

Jesus the Door

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John, John chapter 10, and if we read again at verse 8.

John chapter 10 at verse 8, where Jesus says, 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.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. Jesus said, I am the door. I am the door.

You know, this coming week, it will mark one year since we first closed the doors of our church to the public worship of God.

And although we were only open for a couple of months between December and January, many of you, you haven't been in this church building since our communion season last March.

[1 : 1 6] I'm sure that you'll remember that we had a lovely weekend last March with the Graver minister, the Reverend Deer McCritchie. He was actually standing in for the Perth minister, the Reverend Paul Gibson, who he was told not to travel because he was suspected of having the coronavirus.

And yet that was the last time we gathered together in the Lord's house on the Lord's day, and we sat around the Lord's table. But since closing the doors of our church, something which we had never had to do in the history of our congregation, let alone our denomination.

But, you know, the amazing thing is how we have had to adapt to the situations that we face and the circumstances that we were confronted with. Because, you know, I never thought for a moment that I'd have to preach to a camera rather than a congregation.

And I'm thankful, always thankful for Kenny John and his help in making it possible. I also never thought that our midweek meetings and our Sunday school and our youth fellowship and our testimony evenings and even our Kirk sessions and deacons courts, I never thought that they'd all have to be held virtually using Zoom.

And I'm thankful to Stephen for making that possible. And I'm also thankful to you as a congregation for your patience and your prayerful support.

[2 : 4 3] Because, you know, despite all the restrictions and being confined to our homes, you know, it has actually been a great provision to have the gospel go out every week.

And it goes out to all these different homes. And we're also able to meet together using Zoom. But, you know, there are many things that this past year should have taught us.

It should have taught us, most of all, not to take the privilege of going to church for granted. But also it should have taught us simple things.

The simple things like seeing one another. We're not to take that for granted. Or even congregational singing. Not to take that for granted. Or fellowship. Or prayer meetings.

Even shaking hands with one another. But more than that, this past year should have taught us that the church is not a building. It's a people.

[3 : 43] The church is not a building. It's a people. Barber's Free Church is not a 175-year-old building. No. Barber's Free Church is made up of living stones.

Living stones that have been called out of darkness. And called into the marvellous light of the gospel. And, my friend, because the church is not a building, you don't need to come to church in order to become a Christian.

You don't need to enter through the door of this building in order to be saved. Because, my friend, you can be saved this morning. Sitting where you are.

You don't need to move. You can be saved where you are sitting right now. That's not to say that coming to church and gathering for worship isn't important.

It is important. It's very important. But that's not what saves you. That's not what saves you. Coming through the door of this church is not what saves you. But coming through Jesus, the door, is what saves you.

[4 : 51] Coming through Jesus, the door, is what saves you. And, you know, that's what John is reminding us this morning in this passage. Because, John, he's not inviting us to come to a place of worship.

John is inviting us to come to a person to worship. John is inviting us to come to Jesus.

Because Jesus says to us in the gospel, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

My friend, you are invited to come this morning. You are invited to come. But, you know, I'd like us to consider these verses, these opening ten verses we read earlier.

I want us to think about them under just two headings this morning. Two headings. Deficient leadership and divine leadership. Deficient leadership and divine leadership.

[5 : 57] So, first of all, deficient leadership. Deficient leadership. And we'll read it verse one and then verse ten. Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

And Jesus says in verse ten, The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. Now, this opening statement from the lips of Jesus, It was made three months after the Feast of Tabernacles.

You remember that the Feast of Tabernacles, it was held every year around September, October time. And we saw what happened during the Feast of Tabernacles. We saw that in chapters seven to nine of John's Gospel.

But now three months have passed and it's December. And I say that because we're told in verse 22 that it's winter and the Feast of Dedication or the Feast of Hanukkah, it's taking place.

And we see that once again Jesus is in Jerusalem. He's at the temple and he's speaking to the crowds who have gathered for the Feast of Dedication. And what Jesus says to the crowds is actually quite remarkable because he tells them that they have a deficient leadership.

[7 : 25] He tells them that they have a deficient leadership. He says that these religious leaders who are wandering around the temple right now, they're wandering around with all their pomp and ceremony.

And Jesus says that they're deficient leaders. They're defective leaders. Because as Pharisees, they're fakes and frauds. As scribes, they're shoddy and substandard.

Jesus says their leadership, it's lacking. Their pastoral care is poor and their commitment to the things of God is just casual. And you know, Jesus, he isn't joking when he says this.

