

The Door Of Salvation

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Date: 26 June 2022

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[0 : 00] But this morning we're in John and we're talking about the third I am statement.

There are seven of those statements in John's gospel and we've already looked at two of them. And they're controversial, they were controversial in Jesus' day and they're as controversial in our day, not least because these I am sayings that we find in John's gospel that Jesus made are exclusive claims by Christ to be the only saviour of human beings.

We saw how Jesus said, I am the bread of life. In other words, he was saying your deepest hunger, spiritual hunger, is something that only I can satisfy.

We saw how Jesus said, I am the light of the world. In a sense, for somebody to make such a statement is outrageous, unless, of course, they're the son of God.

And now Jesus, in this third I am saying, claims to be the gate into salvation for every human being.

[1 : 37] That's what it says in verse 9 there, doesn't it? I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.

Now, this saying, I am the gate and the one that follows when Jesus says, I am the good shepherd are obviously closely linked.

In this third saying, I am the gate, Jesus is also claiming to be the true shepherd of God's people. And we heard what Ezekiel was saying about the situation of the shepherds and the sheep back then at that time.

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees saw themselves as the shepherds of God's people. These were the foremost religious leaders in Israel in Jesus' day.

They were the ones that were meant to be the great experts. They were the ones that could move you in circles regarding their ability to talk about the scripture and so on.

[2 : 55] And yet, they're the ones that were the false shepherds. Jesus calls them in this passage thieves and robbers. I want to just mention a wee bit about the context of this confrontation, if you like, that Jesus has with the Pharisees.

From chapter 7 of John's Gospel, Jesus had been in attendance at a religious festival. And during the festival, Jesus had been teaching in the temple area of Jerusalem.

And the Jewish leaders and Pharisees had condemned his teaching and tried to kill him, to stone him. Because they regarded Jesus as a sinner.

Because in their view, he broke the Sabbath by healing people on the Sabbath. And in general, having a lax attitude to the Sabbath.

Anyway, Jesus managed to slip away from the immediate danger. Then he met a man who was blind from birth. And he healed this man once again in the Sabbath.

[4 : 10] And the healed man was then hauled before those Jewish leaders and Pharisees. And eventually thrown out of the synagogue for talking Jesus up, if you like.

And Jesus meets this man again. And this man puts his trust in Jesus as his own personal saviour. Jesus then goes on to make the following comments in the presence of some of the Pharisees at the end of chapter 9.

Jesus said, so I'm reading from chapter 9 at the moment in verse 39. So just imagine, there's this crowd of Pharisees, this crowd of Jewish leaders, and they're engaged with Jesus.

And Jesus said to them, for judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see, and those who see will become blind.

Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this, and they asked, what, are we blind too?

[5 : 30] Jesus said, if you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin. But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

And so the context of this is this healing of this blind, this person that was blind from birth. But in fact, it leads into a picture where Jesus is suggesting that these Pharisees that think they're the true shepherds of Israel, and the ones that should be leading the flock of God, are blind.

And they're blind principally because they do not recognize the person that's standing in front of them as the Messiah of God and the Savior of the world.

And that is why Jesus begins to engage with them, and he engages with them in two ways.

In a figure of speech, and I want you to keep in your mind this blindness that Jesus is talking about.

And by the way, just in passing, I'm sure if Jesus was here today, he would have something to say about so many clergy in Scotland and in the UK and elsewhere who are blind leaders of the blind, and who do not predicate their message or their gospel on the fact that Jesus Christ is the alone Savior of human beings.

[7 : 17] So, Jesus challenges directly this blindness, and he does this implicitly through a figure of speech.

Look what he says there in verse 1. 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.

And he goes on to tell them that the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him. The sheep listen to his voice.

He calls his own sheep by name, and he goes on ahead of them, and so on. What Jesus is doing here is he's sharing with them something that is easily known by everybody that is listening to him.

And what is easily known is that, especially at night, shepherds brought their sheep and made them rest in a sheepfold or a sheeppen.

[8 : 34] And often within that enclosure and within that sheepfold and that sheeppen, there would be several flocks belonging to different shepherds.

And when the shepherd wanted to come and take the flock out and take it to pasture, he would enter. If there was a gate, sometimes there was a gate and sometimes there wasn't a gate.

And sometimes the gate, believe it or not, was the shepherd himself who simply lay down at the opening of the sheeppen and the sheepfold.

So Jesus is talking to them about something that not only they would understand and know what he's talking about or should have known what he's talking about, but they would know the truths of what he's saying.

