

## **The Door**

### **John 10:1-10**

We are going to look at the fourth “I am” statement Jesus made in the book of John this morning as a way to know and experience him more personally. To introduce this statement I want to share a story about my son Matthew when he was 6 years old.

Our family went on a family trip to Door County and on the last day we stopped at the Bay Beach Amusement Park in Green Bay for several hours before heading home. Bay Beach has all kinds of rides that kids can go on that range from kiddie rides like the Merry-go-Round to thrilling roller coaster rides. Matthew was enjoying the kiddie rides, but he was feeling pretty apprehensive about trying anything too big. But as the day went on he eventually tried some bigger rides, and Caleb and Sophia eventually decided to go on the biggest roller coaster in the park called the ‘Zippin Pippin.’ (picture) As you can see, they had a wonderful time. So they tried to convince Matthew to go, but he was not interested. That was a little bit too much for him.

As more time went on he started to think about it and finally we convinced him to try it just one time. So he and I went together. I had to do some coaching and encouragement as we stood in line and got closer to our turn. He was scared, but he overcame his fear and got in the car next to me. He paid very close attention as they strapped him in. He wanted to make sure he was safe and secure. Once they got him strapped in he grabbed hold of the bar in front of him with white knuckles and held on as tight as he could. And we were off... You can see us as the car made its initial ascent to the top. (picture) I was very curious how things were going to go. Was he going to freak out and start to cry? Or was he going to love it and want to go again?

Well, we got to the top and took off down the track. We went flying through the ups and downs and around all the corners. I was yelling with my arms in the air, but Matthew was completely silent with a white-knuckled grip on the bar in front of him. Amy took a picture as we flew down the last hill (picture). We rounded the final corner and the car screeched to a stop and I just waited... After a moment of silence, Matthew finally spoke: “That... was... AWESOME!!!... I almost I pooped my pants...” It was great. After I got done laughing I asked him, “Do you

want to go again?” And immediately he said “No.” He’d had enough excitement for one day.

Roller coasters can be a lot of fun, but I want you to imagine with me what it would be like to go on a roller coaster without the safety harness. What would it feel like if the safety harness broke just before you took off at top speed? A fun ride would turn into a terrifying nightmare. Would you be able to hang on? And what would happen when they slammed on the brakes at the end? In order to be safe and secure throughout a roller coaster ride, you have to have a safety harness!

Though it’s not quite as intense as that, life can be a lot like a roller coaster ride. There are hills and valleys, twists and turns, times when you feel out of control and uncertain. And then there’s the sudden stop at the end. And similar to a roller coaster, in order to feel safe and secure throughout the ride and as you look ahead to the end, you need to have a safety harness. You need to have something you can depend on through the journey and that will give you peace and assurance as you face the end. People turn to a lot of different things to be that safety harness only to find when they need it most, it breaks loose and doesn’t do them any good. But there’s one that will never do that – and that’s what we’re going to look at today.

We’re going to look at a passage where Jesus was teaching a crowd of people right after he healed the blind man that we looked at last week. When he spoke to the people, he taught them some amazing things about himself using the familiar imagery of ancient Israelite shepherding. This imagery is used all over in Scripture and can be very helpful for us in understanding who Jesus is. In this passage we are going to see that Jesus makes two “I am” statements to reveal himself to the people in unique ways. We’re going to look at the first one today and the next one in a couple weeks. The goal is to see Jesus more clearly for who he is for us and experience him more personally in our relationships with him.

Read John 10:1-6.

*“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. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he*

*has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup> This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

I think we're all aware that Jesus is our good shepherd and he definitely had that in mind when he was teaching these things to the people. We will see him talk about that in a couple weeks further along in this passage. But before he does that he also compares himself to something else in this situation and in order to understand that we need to understand something about ancient Israelite shepherding.

R.C. Sproul does a video series on the “I am” statements of Jesus and in this passage he does a great job of explaining the historical details about ancient Israelite shepherding. According to Sproul, sheep would be outside during the day – they would be grazing and the shepherd would lead them to pastures and water. But at night the sheep were brought in and kept in a place that was protected, and that was called the sheepfold.

There were different kinds of sheepfolds, some made of wood, but most often they were made of stones because they were very plentiful in that area. (picture) So the sheepfold was an impenetrable fortress that would shelter the sheep from thieves and wild animals that would come to harm them. The walls didn't have barbed wire, but they did have briars, which were sharp, needly thorns on top to discourage the intruder from trying to climb in over the wall. That's why Jesus said that only those who were thieves and robbers would try to climb up over the wall. The proper way for both the sheep and the shepherd to enter was the door.

At the door was a person known as the gatekeeper. He was not the shepherd, but he was the guardian of the door. And he would open the door for the shepherds when they came with their flocks. Oftentimes in ancient Israel the sheepfolds would be big enough to contain several different flocks of sheep and various shepherds would come in with their sheep. There weren't dividers or stalls within the sheepfold to keep the sheep from getting intermixed because the neat thing about sheep is that they recognized their shepherd and would come to him and the shepherd would recognize his sheep. When the shepherd would call out to his sheep, they would recognize his voice and go to him and he would lead them out.

When a stranger called out that they didn't recognize, they wouldn't respond or follow.

Jesus was using this familiar imagery to reveal things to them, but as you see in verse 6, they weren't getting it, so he went on to explain what he was talking about. In the first part of his explanation he reveals himself as the door to the sheepfold, which is what we're going to focus on today.

Read John 10:7-10.

<sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

So there's only one entrance into the sheepfold, which is the place of safety and protection for the sheep, and that entrance was protected by a door. And that's the image Jesus uses to reveal himself to them: "I am the door. I am the way into the place of safety and protection and abundant life." R.C. Sproul says, *"Jesus is saying that God has a sheepfold. God has a sanctuary. God has a place of safety. God has a place of everlasting peace and protection where God is the mighty fortress for his people. And that fortress, like the sheepfold has a door."*

Jesus is that door. Jesus is the way into God's place of safety and rest. All those who came before him – the self-proclaimed false messiahs in Israel that tried to lure people into following them – they were thieves and robbers. They were counterfeits. They were trying to use people and lead them astray into harms way for their own gain. They were like a safety harness that ends up breaking. But Jesus is different. He is the door. He came to provide the way to salvation, protection, blessing, and abundant life for the sheep. He would be their safety harness that would never break – not through all the ups and downs and twists and turns of life; or in the end when they needed him most.

Jesus told the people in Matthew 11:28-30: *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Jesus came so that you could enter God's place of safety and rest. And that's not just talking about heaven and salvation in the future; he's also talking about experiencing peace, security, safety and abundant life today. Through all the ups and downs and twists and turns of this life, Jesus is the door. Jesus is the safety harness. With Jesus in your life, you can go in and out and find good pasture – you can experience an abundant life. Jesus came so that you can have life and have it abundantly. That doesn't mean you won't face danger, hardship, or suffering, but it does mean that you will always have a safety harness holding you secure through all of it so that you have hope and confidence in him.

I love what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:8-10: *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."* Paul knew Jesus as the door to the sheepfold. He knew him so well that at the end of Romans 8 he was able to write with complete confidence: *"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (vs. 38-39)

Has the bottom dropped out from underneath you lately? Have you encountered an unsettling twist or turn in life that's shaken you? I invite you to come to Jesus as the Door of the sheepfold. I invite you to experience him in a very personal way this morning where you can lay it all out before him and let him handle the mess. He is already with you and he will never leave you or forsake you. He reminded me again this week of just how much he cares for us and is involved in every detail of our lives. He will restore your hope and give you solid ground to stand on.