded wanting to know who the son of man was and Jesus revealed himself and told him that it is him that you are speaking to him that you have seen and is speaking to you how often have you been here and have you heard God's word preached how often have you opened your

Bible how often have you prayed desiring to see Jesus who came as a son of man and you've walked away the blind man worshipped and the call for each and every one of us as we think about it this morning is do we believe in the son of man that we seek to worship him and worship him in spirit and in truth while the door provides us protection from thieves and from robbers it also protects us from the voices promises to protect us the interesting thing was that Jesus recognized that while the Pharisees tried to oppress the people while they tried to set their own rules and regulations the people did not listen to them the people avoided going along with everything that the Pharisees had to say and we see that there was a desire for them to follow Jesus if we move to the next slide there he who enters by 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 and when he has brought them out all when he has brought out all his own he goes before them and the sheep follow him for they know his voice in biblical times there was two different types of fields that were held or where the sheep were actually held there was the fields out on the hill and there was also a communal area but when they used to come in to the town there was a communal area where the sheep were held and there would have been a gatekeeper there for the sheep to be put in the shepherd would speak with the gatekeeper and put his sheep in and then he would go away and the gatekeeper would be there in the morning when the shepherd came to collect his sheep I often wondered what this passage actually meant did it actually work that a shepherd would go and call his sheep and they would follow him 1995 I don't know if you can remember that far back some of you but it was a white Christmas roads were closed and Gillian and I came over from Harris to stay with my parents over in Ness and we left Harris it was actually quite a nice day when we left Harris and we reached Bilallan and it was white out conditions and the roads were that bad I can actually say on the way up the road I get hit by a gritter on the way up the road anyway we made it to Stornoway and found out that the Barvis Moor was closed so sat for a while eventually got through to Ness behind a gritter and in the morning when we got up there'd been more snow overnight power was out and I was sitting having breakfast with my dad and he says right we're going out to get the sheep that are out in the moor and I thought sorry we're going to go and get the

sheep and take them in

I need to put them on the croft so I'll be able to feed them with the depth of the snow they won't be able to feed themselves so I thought right okay so I borrowed a pair of wellies from him got a jacket and the two of us set out out the road and it was quite a long and windy road I was longing for the day when my grandfather had his massive!

[18:13] and we had to walk and walk and walk and I felt like that seven year old boy saying are we nearly there yet as we carried on going out and out and out past where we used to cut the peats and eventually my father stopped and I thought are you okay yeah yeah you walk round there I said where he says there's a dip there just walk round the back of it don't say anything just walk round the back and when you reach the other side turn round and I'll tell you what to do so carried on followed his orders went round the side of this dip and as I was going round I looked in and I could see a couple of bumps in the snow and the signs of one or two horns anyway as I reached the other side and turned round expecting that I was supposed to run down into this dip and chase the sheep I won't repeat the call but my father made a call as he did and the sheep all stood up and he did a quick head count and they followed him all the way in the road and I was standing there going you didn't really need me here but it taught me an answer to that very question that when the shepherd calls the sheep and the sheep hear his voice the sheep will follow him

I learnt very clearly that day that my father had a bond with the sheep because he cared for them that when he heard his voice calling they knew that they were going to get fed they were going to get taken to warmth and that they were going to be looked after and I followed all the way in the road the same as the sheep and the only reason his two legged sheepdog was really there was to close the gates as we made our way back in to the croft but it was a lesson for me my sheep hear my voice and they follow are you hearing God calling you this morning have you heard that voice before and you ignored it because that promise is that he has come to rescue us to rescue us from the voices that so often come and try and tempt us from the path and even those that are within the sheepfold sometimes we hear voices that seek to take us away from the path are we close to the shepherd following him closely knowing that he is the door that he will protect us and he will keep us within his fold

I pray that that is indeed the situation for each and every one here this morning that you know the shepherd you hear him calling you and that you do indeed desire to know him better there was voices that the children of Israel followed in times past those that led them through the difficulties led them into the promised land we can read of Joshua how God appointed Joshua to lead the people and the people trusted Joshua and Joshua led them into the promised land and then there was David David was a man after God's own heart and David also led the people and we see that that God appointed David to lead and call the people and be their king and he was a good king and while

David led them we see there the reference to him being their shepherd that he would be upright of heart in shepherding them but while Joshua and David were good examples there was one promise that was the greatest example that was going to be our shepherd and is our shepherd if we put our trust in him he was the one that was promised as a prophet and that the people were to listen to people weren't listening here to the Pharisees they didn't like what they were hearing from the Pharisees but Jesus came and the people listened to him and the people sought to follow him and that's where the animosity came from the Pharisees the ones that are called the thieves and the robbers what little they got the Pharisees sought to take her away they argued back and forth all the time but Jesus promised that if you came to him if you were within the sheepfold he would protect you we move the slides on sorry and it says there behold the days are coming when I will raise up for

David a righteous branch the one that is promised the one that will be called the Lord is our righteousness that is the Lord Jesus Christ the one that we are here this morning to worship and not only are we here to worship that we're here to take refuge in we've looked at the protection of the door and just briefly we'll look at the promise of the door I am the door if anyone enters by me he will be saved not maybe not could be he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture we

read elsewhere in Acts chapter 4 salvation is found in no one else there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved

[24:41] I am the door if anyone enters by me he will be saved there's a promise and as we looked at the last time that we were here together a promise that we read in Revelation sorry in the Psalms we sang or quoted and will sing later this morning is that your prayer open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord this is the gate of the Lord the righteous shall enter through it I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation do you see the door before you this morning and Jesus calling you to come into the sheepfold because not only does Jesus or John write about

Jesus being the door of the sheep here there's another occasion where John writes of a door in the book of Revelation where he says behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into him and eat with him and he with me the one who conquers I will grant him to sit with me on the throne as I have also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne he who has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches do you have an ear this morning are you hearing the voice that is calling on you Jesus stands at the door and knocks he doesn't force his way in he doesn't come and plead he stands at the door and knocks asking you are you going to come in to his sheepfold do you hear him knocking this morning are you going to come and answer the door and let

Jesus come in to your life because there is indeed great salvation waiting for each and every one that comes Jesus said I am the door of the sheepfold he comes to protect us and he comes to give us a promise that we will be saved and we will go in and we will go out and we will find pasture we will find in him all that we need each and every day if we put our trust in him let us pray let us pray let us let us!

let us let us