

# I Am the Gate for the Sheep

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]      now can you turn with me in your bibles to john chapter 10 and we're going to read the first 10 verses together as we continue to think about the i am sayings that we find in john's gospel here we come to the third one where jesus declares i am the gate for the sheep and so let's hear god's word once again very truly i tell you pharisees anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep the gatekeeper opens the gate for him and the sheep listen to his voice he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out when he has brought out all his own he goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice but they will never follow a stranger in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice jesus used this figure of speech but the pharisees did not understand what he was telling them therefore jesus said again very truly i tell you i am the gate for the sheep all who have come before me are thieves and robbers but the sheep have not listened to them i am the gate whoever enters through me will be saved they will come in and go out and find pasture the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy i have come that they may have life and have it to the full amen let me begin asking a question that perhaps you have asked yourself deliberately or perhaps it's subconscious why are you here today why am i here today um what questions uh do we bring to church today uh to church today now each week i am fairly certain there will be some of us who will come with questions about the christian faith perhaps today the question will be about the the truth claims of jesus and and don't they sound really narrow and exclusive and so we're going to think together about the identity of jesus the uniqueness of jesus and also the welcome and the inclusion that we find in the gospel here in jesus talking about whoever comes to him it will be saved it's not based on background or performance perhaps there are some too who have questions about believing what is being christian all about how do i become a christian and again we'll hear jesus talk about listening to his voice listening to his words and following after him recognizing that he is the only way to god perhaps some of us if we're christians we come with questions about our faith how will this time that we spend together how will this show me more of the glory of jesus how will this help me to live by faith and again we'll hear our shepherd say to us he is the one who knows us and he cares for us and he provides for us and provides life to the full now where does this section fit before we get into it we need to recognize that it's following on from chapter nine in many ways it's a commentary from jesus on what's happened in chapter nine so let me just very briefly fill us in jesus has healed a man who was born blind and that sounds like good news to us instinctively but we find the religious leaders by the end of the chapter abusing him abusing his family and they throw him out of the synagogue

because he has faith in Jesus and the blind man meets Jesus once and then he meets Jesus again and as it becomes clear to the blind man that Jesus is the son of man he worships he says Lord I believe and he worships Jesus and two things become really clear from chapter nine two contrast in a sense and Jesus really cares about the blind man and the religious leaders the Pharisees they don't Jesus cares the Pharisees don't and following on from that Jesus is the way into God's kingdom not the way of the Pharisees so this contrast is being drawn and Jesus then in chapter 10 goes on to develop it further and he develops it through the two images of the shepherd and the gate if you're back next week we'll think some more about Jesus the good shepherd as he mixes these two images together uh two very simple points for us today first of all you're looking at the first six verses Jesus is the shepherd we must listen to Jesus the shepherd we must listen to so um he's given us a picture in words of a first century sheepfold in Palestine all of his teaching is based around something that the people that were listening to would know very well was a sheepfold like it was a large walled or fenced area it would be shared by a number of different families so they could keep their sheep together so it would be a mixed flock there'd be a watchman who'd be employed to guard the gate to make sure only those shepherds would be allowed in and when the shepherds came they would call out their sheep each day the sheep would recognize they would follow they'd find pasture they'd come back again for safety in the evening um I saw a video um about a sheep farm not in Palestine but in Norway um and um tourists in this particular region uh of Norway could go and visit a sheep farm and they could try and call the sheep so uh the farmer would give them a little bit of a tutorial here's the words to use uh you could see lots of people from different countries trying their best to call these sheep in the far distance that were just happily grazing and but then the shepherd eventually would put them out of their misery would give one word and the sheep would come running and Jesus understands this setting and so he's going to use this setting to help us understand some important truths one question that we can ask of this is who is authorized to lead God's people so he gives this image that there are some people who come into the flock and they're thieves and robbers and there's one who is the shepherd so who is authorized to lead God's people and what's clear is it's not the Pharisees now we've seen them in chapter nine they're they're selfish they're abusive they're all about law and they know nothing of God's grace Jesus says I am authorized by God I've been appointed by God to shepherd my flock he is the one who enters by the gate who is the shepherd of the sheep that's why we read Ezekiel 34 Ezekiel 34 where the leaders are condemned as being bad shepherds using abusing not pointing people towards worship and not pointing people back to their God and God gave that promise in Ezekiel 34 I will come and I will be their shepherd and I will send my servant King I will send another David and he will be

