

You did it this morning. You've done it your whole life. You did it at home, you did it on the way to church, you did it when you got here. In fact, you wouldn't be here if you hadn't done it. You will continue to do it all day today and tomorrow and for the rest of your life and there's not much you can do about it. What did you do? You walked through a door.

Life presents us with an endless series of doors. We walk through them every day. Sometimes we walk through a door that changes our life forever...this past week I drove past the door I walked through to my neighbor's house whom God used to lead me to Christ. I spoke at the church where the doors swung open 40 years ago on my wedding day and there was my bride. On the first floor are the glass doors I peered through 14 years ago and dreamed about coming to Dallas to see what God might do here. There are a lot of doors you can walk through. Some doors lead to life and other doors lead to death. Today we come to the third "I Am" of Jesus, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."

The purpose of a door is to let some people in and keep other people out. Doors are the tools of exclusion and inclusion. Those who belong to the shepherd will pass through the door to eternal life. All who bypass the shepherd will be left out in the dark.

John 10 begins with a story about sheep and shepherds. This was a common theme in the Middle East. Kings and priests called themselves shepherds and their subjects, sheep. In the first 5 verses Jesus contrasts true and false shepherds...vv. 1-3a. The analogy employs a sheep fold. Every village had a pen where the sheep were brought at night to be kept safe after grazing out in the fields all day. The sheep in the fold belonged to different shepherds. (v. 16). The gatekeeper would only open the door to those who were the true shepherds of the sheep

A gatekeeper was hired by the shepherds so that they could get some sleep after a day in the fields. This "hired hand" (v. 12) worked the night shift closing the door at night when all the sheep were in. In the morning, as the sun came up, the shepherds would reappear and call their sheep out of the fold to lead them back out to pasture. Only the shepherds were allowed past the gatekeeper. Thieves and robbers had to climb the wall to steal the sheep.

The gatekeeper knew the rightful shepherds and the shepherds knew their sheep...vv. 3b -5. As each sheep entered the fold, a good shepherd would stop them with his rod and check for wounds. One by one, he would let them through. He would drop his rod over the next one, and then, once examined, it was let in. Ezekiel tells us someday God will cause His people to pass under His rod. "As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord God. I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel 20:36-38).

The point Jesus is making is simple - **A true shepherd cares for the sheep. False shepherds exploit the sheep for their own selfish purposes.** There is no real break between John 9 and 10...same day, same people, same event as chapter 9 where Jesus healed a man born blind. As you recall, the leaders of Israel showed nothing but disdain for the blind man and nothing but violent hatred for Jesus. At the end of chapter 9, they showed the beggar the door, they kicked him out.

This passage shines light on the blindness of the Pharisees. They lost sight of their real purpose as leaders of Israel. They were selfish false shepherds who stole God's sheep for their own purposes. Ezekiel warned about the behavior of the false shepherds in Israel, "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." Ez. 34:4.

Those who heard Jesus talking about sheep and shepherds didn't get the point...v. 6. So, in vv. 7-10 He gets more specific. Now He is not talking about a sheepfold and a hired hand letting the shepherds in. He zooms in on the door of the sheepfold, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." (v. 9).

The Pharisees are compared to thieves and robbers who tried to bypass the door to steal, kill and destroy the sheep. Those who bypass the door are not passive forces that are indifferent to the sheep. These are malevolent forces that pursue the sheep to lure them away and devour them. Every day our children are being recruited by the force behind these false shepherds. Satan is the "prince of the power of the air." That means he controls the environment of this fallen world that lies under his authority. Politics, entertainment, technology, education, business, these all serve as delivery systems to lure people away from the true shepherd. The force behind them is not neutral and harmless. That is why I always say to parents, "You don't raise children, you raise tomatoes. Children must be trained." Raising tomatoes just requires a little sun and water. Training children requires advanced shepherding. You have to be aware of your child's vulnerability, as well as what influences are trying to sneak into the sheepfold. On this Mother's Day I'm thankful for moms who know that their calling is not just to provide food and shelter for their children. Good mothers are tender shepherds who instruct train their kids to identify good and evil.

The true Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. In v. 7 Jesus says, "I am the door of the sheep." That seems like a strange image until you get to v. 11, "I lay down my life for the sheep." The shepherd would lay across the opening of the sheepfold so that none of the sheep wandered out at night and no predator could get into the sheepfold. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus has the right, the privilege, the authority to lead His sheep in and to take them out. They are His sheep.

He even says, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold." Who is that? Another fold? "I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." There's the one Shepherd. What's the other fold? Gentiles, nations, countries of the world, Jew and Gentile, just as Ezekiel promised that God would gather his flock from all of the nations and all the countries. The fold, then, is that which temporarily holds the sheep that belong to God.

When Jesus says, "I am the door," He is simply putting a choice before His hearers - come through Me or be left out in the cold. There is no more important decision in all of life. There is no more important door. It is the door to life. The door excludes all those who bypass the shepherd. The Pharisees were spiritually blind even though they claimed to have deep spiritual insight. They were false shepherds. They wanted to enter God's sheepfold a different way than to trust in Jesus. In one of the most stunning passages in the NT, Peter rebukes Jesus for saying that he had to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Mk. 8:32 says, "And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took

Him aside and began to rebuke Him." What would possess Peter to do such a thing? Jesus tells us in the next verse, "Get behind me Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's." (Mk. 8:33). Peter abandoned the authority of God's word for the authority of human reason. Human reason says, "Jesus is a door to God but He can't be the only door." Mohammad is also a door. Buddha is a door. Nature is a door. All religions lead to God. There are many doors." To declare that Jesus is the only door is to be branded as narrow-minded and intolerant.

In saying, "I am the door," Jesus was claiming to be the only way to God. He is the exclusive way to enjoy the care and protection of the Good Shepherd. The condition is (10:9), "if anyone enters through Me." The invitation is open to "anyone" and everyone, but you must enter through Jesus alone. Any other way is illegitimate. How do you enter? Well, that's the theme of the entire Gospel of John. He wrote these signs that Jesus did (20:31), "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." To enter through Jesus, the door, means to believe in Him as the Christ, the Son of God, who died for your sins and was raised from the dead. Have you done that? Have you put your trust in Jesus as your only hope for eternal life?

Last Wednesday I spoke to the men of Grace Chapel in my home town. One of those men has been a good friend since I did his wedding 32 years ago. He married a young woman who had been in my youth group for three years. I saw her go from a rebellious, competitive, tough teenager to a dedicated disciple of Jesus. Jana and I were looking forward to getting together with these friends on Thursday. As I finished my presentation Wednesday night, Scott came over to me and said, "I have to go, Carol has had a stroke." It turned out to be catastrophic. I called early the next morning and he told me she was nonresponsive and they were waiting to see if there was any brain activity. I asked, "What are you feeling?" He said, "My wife is the strongest person I have ever known. She is a fighter. But I know her well enough to know she won't fight God." Shortly after that she passed through the Door to eternal life.

The greatest gift you could give your loved ones is the confidence of knowing where you are going when you die. The promise of Jesus is, "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."

This morning we have the privilege of confirming the choice of Mike Webster and Perry Jager as God's under-shepherds...Acts 20:28-36.

This morning we have the privilege of affirming two of God's undershepherds in our church.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.