

Series: I Am

I am the Gate and the Good Shepherd

Sermon by Paul Joslin

John 10:7-21

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, March 30, 2025

A reading from John 10:7 through 21: “Therefore, Jesus said again, ‘Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, so when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life, only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. I received this command from my Father.’ The Jews who heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, ‘He is demon possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?’ The others said, ‘These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’” The word of the Lord.

Thanks, Ashley. How is everyone doing today? Good. It is good to be with you this morning. On Sunday mornings, typically I wake up a little early, I pray over the sermon and our time together, and then I typically try to take myself out to coffee on the way into church, and today I went to Dunkin. Are there any Dunkin fans in the room? Like four, okay, that doesn’t go well, but yeah, I hadn’t been to Dunkin in forever, and so I get up to the counter and like, “Oh, there are so many options. I do not even know what to do,” and so I ordered coffee, and I get a doughnut, and then I am like on my way out, and I grab this stuff from the lady, and I say very, very loudly, like, way too loudly, “Have a good night.” It was like 7:30 in the morning, so that is how my day got off to a start. So, we will see how the sermon goes today, but no, it is good to be with you.

Before we get into the message today, we are going to be looking at two, “I am” statements, “I am the door,” and “I am the shepherd,” but I just want to shout out to our kids’ team really quickly. Was anyone here on Friday night for the sweetheart ball? Are there any dads in the room or grandpas? It was phenomenal, such a good night. Our kids’ team just crushed it, and it was so fun. I loved it, and I just love seeing how many dads from our community and our church came out to show our daughters how special and valuable they are. It was a really, really great night, so if you see a kids’ staff member or volunteer, just say give them a shout out. It was a ton of work to pull that off. They were here late cleaning up everything after us, but it was an awesome night, and then the last thing, and then I promise we will get going, is at the end of service day we are going to have a special moment where we are commissioning

some of our new Stephen ministers, and so I would love for you to stick around after the sermon and the last song for that moment. It is going to be a really good moment where we commission them to care for the people of Waterstone and our community. Does that sound good? All right, let me pray for us, and then we are going to jump in.

Heavenly Father, God, we just come before you now, and as we open your word, I pray that we would open our hearts. God, if there are people in here, I know so many of us come with distractions, things that have been going on in the week, things at work or home. God, I just pray in this moment that our hearts would be fully turned to you. God, I ask that you would open our eyes, open our ears to receive from you today what you would have for us. We pray by the power of your Spirit and in the name of Jesus for these things, amen.

All right, so a question for you as we get started today, have you ever operated in life under the assumption that if you have done something bad, then something bad might happen to you? You get to that place where you experience maybe some financial stress, or maybe someone in your life gets sick, and there is just a part of you, just like a small part of you that wonders, “Is this bad thing happening because I did something wrong? It is God somehow punishing me for the things that I have done?” and we operate, and at least I do at times with this equation in our relationship with God where we think if I sin somehow, then that is going to result in suffering in my life, and if I am obedient, then that means that I will receive blessing. I remember when I was eighteen years old, my mom was diagnosed with cancer, and I was living under this assumption, and as an eighteen-year-old, I remember wrestling with God. What did I do as a teenager that caused my mom to get sick? Just this week I was on a conversation with a woman who does not go to our church, but she is experiencing just some really challenging things in her life, health issues, financial issues, and over the phone, as I was just talking with her and trying to pray for her, she is sobbing, and she is asking the question, “What did I do to God to deserve this? Why would God do this to me? What have I done?” and I think many of us, even if we do not speak it out loud, we can operate with this equation as our baseline for understanding how we relate to God. I think one of the challenges with it is that there is like a thread of truth, a little bit of truth, in that when we sin, there are consequences, and when we do good things and when we are obedient, then usually that is good too, but is that how God wants us to relate to Him? Is that the foundational understanding of our transactional relationship with God? Is that what our relationship with God is supposed to look like?

I think many of us struggle with this question. We are not quite sure, and even if we can look at that equation and say, “I know that is not true,” we are not quite sure why, and something happens in our life, and we think, “Man, did I do something? Did I cause something to make this bad thing happen?” and that actually is part of the heart of the story that we are going to look at today in John chapter 9, so if you have your Bibles, if you want to turn there, we are going to be really camped out on John chapter 9 and John chapter 10. It begins this way, this story, “Jesus, He was walking along with his disciples, and He saw a man who was blind from birth and his disciples asked Him, ‘Rabbi who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?’” Translation, “Jesus, who screwed up somewhere? Someone did something that they were not supposed to, and so this man was born blind, and either it was his parents, and they did something wrong, or it was this man himself,” which is really, like, think about that for a moment. This man was born blind, and so they are really saying like, hey, he screwed up in the womb or something,

or like, maybe he was going to be so bad that God just like preemptively cursed him. It was like all, “because of this thing you are about to do, I am just going to make you blind from birth.” Like, it is a weird question, but the inherent assumption in it is that he sinned, or his parents sinned, and so that equals suffering. They are operating under that equation.