He isn't trying to be flippant or funny. Jesus, he is seriously and solemnly speaking about the religious leadership of the day. And Jesus, he asserts and affirms how serious he is when he says in verse one, he says, truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

You know, Jesus doesn't mess about. He doesn't mince his words. Jesus says it as he sees it. Jesus says it as he sees it.

[8 : 44] And with his signature phrase, truly, truly or verily, verily, Jesus here, he asserts and affirms that the leadership in Israel is deficient.

It's directionless. It's defunct, he says. It's dead. It's dead. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

And you know, it's a bold statement to make, isn't it? It's a bold statement to make about the religious leaders, especially when you know that they want to kill you. Because as we've said before, Jesus was now Israel's most wanted man.

And there was this tension that was escalating all the time because the religious leaders, they saw Jesus as a terrorist. They saw him as someone who was guilty of religious extremism and political terrorism.

And that as Jesus was going around the country and preaching what they thought was just this, the kingdom of God, he was preaching this message of the kingdom and he was gathering support.

[9 : 56] And they thought that Jesus was going to turn against the religious establishment. They thought that Jesus was going to cause this revolution. And so the religious leaders, they want to stop Jesus.

They want to take Jesus out. They want to kill Jesus. But here is Jesus. He's at the temple again. He's not hiding from the religious leaders.

He's not holding back his message. Jesus is just calling them out for who they are. Deficient leaders. But you know what Jesus says about these religious leaders here?

What he says is that they were like the false shepherds whom the Lord condemned in the Old Testament. Because as we read earlier in Ezekiel 34, we read that the Lord commanded Ezekiel to proclaim and to pronounce judgment on the shepherds in Israel because of their deficient leadership.

And we read that Ezekiel prophesied, he said, Thus says the Lord, Should not the shepherds feed the sheep? But you eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, and you don't feed the sheep.

[11 : 16] 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.

And based upon the prophecy in Israel, Jesus here, Jesus, the true prophet of God, he says to the crowds in the temple, he says, Your religious leaders are thieves and robbers.

Your shepherds in Israel, they are unauthorized and unlawful in their actions because they claim and confess to be shepherds.

They say that they have a care and a concern for the souls of God's people, but the truth is, they're only in leadership for position and for the praise of men.

They have abused their position, Jesus says. They've squandered the resources. They've acted selfishly. They've neglected you as a flock. They're thieves and robbers, and as thieves and robbers, they're only out to steal, kill, and destroy.

[12 : 25] They've only come to see what they can get and gain out of God's people because for them, says Jesus, it's not about the sheep. It's about self.

It's not about the flock. It's about their facade and the front that they put on. For them, it's not about pastoring. It's about their popularity. They only seek to serve their own interests and their own inclinations.

And Jesus says, they're not good shepherds. They're godless shepherds. They're godless shepherds. They're thieves and robbers, and they're only out to steal, kill, and destroy.

But you know what Jesus says here? It's so solemn. It's so solemn because he not only criticizes and condemns the deficiency of the religious leaders, he also criticizes and condemns the deficiency of every false religion.

Because Jesus says that false religious leaders, they are thieves and robbers. And he says that every false religion, it will steal, kill, and destroy.

[13 : 42] You know, one commentator, he writes, everyone who denies that Jesus Christ is God is a liar and an antichrist. whether Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Unitarianism, liberal Christianity, secular saviors, cults, and heresies, all of them, he says, all of them claim to be the truth and the pathway to heaven, but they deny the gospel.

This may be unpalatable, he says, to those who trust in such false hopes, but these deficient religions constitute the broad road that leads to destruction.

You know, it's a solemn statement, but my friend, it's true. It's true. False leaders and false religions, they are only out to steal, kill, and destroy.

And yet, you know, what's really interesting is that when many of the 19th and 20th century theologians, when they commented on Jesus' words in this chapter, they didn't actually draw attention to the deficient paths to heaven.

Instead, they drew attention to deficient preachers in pulpits. And, you know, as a preacher in a pulpit, I found this so challenging.

[15 : 10] Because what they said was that ministers who are not called by God into the ministry, they are thieves and robbers. And that if they're not called of God, and if they don't faithfully serve the Lord, then they'll only steal, kill, and destroy.

And, you know, I thought this was so relevant with all that's come out recently about Ravi Zacharias. And yet, one of them, A.W. Tozer, he said, the church that is man-managed instead of God-governed is doomed to failure.

