

Friday 13 March, 'I am the Gate'

John 10:1-10

1. Snack and Quiz

Doors keep people in; they keep people out. Can you think of a time when you were thankful for a door or gate or mad that one was keeping you out?

Divide into two teams - can you identify the doors?

2. Game: Sheepfold

Each person starts in their sheep pen. All the sheep are in the middle.

4 minutes to get as many sheep as possible.

Players may only hold one sheep at a time; must put this sheep in their own pen before collecting another sheep.

Allowed to steal sheep from other folds as well as collecting from middle.

Game ends when binger goes. Player with the most sheep wins.

3. Recap

Open in prayer.

What did we do the last two Bible clubs?

Which book of the Bible are the I AM statements of Jesus in?

Each time Jesus says "I AM," we are reminded that he is God. Each I AM statement teaches us a bit more about what he is like.

So far, he is the Bread of Life and fills up all our spiritual needs; he is the Light of the World and he lights up our spiritual darkness.

Today we will learn about Jesus' third I AM statement in John 10:1-10.

Kim will read it to you now. Listen quietly. When she has finished, put up your hand if you know what Jesus' third I AM statement is.

4. Reading (John 10:1-10.)

'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. **2** The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. **5** But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger's voice.' **6** Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

7 Therefore Jesus said again, 'Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. **8** All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. **9** I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. **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.

What is today's I AM statement?

That's right. In this passage, Jesus calls himself the gate for the sheep.

Some of what Jesus says might seem a bit confusing since we don't live in a society with lots of sheep. Back then in Israel, sheep and shepherds would have been all over the place, so everyone would have known exactly what Jesus meant. We may need help so let me paint you a word picture.

5. Word picture

Close your eyes and put your head on the table on your arms.

Imagine you are a sheep. [Baaa]

You are a woolly little lamb in a big, big field. All your sheep friends are around you, and you are playing and eating and being happy in the green, green grass.

You take a big, deep breath, and you can smell fresh grass and wild flowers.

You listen closely and you can hear the bubble of a little brook not far away where your shepherd takes you to drink.

You lie down and feel the warm sun on your back, the soft ground beneath your feet, and a gentle breeze tickling your soft, sheep ears. You are one happy lamb. [Baaa]

Suddenly, you hear a voice that is like music to your ears. It is the best sound in the world, and it makes your heart go thump, thump, thump in your little sheep chest. It's your shepherd! He is calling you back to the sheepfold for the night.

You leap up and happily follow your dear shepherd back to the pen. You like your pen. It's a small pen, just the right size for just your flock.

There is another, bigger pen, close the city. Sometimes you share it with other flocks of sheep. When you sleep there, all the sheep from all the flocks are together for the night and the shepherd can go back to his house. Then he comes in the morning and calls all his sheep by name and you say good bye to your friends and follow the him into the hills to find the yummy green grass.

But tonight you are too far away from the city and the weather is warm. You are staying in the hills in this little sheepfold. You look around at the walls that the shepherd has built out of rocks and you know that you are safe for the night.

There is no gate to the sheepfold, no way to lock you in, so after he says good night to each of you, the shepherd puts down his staff and spreads it out in the opening of the pen, where you came through for the night. He becomes the gate. He will sleep there all night and make sure no one will come and hurt his sheep.

You look up and the sky. The orange sun is just starting to set, making the puffy clouds in the sky turn pink. You give a contented "baaaaa" before laying your head down to sleep. You are safe in your sheepfold, with your shepherd as the gate.

Pause. OK, you can open your eyes again.

6. Explanation of the Gate

Does that story help you to understand what Jesus is saying in John 10:1-10?

Would anybody like to explain it to me in their own words?

Back in Jesus' time, shepherds would usually keep their sheep in one of two types of pens.

One type of pen was a big pen found in cities, where several shepherds could keep their flocks all together. This type of pen had a door, which was guarded at night by a watchman. In the morning, the shepherds would come and call their flock out. The sheep would know which shepherd to follow because they knew his voice, just like the sheep in our story, and just like Jesus says, "They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."

The second type of sheepfold was a smaller one in the countryside. The shepherd would keep his sheep there in good weather. The walls were made of piles of rocks and there was no gate, just a gap for the sheep to get in. To keep his sheep in and to keep wild animals out, the shepherd would lie across the opening to sleep.

Jesus is the gate for us. He keeps us safe and protects us from anything that could hurt us.

7. Thieves and robbers

Who are the baddies in the story?

In this passage Jesus mentions thieves and robbers. All throughout the Bible, God's people are referred to as sheep and God as the shepherd. They rely on their shepherd for everything in life, from finding water, to staying safe and warm, to getting up when they fall down. They follow the shepherd wherever he leads. So, like in our story, we are sheep.

Jesus says there are thieves and robbers who want to come in and steal us away!

Who would want to do that?

That's right, Satan is always trying to steal God's people away, but he uses different people and ways to do it.

In John 10:8, Jesus says, "All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them."

What he means by "all who came before me" are the Pharisees, the people he is talking to. Do you remember the burdens they placed on people? They told people that there were all these rules they had to follow to be holy before God. Jesus is telling them that they are thieves and robbers, stealing people from God's kingdom by telling them these lies about how they are to be saved! But the true sheep of God, the people that really know Him, know better.

Do you think we have "thieves and robbers" that want to steal people away from God today?

There are people, for whatever reason, don't believe that Jesus is the way to get to heaven, and want to convince people that Jesus is not really God.

There are other people who say they are Christians, but then, like the Pharisees, they try to get people to believe things that aren't really in the Bible.

But Jesus says the true sheep do not listen to them. We don't listen to the people who want to lead us away because we know the shepherd's voice. We know what Jesus says, so we will not let ourselves be confused and taken in by lies.

How do we know what Jesus says?

That's right: we read our Bibles, we pray, and we come to church! All of these things help us to know Jesus better.

8. Life

Sometimes the thieves and robbers try to deceive us by telling us that it would be much more exciting to escape from the sheep pen.

But what is Jesus's desire for the sheep, v.10?

Jesus says he is the gate to a good life. A good shepherd takes great care of his sheep, and makes sure they have everything they need.

He is the only way of salvation; he is the only way we can get to heaven and be with God forever. There is no other way to get to heaven, no matter what anyone says. We are saved only when we enter through the gate, when we follow Jesus.

When we know his voice and follow him, our lives are filled with good things. That is great news! When we go through Jesus, we have true life. We have a rich and satisfying life now and the promise of heaven to come.

Sometimes people think they will have more fun by ignoring God's ways, but it very often results in sadness and hurt even in this life. Maybe tonight at dinner you could think about some examples of that.

9. Challenge

So the challenge for us:

- (i) Do you know the Shepherd's voice? Do you know that he is calling you by name?
- (ii) Do you trust Jesus to give the best, the most satisfying life, or will you listen to lies of Satan when he whispers that it might be more fun without the shepherd?

10. Craft choices

- (i) Gate (everyone)
- (ii) Door hanger
- (iii) Name
- (iv) Life