How does Jesus respond to this question? He goes on, and He says this: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” and Jesus is not saying here that the parents were sinless and never did anything wrong, and He is not saying that the man never sinned or ever did anything wrong. He is saying that is not the cause of why this man is blind. The disciples are stuck in this mindset. They are thinking that there is some sort of dual causality relationship, that if they do one thing wrong, then something bad happens, and Jesus said He is not willing to play the blame game. He is saying, “You are thinking about it all wrong. It is not because he sinned, or his parents sinned. Neither of that is the cause of this man’s blindness.” Where they are looking for punishment and to understand why this person is being punished, Jesus says actually that this is an opportunity for God to do something incredible, and so He says, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

Now pause here for a moment, because I think when we see that, we love the first part. Jesus is saying neither this man saying nor his parents. That is not the cause for why he is blind, but then He says “this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him,” which, if you think about it too long, it sounds like God cursed this person just so He could show off, and for some of us, I think that maybe does not sit super well with our disposition. We are like, “Okay, really, like this man suffered his entire life just so God could like show off for a little bit in this moment?” Like, is that really what we are saying? and the problem with that is that we miss it in the English, and I am not going to get into all the Greek, because I would put you asleep, but essentially what Jesus is saying here that we miss is not that the man was born blind so that God could be glorified. He is saying that God has sent Him into the world so that He could show God’s glory in broken situations like this man’s life, and that distinction is so important as we go on with this story, so it is not just that God is cruel. Jesus is showing up in this person’s life to show that God is at work.

Then the story gets really, really weird, because Jesus, in front of this blind man, He spits on the ground, in the dirt, and then He bends down, and He starts moving the spit around in the dirt to create mud, and He takes that mud, and He begins smearing it on the person’s face, and you have to imagine. I mean, imagine for a moment you are a blind person, and you are hearing this conversation go on about you with you in the room. “Is it this man who screwed up, or is it his parents? Why is he blind?” and you are just sitting there as a blind person asking for people to help you. Jesus spits and then starts smearing mud on your face. That is a little weird, a little awkward, probably, and Jesus says to him, “I want you to go across the city, and I want you to wash in a particular pool,” and the man does it in blind obedience, literally. He is still blind, and he walks with mud caked on his face across the city to this particular pool, the pool of Siloam. He washes his face, and suddenly he begins to see shapes and colors and faces.

Have you ever seen those videos where maybe a person who is color-blind is given glasses that allow them to see color for the first time? Or maybe those videos of a parent or a child who was born deaf, and they are given hearing aids, and suddenly they can hear their mother’s voice for the first time? I mean, if you have seen those videos, you know how emotional the just the weight of that moment, the beauty.

That is what Jesus has given this man. He has allowed this man at that moment to see the world for the first time, and so after he is healed, he goes back to the place where Jesus healed him, and people see him, and suddenly he has no mud on his face, and he is no longer blind, and they begin arguing among themselves. They have no idea what to do with him, and so some of the neighbors who have lived with him their whole life, they think, “That can’t be him. He was born blind. He cannot be healed. Blind people are not able to see. It has to be someone else that just looks like him.” That is literally what they say, “He probably just looks very similar, like he was a blind person,” and then others think, “No, I think it is he. Like I think he can finally see. I think he was healed,” and he speaks up in the middle of this argument. He says, “No, it is I. I was blind, and now I can see. Jesus healed me,” and they are like, “How did He heal you?” He is like, “You saw it. He put mud on my face. It was really weird, and then I washed it off, and I could see, and I do not understand, but I can see,” and it should be a moment for celebration, and I mean, it is a miracle. A person who is blind from birth can suddenly see, but the people do not celebrate.