the shepherd god will be shepherd and the servant king would be the shepherd what's jesus saying he's saying i am that shepherd i am god and i am god's promised king and as such i am authorized i have the authority to lead to feed to guide my people back to god another question what's the relationship like between the sheep and the shepherd so in chapter nine we saw an example of when there are bad leaders there's a bad relationship there's there's abuse there's mistrust there's people being pointed away from god's truth not so when the true shepherd comes verse three the gatekeeper opens the gate for him and the sheep listen to his voice he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out when he's brought out all his own he goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice so jesus is giving some wonderful truths about himself that he knows his sheep his people individually he knows our hearts and our lives and he calls us individually he speaks to us of his personal care not only is jesus head over the church that's not just local but global but also he knows and loves each one of his own he knows and loves each one of his own he is a shepherd who guides guides by his voice guides by his word guides by his truth that we have in the bible and what of his sheep the sheep know jesus the shepherd in a personal and a living way the sheep listen to the true shepherd they won't follow the thieves and the robbers because they know their bad news they won't listen to a stranger but they will listen to jesus there is trust and obedience the shepherd goes on ahead and the sheep follow so there's a wonderful picture of the life of a church following jesus the good shepherd so jesus is the shepherd we must listen to is his basic point now back to some of the questions that we might have brought with us to church today what about that question of narrowness and jesus is saying a number of times in our passage that you must believe in me to be saved and to have life now we need to remember that when everyone makes a truth claim we are instinctively saying well this is true therefore anything else is false that's not peculiar to jesus that's what we always do when we're talking about truth but we also need to recognize who is speaking we need to remember here is jesus and he has just announced i am god so because of his identity this isn't just any old person speaking this is the one who is declaring i am god the son and i have come as god's promised king and because of his then unique authority he is able to speak and to speak truth and as he does so um he's speaking a loving warning there are false shepherds in his day there are false shepherds and false teaching in every day and jesus sounds a loving warning saying you need to listen to me you need to trust and follow me to to have life and to have salvation and also when we think about the identity of jesus we recognize that that he and he alone has the wisdom to teach us perhaps we can think of it this way if you imagine a great big circle and and this circle

represents all the wisdom in all the world now how much of that wisdom do we know maybe we have a small circle maybe we just feel like we have a dot we don't know everything and we cannot claim to know everything but jesus knows the circle because jesus is god and he speaks with the wisdom of god and he says don't trust anyone else you need to listen and you need to follow me so it's a reminder that that question that jesus asked his disciples who do you say i am is so vital for life it's vital to how we consider the bible and the claims of jesus we need to get that right to understand who jesus is if we are to get anything else right what about what does this a little section have to say about the question what is a christian what do i need to do to be a follower of jesus well jesus talks about this two-way knowing doesn't he talks about this living relationship between sheep and shepherd he's saying the shepherd calls to his sheep he calls to us in the gospel this good news that that jesus has come from god to to live among us and to live a life of perfect obedience as our substitute because we fail to keep god's law and so we are sinners and we are sinful and we deserve judgment but jesus has come as our substitute and he has been perfectly obedient and then the gospel also speaks of his death as a sacrifice that jesus in love was willing to take the place of sinners to take the punishment that we deserve so if we trust him our sins might be forgiven and then the gospel also speaks of the resurrection of jesus now that jesus won a victory over the great enemies of satan and sin and death so that whoever believes in him will also know eternal life and so jesus calls to us in the gospel calls to us to believe and and our response is to listen to follow our response as a church is to listen and to follow jesus is the king so i want to submit to him jesus is god who speaks truth so i want to listen and obey now what about the question if we're here as christians we're asking well how how does this help me to see the glory of jesus how is this going to help me in my faith well let me begin with a with a question that that sometimes it gets asked i was asked it this week perhaps sometimes you get asked what what makes a good church what do i look for in a church how do i know if a church is good and safe well think about this this question and think about how it applies to life in a church isn't it crucial that a church that a minister that a preacher points to the lord jesus christ isn't it crucial for a church that that leadership and members of a church live for the glory of the lord jesus christ the mark of a church is do we preach jesus as savior the only savior for sinners do we call people to trust in jesus that's what good church a safe church looks like because it's all about jesus and we need to understand that that's not a given again there were thieves and robbers there were false teachers in jesus day and so there are in our day too but think too about the gift of grace think about the privilege if you're a christian think about our privilege for a moment the privilege to know and to be known by the lord jesus by god our father to have that personal living relationship with god think of the security that we have in belonging to god through faith in jesus safe in god's law think about the privilege of being able to recognize that jesus is good news because we know that most