And Jesus points out that the one that is truly the shepherd of the sheep always enters through the gate. Never does that shepherd of the sheep try to climb in like a thief and a robber.

[9 : 44] And once he's in, he calls his own sheep by name and only his sheep respond and follow him out and he leads them out to pasture.

This is what Jesus was trying to get across to them, if you like. But then, very interestingly, we read in verse 6.

Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. What is it that they did not understand?

They did not understand that he was telling them, you're the thieves and the robbers. You're the people that will not come near sinners. You're the people that want to quarantine the sinners.

You're the people that want to keep the truth away from sinners. You're the people that do not want to offer sinners hope and life and salvation.

[10 : 51] That's what they didn't understand. And they especially did not understand that Jesus Christ was the real shepherd of the sheep. So then Jesus speaks to them plainly.

And I want you to notice the language that Jesus uses. Both in verse 1 of his implicit confrontation with them.

And then in verse 7 of his explicit confrontation with them. Look at verse 1. Notice the language. Very truly. Very truly.

I tell you Pharisees. Anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in some other ways, a thief and a robber. They had not entered legitimately through Jesus Christ to be a shepherd of the sheep.

Because Jesus is not just referring to anyone entering in. He's referring to whether it's a shepherd or a sheep.

[12 : 05] The only way to enter into the people of God, the kingdom of God. The only way to enter into salvation is through Jesus Christ. Notice how emphatic the language is.

There it is there in verse 7. Therefore Jesus said to again, Very truly I tell you. When Jesus wants to bring, if you like, a fundamental truth to people.

He usually uses this emphatic language. Very truly I tell you. He's underlining the absolute certainty of what he's saying.

No genuine shepherd gets into God's sheepfold except through Christ. Indeed, no one can get into the sheepfold except through Jesus Christ.

What Jesus is saying is I and I alone am the gate into salvation for every single human being. And this exclusive right of Jesus to be the gate for everyone is underlined further with his next comment in verse 8.

[13 : 26] All who have come before me are thieves and robbers. And now people wonder who is Jesus thinking of and who is he making reference to.

Most certainly the Pharisees. But possibly not only the Pharisees. Possibly other pretenders that were around at that time pretending to be saviors or messiahs.

This is an astonishing claim that Jesus is making. Jesus just looks like any other person in Jerusalem. He is just bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

And yet here he is making all those incredible, almost outrageous statements. I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world.

I am the gate. Through me shall one enter into the kingdom of heaven. Let me ask each one of us who are here today.

[14 : 38] Have you entered through that gate that is Jesus Christ? There is no other gate. And the gate isn't religion as such.

The gate isn't even in a sense church. The gate is a person. His name is Jesus Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth. A historical figure. What's at stake here?

Why is it imperative that we enter through the gate of God which is Jesus Christ? It's because we need to be saved. Verse 9.

I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. Saved. Saved. Saved from what?

[15 : 48] From ourselves. From an ultimately pointless life.

What a tragedy would it not be for any human being to have expended all their energies.

Intellectual. Spiritual. And moral. Ultimately for nothing. To be saved from the madness and magnetism of this world.

With its persistent, I would argue, and relentless pursuit of every one of us. You need this. You need this. You need that.

You need the latest. You need the best. You'll never be satisfied until you satiate yourself with whatever it is. Drugs, drinks, sex, or whatever.

[17 : 01] But above all, we need saved from our disconnection from God.

We need saved from a Godless existence. We need saved from the guilt of ignoring God.

Can I ask you again? Have you entered through the gate of salvation, which is Jesus Christ?

Or, are you still circling around that gate? Are you still hanging around that gate?

Perhaps after decades? What does Jesus promise if we walk through that gate in faith?

[18 : 21] Just like the blind man, you know, when he was thrown out of the synagogue. When the so-called shepherds of Israel weren't interested in him.

Thank God he met Jesus Christ. And thank God he walked through that gate and put his trust in Jesus Christ. And what is it Jesus promises anyone that walks through that gate?

Well, of course, salvation. But even more. Because Jesus goes on to say they will come in and go out and find pasture.

Pasture. In other words, there's two things that Jesus is saying that they will always have if they walk through that gate. Spiritual food.

And spiritual freedom. As they even get on with their lives. And they go in.

[19 : 35] And they go out. And they return. Through all the vicissitudes. And all the elements of their life. Jesus Christ.

Will always be with them. Every single step of the way. And Jesus is the food for our souls.

Jesus once put it this way. Graphically. In a way even that perhaps he could have been misunderstood. Indeed. Early in the first century. Christians were accused of cannibalism.