In fact, what happens is they are so upset that they begin asking, “Where is this person? Where is Jesus? Where did He go after he healed you?” He says, “I have no idea where He went. I do not know,” and so they take him, and listen to this in verse 13: “So they took the blind man, and they brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened his eyes,” and notice the two verbs, “He made mud, and He opened his eyes,” “was on the Sabbath,” and so Jesus was breaking some religious rules, and so the people who have witnessed this miracle and are fighting about who He is, turn him in to the religious leaders, because they know something has happened here that was not supposed to happen. Jesus broke the Sabbath rules, and the Pharisees are angry, and they are upset about it too, so they begin this inquisition of the man. “What happened? How were you healed?” and he tells them the story, and they do not really believe it.

They go back and forth, and he says, “He wiped mud on my face, and then I was healed, and then the people brought me before you, and I am just telling you what happened. I do not really know,” and they are like, “Who do you think Jesus is? We think He is a sinner, and maybe He is demon-possessed, and that is how He is able to do it,” and they are fighting about who Jesus is, and he says, “I do not know. I think He is probably a prophet, because I can see now,” and so they send the man away in the middle of this trial, and then they pull his parents into the scene, and they set his parents on trial as well, because they do not believe that this man was actually born blind.

That is how far they are going to disprove the miracle, and so they bring his parents into their courtroom, and they say, “Okay, is this man your son?” and they are like, “Yes, he is our son.” “Was he born blind?” “Yes, he was born blind.” “Can he see now? Was he healed?” “I don’t know. You should ask him,” which is such a weird response. It is a moment like when the police officer shows up at your door with your kid and says, “Is this your son?” and you are like, “Yeah, that is our son,” and they are like, “Why was he vandalizing the school?” “I don’t know, officer. Take him away.” Like you should just, like that is what happens at this moment. There are like, “He is old enough. You should just ask him. We don’t want to,” and they hesitate, and they do not stand up for their son, and they just give him up to the religious leaders, which is such a weird response, and yet John tells us why they are hesitant to answer the question. He tells us that they were afraid.

They were afraid of what the religious leaders might do to them, because the community was already aware that if people spoke up for Jesus and said, “I think this man is from God,” then the Pharisees would kick them out of the religious community. This is a good moment to pause and pick up some of the historical background of what this family has endured from the very beginning because they had this son who was born blind. In that day and age, a physical deformity like that meant that God disfavored you, that there was probably something wrong with you. It is the question that set off the whole story, “Who sinned, this man or his parents?” That was the worldview through which they saw their relationship with God, and so if you were born blind, then it is really clear that someone, somewhere in your family screwed up, and so you are not supposed to be a part of the religious community anymore. In fact, it is very possible that the first time this blind man was able to enter into the religious community was after he had been healed and was brought in on trial.

I mean, imagine being a child born blind, and you were told by the leaders of your community that God does not want you, that you are not allowed in his community because something is wrong with you, and it is not just this blind man who has endured that. It is the parents. It is the whispers, the judgments, and the speculation. “What have they done that caused this? What went on in that household, that God would be so displeased with them?” So, they have been living their entire lives under this social scrutiny and shame of everyone looking at them and condemning them. The religious leaders were ruling the people harshly and brutally. They were already on the outside, and so then they are brought in, and they are asked to give an answer about what is going on with their son and whether or not he was healed, and in the weight of the shame, it was not just the blindness that this man endured, but it was the weight of what people assumed about him and his family for their entire lives. He was born into a world that had a verdict on him before he could even speak. Of course the parents would be afraid. Of course they would be worried about risking their own reputation, whatever little they had left, and so they refused to answer.

So, then the religious leaders, they subpoena this man again, and they bring him back into the courtroom, and I love the question that they ask. They say, “Give glory to God by telling the truth. We know that this man Jesus is a sinner,” which I would classify as leading the witness a little bit, like, “We have the answer we want. You need to tell us what we want to hear so we can condemn Him too,” and then in verse 25, the man responds to this accusation, this leading question, and he says, “Whether He is a sinner or not, I do not know.” Remember this man from the moment he was born and opened his eyes and could not see, he has been labeled as a sinner. That is the label that he has carried, and he says, “Whether he is a sinner like me or not, I do not know, but one thing I do know is that I was blind, and now I see.” He does not have all this theology figured out. He does not know everything there is to know about Jesus, but he knows enough to know that he has been kicked out of the religious system for being blind, and Jesus has somehow healed him, and that does not sound like someone who is a sinner, and so they stir up the debate again, and some of the religious leaders are like, “I think that He is a demon-possessed man, and that is how He is able to do it, and He broke the Sabbath, so He can’t be a man of God,” which is like a weak argument when you really think about it.

