

John 10:1-10

“I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! ²But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.” ⁶Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what he meant, ⁷so he explained it to them: “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”

Background

After rebuking the Pharisees in John 9, Jesus began talking about sheep and shepherds. It may seem like a shift in topic, but it’s actually a continuation. The Pharisees, who were supposed to be spiritual shepherds, were actually false ones. They are the “thieves and robbers” referred to in verses 1, 8, and 10. Jesus is the only **true** Shepherd.

Sheepfolds were walled enclosures guarded by a watchman, often shared by multiple flocks. A “true shepherd” would be recognized both by the watchman and by his own sheep. When a flock could not return to the sheepfold overnight, the shepherd would find a sheltered, enclosed area and gather the sheep there. He would then lie across the entrance, serving as the “door” to protect the flock from thieves and wild animals.

Teaching Points

1. Christ is the Shepherd of the sheep.

In this figurative discourse, Jesus is clearly the true Shepherd, but the sheepfold, gate, and gatekeeper also carry symbolic meaning. The **sheepfold** represents Israel, protected under the Law given through Moses. The **gate** represents the proper, prophetic way for the Messiah to enter, true to Scripture. The **gatekeeper** likely represents John the Baptist, who, by the Holy Spirit, prepared the way and recognized Jesus as the true Shepherd.

The **true sheep** are those who recognize and follow Jesus, such as His disciples and all other genuine believers. Jesus came to lead His true sheep out of the sheepfold—out of Judaism and the Mosaic Law—because salvation is not through the Law (Romans 10:4). This fulfilled the prophecy in Ezekiel 34.

2. Christ is the Gate of the sheep.

Christ is not only the Shepherd of the sheep; He is also the Gate for the sheep (v7). He leads His sheep out of the sheepfold and into salvation, safety, and spiritual nourishment (v9). He is the Gate to abundant life filled with meaning and joy (v.10). Jesus alone is the Gate. As He said in Matthew 7:13–14, the narrow gate leads to life.

Application

1. Have you heard the True Shepherd's voice?

Verse 3 says His sheep recognize His voice. But many people refuse to listen. Many are led astray by the voices of false shepherds and false religions. Jesus is the **true** Shepherd, and His voice always aligns with Scripture. If someone claims, “The Lord told me...,” but it contradicts Scripture, then it’s not the true Shepherd speaking.

2. Have you found the True Shepherd's pasture?

Notice in verse 9, Jesus is not only the Gate to salvation but also to pasture, or spiritual nourishment for the soul. Through Him, we find what truly feeds us. A Christ-centered life, grounded in prayer and Scripture, is essential for a healthy soul. We won’t find lasting nourishment in entertainment, travel, sports, or career success. These things have their place, but true food for the soul is found only in Jesus and His Word.