people don't recognize jesus is good news that's not something we earn that's all due to god's kindness and in response to god's kindness there is in our little section here a call to us as the church to grow and to develop in this two-way relationship that we would listen to jesus that we would listen as we gather together as the people of god sunday by sunday we listen as we spend time at home reading the bible we listen as we gather in small groups for discipleship and not just to listen but also to apply that word that it would be evident that we belong to jesus that his word would shape how we approach work and friendship and thoughts about the future and our money and our character because jesus is the shepherd we must listen to so that's the first image verse 7 to 10 gives us a second one where jesus says that he is the gate we must enter through so jesus continuing to speak to the same crowd but there's a slight change in the picture in the first scene i remember there was the wall and there was the mixed flock and there was the gatekeeper and there was shepherd who comes and calls and leads and in that first picture it's as if god himself was the gatekeeper saying i have chosen my son jesus to be the shepherd for my people listen to him but now the picture changes so still imagine a sheep pen with a wall and a fence but now instead of a mixed flock we're invited to think of a single flock and the focus now is on the gate the gate as the one point of entry the entry point to safety to security to plentiful supply and to true life let me read again verse 7 onwards very truly i tell you i am the gate for the sheep all who have come before me are thieves and robbers but the sheep have not listened to them i am the gate whoever enters through me will be saved they will come in and go out and find pasture the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy i have come that they may have life and have it to the full and so when we were back in sky a couple of weeks ago we visited family friends who have a farm and they had just started keeping some pigs so they had this small herd of pigs in a pen and they'd erected this electrified gateway so when the sheep there were the sheep pigs when the pigs were in the pen the electric fence the electric gate was on then when the farmer needed to go in or they needed to come out for a while the gate would be switched off now those pigs and i saw this in the short time we were there they needed the gate because if the gate was switched off and it was left open those pigs would run a mile and without the gate i imagine pretty quickly some of those pigs would get lost and some of them might find themselves in danger and then positively because of the gate they knew a place of safety and they knew a place where they would get food where they would have the care of the pig farmer the gate matters and jesus says i am the gate he says you must enter through me in order to have salvation in order to have life in order to avoid the destruction that jesus warns of because again there's a contrast in verse 10 he talks of the

