

## Jesus, Door and Shepherd.

Text: John 10:1-11

Suggested Hymns:

607, 175, 602, 387

- 1) Jesus, the Good Shepherd
- 2) Jesus, the Door
- 3) Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the Door
- 4) People Tend To Reject Jesus In Good Times
- 5) In Times Of Trouble Many People Turn To Christ
- 6) Jesus Is Changeless, All-Wise, And All-Powerful

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 10:1-11, <sup>1</sup> *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same 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 doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> “Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.*

<sup>7</sup> *Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> “All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear 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 does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. <sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

You do not need to be a literary genius to appreciate the vividness of the illustrations which Jesus uses. His illustrations are forceful and they are taken from the common things in life.

Who would have dared to liken himself to a “*a hen gathers [that] her chicks under her wings*,”<sup>1</sup> or to compare himself to a road,<sup>2</sup> a loaf of bread,<sup>3</sup> water,<sup>4</sup> a house, a cornerstone,<sup>5</sup> a vine,<sup>6</sup> a lamb,<sup>7</sup> or a temple?<sup>8</sup> In the text before us Christ calls Himself both the Door and the Good Shepherd.

That Jesus should call Himself a King, a Prince, a Governor, is understandable in the light of Old Testament prophecy. But that Holy Scripture should call Jesus both a Door and a Shepherd is striking.

We can be thankful that others before us required the enlightenment of their understanding on this comparison, as our text says, *but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.*

Today, as we worship our risen Saviour, let us gain the strength and significance of these references to our Lord. They will certainly enrich our Easter joy. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Jesus, The Good Shepherd**

Let us first take a closer look at our text. The sheep are kept in a stone-walled, open-air pen with only one entrance. Only the shepherd has access through the door to the sheep. Anyone finding another way in is up to no good, a robber and a thief.

The watchman protecting the door opens it for the shepherd. The sheep recognise the shepherd's voice as he calls them by name and leads them out. The shepherd knows each of his sheep by name.

When the shepherd has called out all of his own sheep, he goes on ahead of them, and they follow because they know his voice. But they will not follow a stranger. They fear strangers because they do not recognise the voice of strangers.

The sheep are God's chosen people. The strangers and thieves are those who want to endanger and harm them. The shepherd is Jesus, sent by God to care for the flock.

### **2. Jesus, The Door**

Jesus saw that the Jews failed to understand, so he started again with a slightly different explanation and a more direct application. *“Most assuredly, I*

*say to you, I am the door of the sheep.*” This was yet another **I AM** passage, reflecting His divinity.

Jesus is the way to reach the sheep and the way for the sheep to come for nourishment. Many “strangers” came prior to Jesus, trying to reach His sheep. False prophets and false christs, thieves and robbers came. They did not come by way of Jesus. They did not find Christ Jesus in the Scriptures and point Him out to others as the way of salvation. Therefore, they did not reach God’s elect — the sheep. God’s sheep would not listen to the thieves and robbers.

Anyone who comes through the door, that is, who believes in Jesus Christ, will be saved. He or she will come and go and be nourished. The thieves and robbers come to steal, kill, and destroy. The effect of false teaching is disastrous. The path of the Pharisees falls off a rocky cliff. But Jesus came so that the sheep might have life and have it to the full.

With Jesus, life takes on meaning and has an eternal future. Jesus gives life that delivers joy, rests content, and blossoms in glory. We believe, and we receive that life from Jesus.

### **3. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the Door**

Jesus is the Word, and all God’s Word reveals Jesus. So Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the door, when think of the Word through which Jesus comes to us and we to Him, and through which we receive nourishment for life eternal from Him.

Jesus is the “good” — “beautiful,” “noble,” “excellent” — shepherd. This shepherd excels in every respect beyond any other shepherd. He is unique.

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Using the figure of the shepherd, Jesus prophesies His death at Calvary, which was just months away.

Ordinarily shepherds protect sheep, but they do not die for their sheep. The Good Shepherd is extraordinary. In contrast, the hired hand won’t take any risk. When trouble comes, he disappears.