A ministry that is college-trained but not spirit-filled works no miracles. And things will get no better until we come back to the realized presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Solemn words, but every word is true. It was also my good friend J.C. Ryle. He said, ordination is no proof that a man is fit to show others the way to heaven.

For the true shepherd of souls is he who enters the ministry with a single eye to Christ, desiring to glorify Christ, doing all in the strength of Christ, preaching Christ's doctrine, walking in Christ's steps and laboring to bring men and women to Christ.

[17 : 03] The man who makes much of Christ, he says, is a pastor after God's own heart whom God delights to honor. The minister who makes little of Christ, he says, is an imposter.

He's the one who has climbed into his holy office not by the door but by some other way. If we would know the value of a man's ministry, says Ryle, we must never fail to ask, where is the lamb?

Where is the door? Does he bring forward Christ and give him his rightful place? And you know, my friend, I write those words and I thought, what about you, Mardo?

What about you? And you know, my friend, I hope and pray that I'm faithful to you as the flock. I hope and pray that I pastor you as people in this community.

I hope and pray that I shepherd your souls under the divine leadership of the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. I hope and pray I serve you as I have been called to serve you.

[18 : 17] And if I don't, please speak to me. Please remind me of what we've just read there and what I'm called to. You know, we have to be under the divine leadership of the good shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Because I know that if we don't follow divine leadership, we will have deficient leadership. If we don't follow divine leadership, we will have deficient leadership.

And that's what we see secondly. Divine leadership. So deficient leadership and then divine leadership. Divine leadership.

Jesus says in verse one, Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But 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. You know, when Jesus spoke to the crowds at the temple that day, he did so using a parable.

[19 : 28] But what's interesting about this parable is that it's the only parable in John's gospel. As you know, the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, they're full of parables. But this is the only parable in John's gospel.

And as the gospel writers tell us, Jesus never spoke to the crowds without using a parable. And Jesus, he drew all his parables from the circumstances and situations that people were familiar with.

And that's certainly the case with this parable. Because here Jesus describes a sheepfold. And a sheepfold, it would have been a large circular pen for sheep.

And it would have been made using a stone wall. So it was a large stone wall pen. But in that stone wall, there would have been this little opening in the wall through which the shepherd would lead the sheep in at night.

And what Jesus describes here is something that we're not used to in our crafting culture. But in ancient Israel, shepherds had to constantly move their flocks from one place to the next in order to find pasture.

[20 : 40] But when the shepherds came near to a town or a village, they would lead their sheep into a sheepfold for the night. And they could leave their sheep in the sheepfold and they could go into the town or village and find rest and refreshment.

In many ways, you could say that the sheepfold was like a creche for sheep. Because the sheep would be left overnight in the sheepfold. They would be left in the care of the porter or the watchman or the doorkeeper or the gatekeeper, whatever translation you're using.

And the role and responsibility of the doorkeeper was very important because he would own this large sheep pen. He would own this stone-walled sheep pen.

And when a shepherd would lead his sheep through the little opening in the wall, when the shepherd would lead the sheep in, he would leave his sheep in the care of the doorkeeper.

And what's interesting is that there was no gate. There was no gate on this stone-walled pen. Just this little opening. And because of this, the doorkeeper the doorkeeper would keep all the sheep in and keep all the wild animals out.

[22 : 00] And he would do that by lying across the opening. He would lie across the opening all night. The doorkeeper would lie down in this opening.

And by doing so, he would literally become the door of the sheepfold. He would become the door of the sheepfold. And you know, this was very common in ancient Israel.

Shepherds would leave their flock in the care of the doorkeeper. And the doorkeeper would keep watch. He would guard the sheep from the thieves and robbers and wild animals.

And then in the morning, when the shepherd would come and collect his sheep from the sheep creche, the doorkeeper would admit the shepherd by simply allowing him to call his sheep.

And all the shepherd would have to do is call the sheep. And the sheep would know the voice of the shepherd and the sheep would just follow him out. And yet what's remarkable is that sometimes there was actually more than one flock in the sheepfold.

[23 : 02] And yet the sheep would respond to the voice of their shepherd and follow the shepherd out of the sheepfold. And God willing, we'll consider this in more detail in the coming weeks when we come to look at Jesus, the good shepherd.

But here we see Jesus describing and declaring himself to be the doorkeeper. And Jesus had to do this. He had to do this because as we read in verse 6, the crowds, they didn't understand the parable.

