

John 10:1-10  
I AM the Gate  
Sunday August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Today I am addressing the third “I am” statement of Jesus. It is important to understand these “I am” statements of Jesus for these “I am” statements are Jesus’ own explanation of who he was, and is, to this day.

In this series we are looking at who Jesus stated he was as a means of understanding who we are for we are disciples of Jesus Christ. And remember, a disciple of Jesus Christ is a person who seeks to model his or her life after Jesus’ life and teachings. We want to become like Jesus in what we say and what we do. When we know Jesus we know ourselves.

Now what do you think of when you think of a gate? Do you think of a garden gate,



a yard gate,



a pool gate?



Do you think of a cattle gate on a ranch?



Does a gate give you feelings of protection like a castle gate;



or feelings of being locked-in like a prison gate?



does it give you feelings of opportunity as in “opening a new gateway in life?”



What do you think about when you think about a gate?

I spent the first 6 years of my life on a Forest Service ranch and many years hiking, hunting and fishing in cattle country; so that when I think of a gate I think of a cattle gate for a cow pasture. I remember many times jumping out of a pickup to open a cattle gate and then closing it behind the truck once we drove through.



If you see a pick-up truck on a ranch with 3 cowboys in the front seat how can you tell who is the greenhorn cowboy? There is the driver. There is the cowboy in the middle of the seat and then there is the guy next to the passenger door..... Well, the guy by the door is the greenhorn, for he is the one always jumping out to open and close the gates.

The scripture we just heard read comes immediately after Jesus had healed a man born blind. The Pharisees had called this formerly blind man in to have him denounce Jesus, which he refused to do, even after being threatened with excommunication. So, Jesus was speaking in the midst of a very hostile environment.



Anyway, how many here have ever herded sheep? Owned sheep? Watched sheep or a shepherd? Well it seems to me most of you are just like me. Most of my life the closest I have gotten to sheep are wool socks or a leg of lamb. So...it is time for Sheep Herding 101 in the first century.

In verses 1-5 of our scripture today Jesus uses a parable to describe who he was. This is the only parable that appears in the gospel of John. Jesus, in this parable, describes one of the two ways that sheep were bedded down at night. In the parable it was how they did it in a small village. In verses 6-10 Jesus describes how sheep were bedded down in the wilderness.

In a small village at night all the various sheep herds, cared for by different shepherds, were put together in a walled pen guarded by a gate and a gate keeper. All the sheep were simply mixed together. There was no fear that the next morning that each shepherd would not get their sheep back, by being mixed together for sheep know the voice of their shepherd and they will follow only that person's voice.

Sheep are better than many dog breeds in following their master's voice. I know, I had beagles for a long time that only would come to me if I gave them food.

What shepherds feared were thieves and robbers. Thieves would jump the wall to steal a sheep. Robbers would bash the guard or shepherd and steal all the sheep.

We'll get to it a little later who the thieves and robbers were in Jesus' day and who and what they are today.

Anyway, the 2<sup>nd</sup> way of bedding down sheep occurs in the field. That's when the shepherd can't get back to the city and has to spend the night in the wild tending the sheep.

Now in this case, in areas used by the same shepherds over many years, they would build up rock enclosures with a single entrance, or gather brush into a circle and enclose the sheep within it. There were no doors or gates to these sheep pens in the wilderness so the shepherd himself would lie down across the entrance.



The shepherd would indeed be the gate! Literally, they **would lay down their life as the gate** for the sheep pen. I imagine they never slept very well for they were there to vigilantly protect their sheep from thieves, robbers, wolves and bears...

And for protection and defense of the sheep they had a “rod and a staff”. The rod was the classic shepherd’s crook to haul sheep out of places they fell into.



The shepherds also carried a staff. It was a short wooden club often with nails imbedded in the head. It was to ward off the predators and if necessary to dispatch them.



Truly, for sheep, in very hostile territory the presence of the shepherd’s rod and staff would comfort them. They were instruments of care and protection.

Now what this whole section is about is relationship; the shepherds’ relationship with the sheep and Jesus’ relationship with us. As Jesus said in verse 9, **“I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.”**

Jesus is our gateway to salvation, and we being made in his image, are gates for others to meet Jesus.

In Jesus' day in Palestine, sheep were raised mainly for their wool, not for their meat!!! Shepherds would shepherd the same sheep for years and years and each would have a name.

Each sheep every night would be examined individually as it entered the sheepfold for rest.



The Shepherd knew each sheep by name as Jesus knows and calls each of us by name. You see any farmer or rancher knows you don't name an animal you are going to eat unless you call it dinner, lunch or taco. To the shepherd each sheep was named and precious. To the thief or robber they were simply meat; so they indeed came to **“steal and kill and destroy.”**

We are going to watch a video clip now of shepherds in today's Israel who haven't changed sheep herding techniques in thousands of years. This video ends with a question that all have answered or need to answer.

