**“I AM THE DOOR”**

Let me begin this morning by asking you to share what your favorite chapter in the Bible is and why.

My favorite chapter in the Bible is the one that we’ll be looking at this morning and for the next few weeks, John Chapter 10. It’s a wonderful chapter, theologically rich. Much of what I believe as it relates to salvation and eternal security I get from this chapter. For me this chapter settles any doubt I once had about the assurance of my salvation. Whenever I read John Chapter 10 I can rest assured that my hope, my salvation is secured – not because of me, but because of Him! I may fail. I may disappoint. I may feel like giving up. But Jesus never does. He is faithful to the very end. And that comes out in this chapter.

Another reason I love John Chapter 10 is that I fully relate to Jesus’ word picture, v 6 calls it a “figure of speech,” that of us humans being just like sheep. I love that! What are the characteristics of sheep? Frankly, sheep are stupid, they’re weak, they have no sense of direction, they’re gregarious (stay in groups) and they know their shepherd. Well, like sheep, we human beings tend to congregate in groups made up of people who are like us and most of us are followers. People, we’re not as smart as we might think we are! We’re too easily fooled and led astray and even a bit gullible at times. So I very much relate to the sheep analogy that Jesus uses in this chapter.

To set the scene for you, as Chapter 9 closes Jesus is outside the temple with the man who He had healed of his blindness. The man was kicked out of the Temple, excommunicated by the Pharisees, and has just professed his belief in Jesus. Jesus talks to the man and then He enters into a dialog with a few Pharisees who overheard what Jesus had said to the man. These Pharisees ask Jesus, “Are we also blind?” Our conclusion after reading thru John Chapter 9 was that, yes, they were blind spiritually. They’re blind because they refuse to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, as the Son of God, the Savior, and the Light of the world. This willful rejection of Jesus comes after His many claims, His authoritative teachings and countless signs and miracles (proof that He was indeed from God). And here is a big point – the Old Testament scriptures all pointed to Jesus as being the Jews’ long awaited Messiah. So, yes, the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, are blind. They are not ignorant, they have been given plenty of light, but they are blind. So John Chapter 10 is a continuation of Jesus’ response to these Pharisees.

READ John 10:1-10.

What a tremendous passage of scripture! Jesus is the good shepherd, which we will see beginning in verse 11. He’s the true shepherd of the sheep. He’s the One who comes to bring life, abundant life, and to offer peace and security. He contrasts Himself in this passage to the “thieves and the robbers,” who “come to steal, kill and destroy.” In His figure of speech, who might these people be? Who do they represent? The religious leaders of Israel.

READ John 10:1-3

The sheepfold here represents the nation of Israel. God’s plan was to save His people from their sins by sending a Savior at the appointed time. That’s the Christmas story. So Jesus arrives on the scene. He’s announced by the angels, by Simeon, by Anna, and later by John the Baptist. Then, when His earthly ministry begins, Jesus reveals Himself as the true shepherd of His people and He leads those who believe in Him out of the sheepfold – His 12 disciples and many other followers, most of whom are unnamed. This was God’s plan. You could say that Jesus entered into the sheepfold legally. He came in fulfilling the O.T. prophecies. He came in under the Law. Galatians 4:4 says, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law.” According to the prophecies He was of the line of David, was born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, etc. He was a rod out of the stem of Jesse. Though Jesus was in the kingly line, when He was born He was just a branch out of the stem of Jesse, a peasant. Jesus was a lowly son of a carpenter. No one else had the credentials that Jesus had.

But then you have these thieves and robbers. They didn’t enter thru the gate. They were not in God’s plan of redemption. In fact, they entered the sheepfold of Israel by climbing over the fence. They usurped God’s plan and stole away some of the flock. Just like those sheep thieves in Jesus’ day would come to the sheepfolds and steal the sheep for their wool and meat. Thieves took the sheep that didn’t belong to them for their own selfish purposes. They never had the welfare of the sheep in mind at all. This is what was happening in Jesus’ day in a spiritual sense. And it wasn’t anything new. It had been a problem in Israel for a while, going all the way back to the days of Ezekiel.

READ Ezekiel 34:1-5

So God announces through the prophet Ezekiel that He is going to come and gather the scattered sheep and shepherd them Himself…

READ Ezekiel 34:11-14

This is a Messianic prophecy and Jesus fulfills it during His ministry. Jesus is contrasting Himself as the True Shepherd of Israel, sent by God against the false shepherds.

READ John 10:3-4

Notice that Jesus calls His sheep and leads them out, v 3. One sheepfold might serve as the temporary holding place for many different flocks, each with its own shepherd. But the sheep will only follow the voice of THEIR shepherd. The shepherd knows his sheep and he calls each one by name. And the sheep know their shepherd and follow them. There is a relationship which has already been established between the sheep and their shepherd.