The crowds didn't understand the parable. We read in verse 6, this figure of speech Jesus used with them. But they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, 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. So by using the image and illustration of the sheepfold and the doorkeeper, Jesus was teaching the crowds and us that he has come to provide divine leadership.

He has come to protect the flock of God. He has come to keep watch over the flock of God. He has come to guard God's sheep from thieves and robbers.

[24 : 18] And with that, Jesus says again, he says it with his signature phrase, he says, 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. And you know, my friend, when Jesus says to us, I am the door of the sheep, he's not only saying that he has come to protect the sheep, he's saying that he's also come to lie down for the sheep.

Because as the door to the stone-walled sheepfold, the doorkeeper would lie down. He would lie down in the opening. He would lie down, you could say, in the gap.

And you know, what Jesus is actually reminding us here is that he is the middleman. He's the one who has come to lie down in the gap. Jesus is the one who has come to fill the chasm, to fill the void that exists because of sin.

He's the one who has come to be our mediator, to stand in this chasm between a holy God and sinful man. And our Bible reminds us that there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men and he is the middleman, the man Christ Jesus.

[25 : 40] My friend, Jesus is our middleman. Jesus is our mediator. Jesus is our intermediary and intercessor. Jesus is our only access into safety, security and salvation.

salvation. My friend, Jesus is our only access into safety, security and salvation. He is the middleman.

There's only one way and it's through him. And if you come by any other way, you will be deemed and denounced. You'll be criticised and condemned as a thief and a robber.

My friend, Jesus is our only access into safety, security and salvation. There's only one way and there's only one entrance into the sheepfold and it's through him.

It's through him. That's why Jesus says in verse 9, I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and go in and out and find pasture.

[26 : 47] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the door, he says.

And as you know, this is the third of the seven I am sayings in John's gospel. John records these I am sayings of Jesus in order to make sure that we get the identity of Jesus right.

Because if we get the identity of Jesus wrong, we'll misunderstand the gospel and we'll fail to see that Jesus is the Son of God and the only saviour of sinners, we'll fail to see that Jesus is the great I am.

He's the I am who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. He's the I am who revealed himself to his people down throughout the generations. And he's the I am who revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

And as you know, we witnessed the first I am saying in John 6, when Jesus said, I am the bread of life. whoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whosoever believes in me shall never thirst.

[27 : 56] Jesus said, come to me and you will receive spiritual satisfaction. And then in John 8, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Jesus said, follow me, follow me and you will have light and life, rather than darkness and death. And now here in John 10, Jesus says, I am the door.

I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. Jesus says, I am your only access to safety, security, and salvation.

And you know, Jesus, he uses such a simple illustration, isn't it? You know, whether it's a door in the first century or the 21st century, we all know what a door is and what a door does.

We all know that a door keeps people in and keeps other people out. We all know that a door provides safety and security. We all know that a door opens and a door closes.

[29 : 01] And as we saw with the children, there are some famous doors that we're very familiar with. But few, if any of us, have ever been invited through these famous doors.

We've never been invited into 10 Downing Street or Buckingham Palace or the White House. And yet John is saying to us this morning, Jesus is the most famous door in the world.

And he's a door that we're all familiar with. And the wonder is we're all invited to enter through his door this morning. We're all invited to come and enter in.

My friend, you know, there's no other door into the kingdom of God. There's no other door. There's no other door that promises you safety, security, and salvation on entry.

There's no other door that guarantees abundant life, everlasting life, eternal life. And you know, the wonder of wonders is that this door, it's not locked.

[30 : 07] It's not even closed. It's not even ajar. This door is wide open. It's wide open this morning.

And Jesus says to us, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. My friend, the door of opportunity, it's wide open this morning.

Wide open to you. And you've been invited to come in. And as we said earlier, you're not being invited to come to a place of worship.

You've been invited to come to a person to worship. You've been invited to come to Jesus and call upon Jesus and commit your life to Jesus and confess Jesus as your Lord.

The door of opportunity is open. It's wide open. It's wide open, my friend. But I must warn you that it will not always remain open.

[31 : 12] And you know that. I don't need to tell you that. You know that already. This door will not always remain open because like it was in Noah's day, Noah the preacher of righteousness, he proclaimed and he pleaded for sinners to come through the door.

He pleaded for them to come to safety and come to security and come to salvation and the door remained open for a lifetime. But they didn't come.