Probably because somewhere or other people had lighted on these words that Jesus once spoke. He said, except you eat the flesh of the son of man.

You have no life in you. What a statement. Jesus spoke, you see, metaphorically. Jesus spoke in figures of speech. In parables.

[20 : 45] Jesus spoke in evidence. Jesus spoke in vivid ways. To try and convey the truth to people. It's me. And me alone that you need.

How is it that Jesus is the only redeemer of humanity?

How is it that he's the only gate of God and the only gate to God? Because he came. He came. Because he came. Because he came.

He came. Legitimately. As the son of David. That was always promised. The whole movement of Old Testament scripture and revelation.

Was moving inexorably. Towards one that was going to come. Known as the son of David. The Messiah. The Baptist.

[21 : 50] The forerunner of Jesus Christ. Testified about him. The fact that when he was here. It tells us that he ate and drank with sinners.

It tells us that he gave sinners food to eat. It tells us that he had time for sinners. It tells us that he came to seek that which was lost.

The absolute opposite. Of the religious leaders and the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees. But above all.

What gives them that legitimacy. Is his incarnation. This very gospel. Starts. In chapter one. With this astonishing statement.

Of talking about Jesus Christ. This Jesus. Of course. Is man. Qua. Man. Of course.

[22 : 56] Is fully human. But you know. Even when you've said that. And emphasized it. As much as it should be. And it certainly should be.

Emphasized to the help. But you haven't said everything about this being Jesus Christ. John tells us. John tells us that in the beginning.

Was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. John tells us in verse 14 of chapter one. That the word was made flesh.

And dwelt among us. Here is his legitimacy. Mercy. And you know that same one.

A few years later. Is hanging on the cross. Bearing shame. And scoffing rude.

[23 : 53] In my place. Condemned he stood. Sealed my pardon. With his blood. Hallelujah. What a savior.

The incarnation is his legitimacy. The cross is his legitimacy. The resurrection is his legitimacy. There is no other gate. Jesus makes a final contrast there.

As he closes his conversation. With these people. In verse 10. The thief. Comes only to steal. And kill.

And destroy. I have come. That they may have life. And have it. To the full. As I close this sermon. I definitely want you. To focus now with me. On these last words. Of Jesus. To. The group of people there.

[25 : 04] That included the Pharisees. I have come. That they may. Have life. And have it.

To the full. I have come. That they may. Have life. Life.

Life. And have it. To the full. In. In. In. John's gospel. In that. Great chapter one.

The so-called. Prologue. It told us that. Speaking of Jesus. In. Him. Was life.

And that life. Was the light. Of. Every human being. Being. Being. Jesus.

[26 : 02] I have already. Mentioned. In our first. I am statement. I am the bread. Of life. I am the way.

The truth. And the life. I am the resurrection. And the life. What is it you mean Jesus?

Because I am breathing. I am the life. I am. I am not talking. About. Biological life.

I am talking. About. The life. Of. God. And the primary purpose.

Of my coming. Was that you might. Have that life. That life. That you have become. Disconnected to. Our fall.

[27 : 09] Our flight. Our retreat. From God. Our. Sense of. We can do it. Ourselves. Has taken us.

Far. From that life. In our natural condition. We can do it. And that's why. Jesus. Uses this.

Wonderful. Wonderful. Phrase. I have come. That they may have life. And have it. To the full. Or as the AV.

Puts it. I think. More abundantly. This is a life. This is. No. Comparison. To our. Biological life.

The orthodox. Churches. Call what Jesus. Is talking about here. Deification. The apostle.
[28 : 13] Peter. In his letter. Calls it. Partakers. Of eternal life. Well. We're nearly finished.
This sermon. I repeat again. Have you come through. The gate of Christ.
Yet. You've been close to it. Hanging around. End it.
Perhaps. For a very. Very. Long time. What keeps you. From going through it. Don't leave it.
Too late. Don't miss. The abundant life. That Jesus. Offers you. Hear the voice.
[29 : 19] Of the shepherd. Yes. He's calling you. Right now. Don't listen.
Listen to the voice. Of strangers. And thieves. And robbers. That want to. Rob you. Of the life. Of
Christ. And want to shut you out.
Of the kingdom of God. Forever. Forever. Forever. Forever. Forever. Forever. Step through the
gate.
In faith. Like that blind man did. That Jesus healed.
And saved. Amen. May the Lord bless. These words. To each one of us. For his eternal glory. And.
[30 : 27] For our. Eternal good. People. The people. Interest. Man. Satan. When. The feet.
ucaress. Into. Sounds.