Then to that, some people respond and say, “Yeah, He broke the Sabbath, but He also opened the eyes of a blind man, so maybe He is from God,” which I think is the stronger argument, and so they are debating, and they are questioning, and they are angry, and they accuse the man of standing up for Jesus

and being his disciple, and he says, “He healed me. What do you expect? Do you want to be his disciples too?” and at this, they get angry at his response that Jesus opened his eyes and that he is one of his disciples, and so in verse 34 they say this, ““You were steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us?” and then they threw him out.”

This man who was born blind suddenly gets thrust into the middle of this philosophical, theological debate. Jesus heals him, and the thing that has kept him from the religious community his entire life is suddenly healed, and there is suddenly a glimmer of hope that he might be welcomed into the community of God, and then the label that he has carried his entire life for his blindness that is now healed, the Pharisees hurl at him again: “You are a sinner from the moment you were born. We are asking who sinned, you or your parents? We know the answer. It was you,” and they heap all of the shame, all of the guilt, all of the rejection that he has experienced, and they label him that way, and they kick him out of the community. They confirm what he has been worried about for his entire life.

I think this is a really important moment in the story, because I think it is a moment that many of us can relate to, because many of us have carried labels throughout our lives for things that we have done, or we have carried labels in our lives for things that have happened to us, maybe abuse or abandonment, and somehow, somewhere, the world told you that those things were your fault, that you did something to deserve the bad stuff that happened to you, that who sinned? You did, and because you were so bad that God could not love you, He is so displeased with you that He is punishing you with all of the bad stuff that has happened in your life, and we carry the weight of that label, and we believe that lie about ourselves, and we begin to have that belief stick to us like glue, and we think, “I do not belong. There is something wrong with me. I am damaged. I have disappointed God too much.” “Who has sinned, this man or his parents?” In many ways, that is the question that we all live under the weight of, “Did I do something wrong to cause God to be upset at me?”

Now you might be thinking here like, “Paul, what in the world are we doing in this story? We just read from John chapter 10, and that is where those ‘I am’ statements come from. This is the ‘I am’ series. This story is pretty heavy, and I do not quite understand the connection,” and it is heavy, and you are right, and what we have to recognize is that this comes in the heart of this dialogue with the Pharisees, that this question of this man’s blindness, Jesus healing this man’s blindness, him being put on trial, it is the whole setup for Jesus’ two statements, “I am the door. I am the gate, and I am the good shepherd,” because Jesus does not say these statements to his disciples, and He does not say them to the crowds who are around Him. He says them directly to the Pharisees in response to how they treated this blind man.

We come to these statements, and we think, “Okay, ‘I am the door,’ it is all about how God allows certain people into the faith community or not, and Jesus is the way in, and He keeps certain people out, and He lets other people in,” or we think about this idea of God as the good shepherd, and we get this image, I remember this painting that my grandma had in her kitchen, and it was Jesus holding a lamb up to his shoulder, and that is the image that we have of the good shepherd, and there is truth to that, and I do not want to ruin your nostalgia, but there is a very different story happening here. Jesus sees what happens to the blind man after He heals him, and He goes to the Pharisees, and He confronts them, and this is what He says, starting in verse 7: “Therefore Jesus said again, ‘Very truly I tell you’” and He is talking to the Pharisees directly, “I am the gate for the sheep, and all who have come before me are thieves and robbers,

but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate, and whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, but I have come that they might have life and have it to the fullest.” Jesus is declaring something about Himself in this statement to the Pharisees. He is making a theological claim that He is speaking into the pain of this man and the Pharisees’ treatment of him. He is declaring something about who He is for people like the blind man and people like you and like me.

This is an image of a sheep pen from Jesus’ day, and it was a wall of rock that the shepherd would stand in that opening there and then allow the sheep to come in, and as the sheep would come in, what we understand is that the shepherd would lay his staff across the back of the sheep to stop the sheep before it went in, check it to make sure it was okay, make sure there were no wounds on it, and then bring it in to safety. Now what do you notice about what Jesus says about Him being the door for the sheep in this sheep pen? There is no door, so what is Jesus saying? Here is the imagery: what we understand is that shepherds, when they had all of their sheep safely in the pen, they would actually lie across that opening, and they themselves were the door, and so they would take the place to safeguard the sheep, and what does Jesus say to the Pharisees? The thieves and robbers, what do they do? They do not go through the door. They climb over the side to try to steal and harm the sheep. Jesus is saying that He is the door. He is the one who stands in the gap to protect the sheep, that He is the one who allows them to come in to safety and security, that He is the one who protects them, that He literally lays his life in the gap to protect the sheep.