So, how do we become Jesus’ sheep? Theologically the answer to this question came back in John Chapter 6: “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me” (v 37); “I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me” (v 39); “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (v 44); “No one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father” (v 65). Ephesians 1:4 says, “Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world…” According to what Jesus and Paul say in the Bible, God appointed us, He chose us, to be Jesus’ sheep. So the gatekeeper in verse 3 is God. I’m not going to get into a discussion about election and predestination this morning and how all that works in relation to human free will. What you need to understand is that by the time you come to John Chapter 10, the sheep that Jesus calls are already His sheep. He knows them and they know Him. So Jesus leads these sheep out of Judaism, out of the bondage of legalism. That’s what is happening in these verses.

As we move thru the chapter Jesus is going to call His sheep out of various different sheepfolds. Later in verse 16 Jesus will say, “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” This is in keeping with what Ezekiel 34 said about God gathering His sheep from out of all the nations (Jews and Gentiles). So as we read thru John Chapter 10 we find application for us as well.

READ John 10:5

Open your ears and listen. There are a lot of voices clamoring to be heard in our world today. Some of these voices are very persuasive and would love for you to follow them. Maybe they are the voices of false doctrine. Maybe they are the voice of the tempter trying to get us to do something we know is wrong. Maybe it’s the voice of indifference or anger or envy. The mark of a true believer, a true follower of Jesus Christ, is that they follow the voice of their True Shepherd, Jesus. “A stranger they will not follow.” In fact, Jesus says, “they will flee from him.” The sheep that belong to the Lord run away from those strange voices. First Corinthians 6:14 tells us to “Flee immorality!” As for false teachings, Paul warns the Ephesian pastors, “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” The sheep must avoid the enemy and the way to do that is to stay close to their Shepherd.

READ John 10:6

Remember who Jesus is talking to here in this passage – a small group of Pharisees. So it should come as no surprise that they don’t understand what Jesus is saying (remember, they are spiritually blind). But Jesus is going to try to help them out because He loves them…

READ John 10:7

This is the third of Jesus seven “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John. He has already claimed, “I am the bread of life” in John 6 and “I am the light of the world” in John 8. Here in John 10 He says, “I am the door of the sheep.” Next week in verse 11 He will say, “I am the good shepherd.” We’ll focus our attention on the door this morning.

READ John 10:8-9

In Bible times, often the shepherd was the door. At night he led his sheep into the fold where they would find rest and be safe from the prowlers of the night – the beasts of prey and other predators. The shepherd would take up his place at the opening of the sheepfold, thus becoming the door. This is a wonderful picture of our security in Christ! Our True Shepherd, Jesus: (1) saves us, v 9 (2) secures us, He’s the door, v 7 and 9, and (3) satisfies us, v 9. This is what Jesus came to do, to shepherd His flock just like we read in Ezekiel 34. “I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.” Psalm 23 says, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters…” Remember who Jesus is talking to. He’s addressing some of the Jewish religious leaders. The way out of the sheepfold of legalism and self-righteousness is thru the door, it’s thru Jesus. He’s the way. He’s the only way.

READ John 10:10

Notice the stark contrast between Jesus, the True Shepherd, the Good Shepherd and the thieves and the robbers, the false shepherds of Israel. They came to steal, kill and destroy the sheep of Israel. Jesus came that these sheep may have abundant life, eternal life, a relationship with their covenant God. Only Jesus is the true source for the knowledge of God and spiritual life and security. For both Jew and Gentile, Jesus is the door of salvation. Through Him we enjoy all the blessings that come with being His sheep. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6). “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20)

There are many voices calling us. There are many shepherds that want to lead us. But we can only follow one of them. Why? Because they’re all headed in different directions. Which voice are you going to follow? It’s a willful choice, an informed choice. Follow the voice of the True Shepherd. In Matthew 18, Jesus is the Shepherd who will risk His life to seek and save the straying sheep. In Matthew 9, Jesus is the Shepherd who has pity on the people because they are “like sheep without a shepherd.” In Luke 12, Jesus calls His true disciples His own “little flock.” In 1 Peter 2:25, Peter refers to Jesus as, “the Lord Jesus the Shepherd of our souls.” The writer of Hebrews in 13:20 in that great closing benediction says He is the great Shepherd of the sheep. Follow THAT Shepherd. Follow His voice.

Joseph Henry Gilmore was a Baptist preacher from New York state in the 19th Century. He said, “I set out to give the people an exposition of the Twenty-third Psalm. I had given this exposition on three or four other occasions; but this time I did not get beyond the words ‘He leadeth me.’ So greatly impressed was I with the blessedness of divine guidance that I made this my theme.” He wrote the words to this well-known hymn, “He Leadeth Me” originally as part of his sermon notes. He was 28 years old. “He leadeth me, He leadeth me; by His own hand He leadeth me: His faithful follower I would be, for by His hand He leadeth me.” May that be our prayer of commitment, our song this morning. Let’s sing…