The hired hand is like those church leaders who think more of their own well-being than of serving God’s flock. They are not true shepherds. They do not feel any personal responsibility for the sheep. They do the job to make a

living. When wolves come, they show their real colours. They abandon the flock and let the wolves (false doctrine) ravage and scatter it.

The wolf is the enemy who, if unchecked, will destroy the flock and keep it from the Good Shepherd. Every false teacher is such a wolf. Jesus warned another time in Matthew 7:15, <sup>15</sup> *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*<sup>9</sup>

The leader of such a wolf pack, as Jesus had told the Pharisees earlier,<sup>10</sup> is the devil. Jesus was prepared to give up His life to save us from the devil.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does not lose His sheep. He knows us, and He has led us to know Him. He has created a bond between us like that between the Father and Himself. This knowledge surpasses just recognising each other, for even the devil recognises Jesus. This knowledge binds one to the other in love.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus gave up His life to secure that bond and keep His sheep safe. He died for all the world,<sup>11</sup> and His sheep all over the world receive the benefit. Many people thought that the Messiah would come only for the Jews, but Jesus corrected that perception. The other sheep not of that sheep pen were the Gentiles who were also chosen by God from eternity.

Jesus’ mission is to bring them too, along with the Jewish believers, into His flock. This He did and continues to do by the power of His Gospel in the Word and sacraments. His sheep everywhere hear His voice, His Word, and become one flock under the one Shepherd.

The one flock is the holy Christian church, the sum total of all believers, which we will see in all its unity when it enters heaven with the Good Shepherd. For now it is invisible to us, because true faith lies in the hearts of people.

#### **4. People Tend To Reject Jesus In Good Times**

There are days when we do not think that we need Jesus as a Door and as a Shepherd. They are the days of prosperity, sunshine, health, and achievement. If we only knew then the things which belong to our peace!

Usually in such days we ignore the deeper things. It is *“the bright day that brings forth the adder and craves wary walking.”*<sup>12</sup> It was on a day in the life of King Saul when he was a giant among men that he became a dwarf before God.

He forgot that God was both his Door to life, and the Shepherd of that life. He took the spoil which the Lord had told him utterly to destroy. God told him, ***Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.***<sup>13</sup>“

In another passage of the Old Testament we read of another person, ***But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.***<sup>14</sup>

In such days we are tempted to be our own door, our own shepherd. With William Ernest Henley we are likely to say, *“I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.”* This characteristic of human nature is clearly revealed to us in Revelation 3:17, ***‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.’***

The simple qualities of a door, the steady duty of a shepherd in such times, are taken as a matter of course, ignored, and often despised.

### **5. In Times Of Trouble Many People Turn To Christ**

But the Saviour warns us here of another time, times of trouble. Just as in pastoral life there are times of danger — when the wolf comes, when the thieves attempt to take the sheep — so also in human life, there are times when the night of the soul closes around this world of ours.

The world we know is fraught with danger and trouble. There is much fighting overseas and who knows what wars will flare up. There is also much unrest and evil in our own country. We can clearly see that the way people are living today is fast approaching the way it ***was in the days of Noah***. As Christians we rejoice in the Scripture which reminds us ***that as was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man.***<sup>15</sup>

In such trouble most people seek help. It is our experience that then people are more thoughtful and religious. We read in Isaiah 26:16, <sup>16</sup> ***LORD, in trouble they have visited You, They poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them.***

Likewise in a dark hour of David’s life, when he was greatly distressed and ***“the people spoke of stoning him,”*** we read that ***“David strengthened himself in***

*the LORD his God.*"<sup>16</sup> The writer of the Shepherd Psalm knew the characteristics of a true Shepherd in the hour of peril.

When Hezekiah was deathly sick and the Prophet Isaiah had told him to set his house in order, *"he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD."*<sup>17</sup>

Thus Christ is our Door of protection and help. In Him we have escape from the enemy of our souls. And, again, when the door is opened by our Good Shepherd, it is safe for us to go out and feed under His care, but He must remain our Shepherd. Whether the door is open or shut, whether you are inside or outside, He is your Guide and Host.