This is something else that I noticed about this passage this week that I have actually never noticed before. In Jesus’ dialogue with the Pharisees, He says, “the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” Now I have always read that, and I have always assumed that that is talking about whom? Satan, the devil. Whom is Jesus talking to? The Pharisees. He is talking very specifically to the Pharisees, saying, “you are thieves and robbers. You are not taking care of the sheep the way that you are supposed to. The sheep, the flock of God has been entrusted to you, and you are ruling them harshly and brutally, like this blind man. You are thieves and robbers,” and what is so important for us to understand is Jesus is not just stepping into this scene and just having this conversation. He is in a theological fistfight with these Pharisees, and He is pulling on an ancient prophetic indictment from the Old Testament found in Ezekiel 33.

I want to read that to you, because it is so important that we get this imagery right, so Ezekiel 33 says this: “The word of the Lord came to me,” talking to Ezekiel: “Son of man, I want you to prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, and I want you to prophecy and say to them, ‘this is what the sovereign Lord says: “Woe to you shepherds of Israel, who only take care of yourselves. Should shepherds not take care of the flock? But you eat the curds. You clothe yourselves with the wool. You slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened up the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.”’”

God is ticked at how his sheep have been treated. In fact, He goes on to say that He is going to judge the shepherds, that He is going to come against them, that He is setting Himself against them for how the sheep have been treated, and do you see some of the parallel between these words in Ezekiel and what Jesus says to the Pharisees in this moment? I mean, He is calling out to them that “you have not taken care of the sheep. You have abandoned the sheep. You have ruled them harshly and brutally,” and

He is pointing back to the blind man who has been kicked out and excommunicated, and Jesus is drawing a direct parallel from six-hundred years prior, saying, “You are the false shepherds. You are the ones who do not take care of the sheep, but I have come. I am the gate who will protect the sheep.” What Jesus is saying here is, “You are the people who keep telling everyone they cannot get to God, but I am the gate. I am the one who makes a way for all of the people who you said do not belong, and I am giving them access to God.” We flip the metaphor, do we not? We look at this idea of Jesus being the door, and we think, “Jesus is the only way in or out,” and that is true, but it is not about restriction. What Jesus is saying in this moment is He is throwing open the doors for all of the people like you and like me and like the blind man who have been told their whole life that they do not belong, that they are not allowed into God’s people or his presence or his community, and Jesus is saying, “I am the door. I am letting them in, and I am here to protect the sheep from people like you.”

The gate is not just a metaphor for keeping people from God. It is a metaphor for giving people access to God who had previously been kept from God. Jesus says, “I am the gate, and whoever enters through me will be saved.” He is not saying whoever obeys perfectly, not whoever has no past, not whoever fits the religious mold, and not someone who has never messed up. He is saying whoever. Jesus is flinging the gate to wide open right in front of the Pharisees faces as He is saying, “You are the false shepherds.” Do you see the beauty of what Jesus is doing?

Then He goes on, and it gets even better, because He goes on to say that He is the good shepherd, but before we get to that, I want to flip back again very quickly to Ezekiel 34, because this is where it all begins to come together. This is a longer section, but I want you to stick with me, because the payoff at the end is so good. It says in verse 11, “for this is what the sovereign Lord says.” God has been angry at the shepherds. He has condemned, and He is angry at the shepherds, and He is saying that they have not taken care of the sheep, and then this is his response: “‘I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd who looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they are scattered on the day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out of the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land, and I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture. In the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land, and there they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down,’ declares the sovereign Lord. ‘I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured, and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong, I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice,’” and then it goes on a few verses later, and it says this: “‘I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them and be their shepherd. I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken,’” and it is with that background that Jesus says these words: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, so when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep, and he runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it, but the man runs away, because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”

What is Jesus saying here? God in Ezekiel 34 says that the sheep have been so mistreated that if the leaders and the shepherds who were supposed to take care of them, will not take care of them, then I myself will, and Jesus shows up onto the scene in this story of the shepherds not taking care of the sheep, and He says, “I am the good shepherd.” I am the one who has come to protect. I am the one who was promised. I am the son of David, who has come to take care of the flock, to set free the captives, to bind up the brokenhearted, to rescue the weak, to vindicate the oppressed and feed the flock with my very own body.” He says, “I am the good shepherd, and you false shepherds.” I mean, Jesus is, it is like He has turned his shepherd’s staff into a bow staff, like He is fighting them like a ninja with this staff. He says to them, “You are thieves and robbers who do not take care of the sheep.” He is saying, “The thief comes to steal, but the good shepherd searches and saves. I have come to protect the traumatized.” He is picking a fight. It is not this image of Jesus just like holding a little lamb to Himself and saying like, “It is okay.” He is fighting against these false shepherds and saying that the good shepherd has come.