## **ROLL CLIP “JESUS IS THE GATE”**

Indeed, have you entered the gate? Is Jesus for you “the way of salvation?” “The point here is not that others are outside the fold, but that you are in!!!” The choice is yours. This is not about sitting back comfortably and smugly and judging others, but rejoicing that you have been brought in,... if you want to be included in!!!

Jesus is the way to life (the gate) and he leads the way to life (as the Good Shepherd). Jesus is “the way to life”, because he himself is “life”. The mystery of when Moses first asked God who he was and God replied “I am who I am” is that God is the source of all being, all life.

God is the source and sustainer of everything. When Jesus used these “I am” statements he picked up the claim that he was God. He made that explicit in John 10:30 when he said, **“I and the Father are one.”**

Jesus leads the way to God because he is the gate who **“lays down his life for the sheep.”** “Jesus lays down his life for “the” sheep, not “his” sheep. It is an inclusive rather than an exclusive gift.” Just as John 3:16 reminds us that “God so loved “the” world.” The fearful mystery is the choice is ours if we want to be included in, and if we will invite others. **Will we enter the Gate and be the gate for others?**

As I have said, “We Christians from the front look like sheep



and from the back like Shepherds.”



There is always someone watching us and being lead by us and our example. We are their gate to God.

Now in verse 9 there is a phrase that needs explaining. Jesus says, **“I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.”**

The phrase, “come in and go out” is a Hebrew figure of speech that means to ‘live a life that is absolutely safe and secure.’ The sense is of “a country that is at peace and the forces of law and order are supreme.” In a Christian’s life it means when one discovers God in Jesus Christ there is a new sense of safety and security--worries and fears leave.



This lamb on the screen, to me, is living that sense of absolute peace and security.

Now what causes worries and fears? Who are the thieves and robbers Jesus was speaking about? In the context of the scripture it was the Pharisees who sought to exclude the blind man who was healed. Jesus included him in his flock.

‘Others feel Jesus was speaking about the false Messiahs that kept arising in Palestine who promised people if they followed them they would bring in the new golden age. Groups such as the zealots’ whose way was war, murder, assassination (who we would call terrorists) as opposed to Jesus’ way of peace, love and life abundantly.

The thieves were and are many. And today, in our individual lives, there are thieves and robbers who would take from us the peace and security Jesus would provide: thieves who silently steal our peace and drive us into worry and stress. These thieves when they steal our peace and security they keep us from being gates to Jesus. They keep us from opening the door to the abundant life that Jesus offers.

The evil one who whispers in our ears: **discouragement**. We hear the word that we cannot be saved. We’ve sinned too much so the Door is closed. We forget that nothing can separate us from the love God in Christ Jesus.

The thief of **drugs, alcohol, gambling and other addictions** visit us telling us they are the route to a good time, abundant life, and then those things we thought we could possess for our own enjoyment wind up possessing us.

The thief of a **sense of want** comes. It tells us that what we have is never enough. It says we need more and when we get more we will be happy and at peace, but no matter what we save or buy there is someone telling us we need more. So we buy more and then have to rent storage units and increase our insurance and install alarm systems to protect our stuff we worry over losing. We find again we don’t really

have the abundant life in our possessions, but again find we are possessed.

The material and the search for bigger, better, brighter develops a critical spirit in us for everything. Nothing is good enough for long enough and that includes the church and things of God. We ask, "What have you done for me lately God?" We critique every part of the church and worship and focus on the trivial instead of those in a lost world. We focus on the trivial; what we and ours can get from church and worship, instead of what we on God and what we can give in service.

Our life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions and how well they work and what they do. Our abundance comes from God, and we as an act of worship return a portion of what we have to God. In the end it's not about us it's about God. The abundant life Jesus promises comes in relationship with God through Christ.

It comes in relationship to those we hold most dear (mainly our family or those we have emotionally adopted and made our family.) And finally, the abundant life comes in that we have a purpose here on earth. From the front we look like sheep and from the back we look like shepherds. We are the gates to Jesus here on earth.

Most of all today, I want to invite you to open your hearts and lives to the One who said, "I am the Gate." Christ is the salvation of our souls. I invite you to walk through that gate into new life, abundant life, eternal live with Jesus. In the name of I AM, amen.

PRAYER: Every eye closed, head bowed. If you want this day at this moment to enter through the Gate into life, life eternal pray with me. Today God I ask to enter the Gate to new life. Forgive my sins, take from my life all that would steal my peace and and may I be a part of your flock forever more. If you prayed this prayer with me raise your hand! In Jesus name amen!