## **6. Jesus Is Changeless, All-Wise, And All-Powerful**

Thus, as our fortunes change, we change in our attitude toward the Good Shepherd and the Door. But His love, protection, and goodness are always the same. Our text says, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.* When the enemies sought the sheep and they wavered, Jesus told the enemies, *"I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,"*<sup>9</sup> *that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."*<sup>18</sup>

Recall the parable of Jesus of the ninety-nine and the one lost and strayed sheep. What did He risk to regain the lost? He risked the ninety-nine for the one. This shows God's great love for each and every one of us. We read in Romans 5:8, *<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

As you consider the words of the Apostles' Creed, the blessedness of the representation of Christ as our Door to life, and as our Shepherd, stands out all the plainer. In Him all that a spiritual door and a good shepherd does is comprehended.

The Good Shepherd acts, and the door operates, according to wisdom. Note that the watchman opens the door when the true shepherd comes, and the true shepherd enters by the door; but any other way of access is the sign of someone who is not good.

Jesus knows each sheep. ***“I know My sheep.”*** He knows the sparrow on the housetop and the very hairs of our head in number.<sup>19</sup> Even the evil that is meant against the sheep He knows and turns it to good so long as the sheep follow Him.

Remember what Joseph said to his brothers, as written in Genesis 50:20-21,<sup>20</sup> ***“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”***<sup>21</sup> ***“Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.”*** And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

When Moses was a helpless babe in the river, God knew the best place for that child.

Jesus, in dealing with His own mother, knew when the right hour would come. This incident happened at the wedding in Cana of Galilee where Jesus turned water into wine.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise in a forthright fashion Jesus told His enemies, ***“Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs?”***<sup>53</sup> ***“When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”***<sup>21</sup>

Yes, Jesus knows the right time for His sheep. When we are His sheep, we place our times in His hands and follow Him, just as sheep hearing His voice respond to him. Therefore we should have complete confidence as to His wise guidance and the beneficial functions of His office.

When this all-knowing Shepherd becomes our Shepherd, we have the all-powerful One. Did Jesus not say, ***“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth”***?<sup>22</sup> By that power and authority Jesus gives to us what that power can convey.

In our text Jesus tells us what, through this power, He can give us, ***I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*** It is through His life as our Saviour and Redeemer that we obtain new life here and life everlasting hereafter.

It was for this reason that David said in the great Shepherd Psalm,<sup>3</sup> ***He restores my soul;*** that is to say ***“He redeemed my life from destruction”*** ...<sup>6</sup> ***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will***

*dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.* Indeed, in the keeping of this Shepherd we are safe, both now and to all eternity.

Whoever evaluates this great supremacy of the Good Shepherd, who proclaims Himself also as the Door, must realise that there is no one to take His place, and that there is no shepherd compared with Him.

Let us cheerfully remain members of Jesus' flock by believing in Him and following where He leads us.

Let us count what He has bestowed, what He has assured, and with the little children say:<sup>23</sup>

Jesus is my staff and stay,  
Gently guiding day by day.  
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me;  
When I thirst, my shepherd leads me  
Where the quiet waters flow,  
Where the sweetest pastures grow. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 23:37

<sup>2</sup> John 14:6, way

<sup>3</sup> John 6:48

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 17:13

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 21:42

<sup>6</sup> John 15:5

<sup>7</sup> John 1:29

<sup>8</sup> John 2:19

<sup>9</sup> See also Acts 20:29

<sup>10</sup> John 8:44

<sup>11</sup> John 3:16

<sup>12</sup> Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act 2, Scene 1

<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 15:23

<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 32:15

<sup>15</sup> Luke 17:26

<sup>16</sup> 1 Samuel 30:6

<sup>17</sup> 2 Kings 20:1

<sup>18</sup> John 18:8

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew 10:29

<sup>20</sup> John 2:4

<sup>21</sup> Luke 22:52-53

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 28:18

<sup>23</sup> Hymn 602 v 2