So, who sinned, this man or his parents? The Pharisees have an answer to that question. It is the same question that the world often hurls at us. It is the insult that you are the reason for all of the things that have gone wrong in your life, your sin. It is the ways that you have screwed up, the things you have done wrong. God is punishing you, and Jesus looks at the same story, the same circumstances, and He says something completely different. It is not about the sin that has been committed. It is about the world being broken and the God who enters it to care for his sheep. Who sinned, this man or his parents? That is the question that so many of us have hanging over our heads. “What have we done wrong? What did we do to deserve this?”

It is not always what the world says to us from the outside. Sometimes it comes from us inside. “Does God still want me? Could He really love someone like me? Is God good? Is He for me?” and into that ache and that pain, God says, “I am the gate. The world may have told you, maybe even the religious institutions have told you that you are too far gone. You do not get access to the Father, and I am here to tell you, I am the gate. For all of the people who have been told that they are not allowed to come in, I am throwing the doors open into God’s presence. I am making a way for you to enter into the good pasture of mercy and forgiveness and rest,” and into that pain, God says, “I am the Good Shepherd, and I have come to take care of the sheep,” and He is not just a kind shepherd. He is also a sacrificial one.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, and here is the part that gets me about this story that I skipped. There is this confrontation and this trial with the Pharisees and the blind man, and then Jesus confronting the Pharisees, but in between there, Jesus goes to the man, and they have a conversation about who He is and what He has done, but I love, I just I cannot get past this. In verse 35 it says this: “Then Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when He found him,” do you hear the assumption there? It is that when Jesus heard what happened to this man, when He heard he was put on trial, when He heard how he was abused and kicked out and thrown out, the assumption is He immediately went to go search for him, and He found him, because He is the good shepherd, who searches for the lost, who binds up the broken, and who chases after the ones who have strayed. Jesus is the shepherd, and He is shepherding the flock. In this moment He searches out, and He went and looked for him, and when He found him, then they have this conversation about who He is and why this man should believe in Him.

Jesus is the good shepherd that when the world slams the door in your face, Jesus is the gate that opens Himself to you. When you feel unworthy, or you feel unloved, Jesus is the good shepherd, who lays down his life for you. While the thief comes to steal your life, Jesus comes to give life to you. While the thief comes to kill, Jesus came to heal, and while the thief came to destroy, Jesus came to restore, because He is the good shepherd.

So, my question for you today is, where do you need the good shepherd to show up in your life? What set of circumstances are you living under the weight of? “Who sinned, you or your parents?” Where are you struggling to see or find God’s goodness? Where are you carrying the weight of shame or guilt or feeling like something has gone wrong, and you feel like it is your fault? Where are you living under the burden of your sin and your shame? Would you allow Jesus to be the good shepherd in your life, the gate that opens a way for you to find good pasture and rest with the Father?

During this last song, I am going to invite any of you who may need prayer today. If there is a set of circumstances in your life, something you are going through, I would just invite you during this song as we respond to this story to just come forward. I will be available for prayer. We have someone available over here if you need prayer, right down here. I would just encourage you, if you feel like you are in a place where you do not know the answer to that question, if you do not understand who Jesus is, let someone pray that truth over you today. That is the invitation. Let me pray for us, and then we will respond.

Heavenly Father, God, as we come before you now, God, this story of a man born in darkness, who sees the light, who experiences you as the good shepherd, who has been condemned for his whole life and told he cannot come to the Father, who was given away to you, Father, wherever we are, whatever story we are living in, whatever lie we believe, I pray in this moment by the power of Jesus that you would bring freedom. I pray and I ask that you bind up the broken in this moment, that the places within us that are suffering and longing for a good shepherd, would you come and provide healing? Father, may we experience the goodness of these two ideas that you are the gate, and you are the good shepherd. It is in Christ’s name that we pray, amen.

Jesus is the good shepherd. May you live in that truth this week. May that pierce the narrative and the lies that you believe about who you are, and may you just know God’s goodness is the good shepherd.

41:22 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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