[ 20 : 25 ] thief who only comes to kill and to steal and to destroy again jesus is thinking back to the pharisees to those bad shepherds what's he saying more widely he's saying anyone who says listen to me my way leads to god my way leads to true life but doesn't make it all about jesus that way ends in destruction jesus saying i and i alone and the gateway to life from god to relationship with god to think of it this way without a gate without jesus the gate if we want to get to god but we don't go through jesus what's going to happen we're going to find ourselves running into a brick wall perhaps we will try morality and religion but we will never get close to god that way jesus speaks against the pharisees who were busy saying keep our rules live our way be like us and jesus saying that's a brick wall it's like death it's destruction any religious system any moral teaching that denies jesus is the son of god he is the lord he's the only savior will lead to disaster there is no entry to god and his grace and his love and his life without jesus we need to recognize i think it forces us to recognize the barrier there is between us and god god is perfectly holy perfectly right and everything he does and who he is and we are not because of our sin we can never by ourselves be good enough we can never match god's perfect standard that barrier wall of sin is not one that we will break through by ourselves that guilt that we know in our hearts in our conscience knowing that all is not well with god we cannot deal with that by ourselves the barrier the separation between us and a holy god is too great so there's good news when jesus says i am the gate jesus says enter through me and you will know salvation jesus says believe in me believe that i am believe that i am god believe that i have been appointed by god to be your shepherd to be your savior to be the way home to life with god and you will have salvation and what's that look like it looks like the barrier of sin and guilt being removed it's the divide between a holy god and unholy people being bridged by jesus the one mediator between god and man that separation that's removed by the cross of christ where jesus takes sin and guilt and punishment for all who trust in him so that we can have to use the language of verse 10 life and life to the fool it's the idea of eternal life now when we hear eternal life we might think in terms of quantity life that goes on and on and on and on and it does so we do have the hope of a quantity of life that never ends as god people but but jesus points to a quality of life life as it is meant to be the life that we were made for life in relationship with god life where we know all is well between us and god because we have asked jesus to be our savior and to forgive our sin all is well because we are enjoying his love all is well because we experience life with him now and we anticipate that perfect life going on forever and all of that

is through jesus the gate now again let's go back to our questions is christianity a narrow religion well in one sense we want to say yes it is because it insists that you must i must have faith in jesus that he is the only way to be saved all paths do not lead to god we are not free to say well i think my god is like this we need to listen to the authority of jesus who says truly truly i say to you i am the gate so yes christianity is exclusive in that sense but in another sense christianity is wonderfully wide open what's the promise of verse 9 i am the gate there's the exclusive part the only way in through jesus but then whoever enters through me will be saved whoever doesn't get wider than that and here's what we need to understand that any religion that's based on on effort and merit is always going to be narrow because because it excludes people who are bad and people who are failures you can never get anywhere close that's not how jesus works because with jesus it's grace and that means the door is wide open to you and to me and the only requirement is to know our need is to have humility and to come with faith turning away from sin how does this help us think about the question how do i become a christian well picture that sheep pen once again there's walls there's the place where you need to be and there's the gate and very simply and jesus is saying you need to enter in don't stand on the outside you need to come come to him today do you know jesus is god do you know jesus is the only savior for sinners you need to come to him come admitting your need admitting your sin come believing that his his death on the cross and his resurrection were for you and for your salvation and come to the father through him and then finally how does this help you and me to live as christians how does this show us the glory of our savior well again notice what jesus provides jesus provides verse 9 pasture he feeds us he feeds our soul from his word he gives us supplies of grace by his spirit we have security when we find ourselves in god's flock jesus will never lose any who come to him the father promises that all who come to jesus will be saved and when our faith is in jesus we have true life the way god made us to be by god's grace he has dealt with our sin made it possible for us to come into his presence made it possible for us to call him father made it possible for us to worship together as the people of god so we can enjoy and we can worship

jesus is god who has come to shepherd and bring his people home our need then is to listen to him and to be led by him to enjoy life from him and with him and jesus is god who has come as the only way to be saved so our need is to end self-reliance and to enter by jesus the only gateway to eternal life let's pray together lord our god we thank you for these simple but powerful images that jesus has provided thank you for this picture of jesus the shepherd the one who calls his own who knows his sheep by name who leads who cares who gives true life thank you for jesus declaring he is the gate he is the way back to you our god that you by your great mercy have made that way open to us that sinners like us can be saved by trusting in jesus and so we pray that as we come with our questions and we would come to christ and find answers that we would come to him and find rest for our souls that we'd come to him and find joy and know life to the full we pray in jesus name amen now as we close we're going to sing a couple of different songs first of all the hymn i heard the voice of jesus say and then we will close by singing psalm 23 so let's stand together for our last couple of items of praise 16 see you next time thanks thank you uh oh sorry oh