

37. Jesus Is the Door of the Sheepfold

In our last topic, we saw that we want to equip our children to lead people to the One who is the Light. Some people are in spiritual darkness because they have heard the truth and are in open rebellion against Jesus as the religious leaders were in the time of Christ. However, many people are in spiritual darkness because they had never had the message of the Gospel clearly explained to them. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus is the One who is the door through which a person enters to have eternal life.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus made it clear that He had come from the Father. However, His concern was also to help the people learn how to come to the Father. As a result, in our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus explains the difference between His goal and the goal of Satan. John 10:1-3 says, “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. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” In these verses, we see that Jesus explains that there is One who leads people to life and one who leads people to death.

Jesus began by talking about the thief. The thief does not come through the door and he does not want others to come through the door. That is why the thief tries to get into the sheepfold in some other way. Jesus warned that the one who tries to get into the fold by some way other than the door is a thief and a robber. God had said through Ezekiel that the leaders of Israel were like false shepherds. God told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 34:2, “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?’”” Then, God explained how the shepherds of Israel were like thieves and robbers. Ezekiel 34:3-4 says, “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.” By these actions, they had scattered the people.

In contrast, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. In Israel and the surrounding nations, all of the people in a village kept their sheep in a sheepfold and one person was hired to care for the sheep. In the morning, each of the shepherds would come to the sheepfold and would call his own sheep. He would call each sheep by name. The sheep would each hear their own shepherd calling them and come to him. Then, the shepherd would lead the sheep to a place where there was plenty of grass so that the sheep could eat sufficient grass. Jesus called each one of us to salvation by name.

A good friend of mine grew up herding sheep. Since most people today drive sheep, I asked him what it takes to lead sheep. He said that when a lamb is first born, the shepherd feeds the lamb, carries the lamb and plays with the lamb. When that lamb grows and becomes a sheep, then that sheep will follow the shepherd wherever he goes. Then, I asked my friend what it takes to drive sheep. He replied, “A few good dogs.” Jesus is the One who is the Good Shepherd. That is why

John 10:4-6 says, “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.” Here, we see that the shepherd leads his sheep rather than driving them, which is an illustration of the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus gave us a real picture of the way that He leads us once we come to Him in repentance and faith. He calls us by name. Ephesians 1:4 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” We were chosen and Jesus has called us by name. In addition, 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” Here, we see that we responded to His love for us. Then, He has called us with a wonderful invitation. Matthew 11:28-30 says, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” It is these and many other things which Jesus did for us that give us a desire to follow Him as He goes before us. That has resulted in us getting to know His voice as we follow Him.

At the same time, Jesus said that His sheep will not follow a stranger. Instead, Jesus says that His sheep will flee from strangers. False religious leaders carry out their religious duties for self-gain. We saw earlier in this topic that the shepherds of Israel were serving themselves and not the Lord. We see what the Lord told those unfaithful shepherds in Ezekiel 34:10 where we read, “‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.’”” Jesus said that those who are His true followers will recognize and avoid such leaders.

Jesus also gave the reason why those who are true followers of Him will flee from those who are strangers. Jesus said that His sheep do not know the voice of strangers. The word translated “stranger” speaks of one belonging to another or an enemy. Jesus told the Pharisees in John 8:44, “‘You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.’”

The Pharisees were doing the same things as the false religious leaders in the time of Ezekiel. Jesus gave this illustration to the Jewish religious leaders. However, we see that they did not understand the things that Jesus said to them. The reason that they could not understand was due to the fact that they were not followers of God. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” They could not understand spiritual truth because they did not have spiritual life.

Then, Jesus went on to teach some additional lessons from His illustration. John 10:7-10 says, “Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If

anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 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.” Jesus had already said that He is the Bread of Life and the Light of the World. Now, He said that He is the Door of the sheep. All those who are His sheep are His sheep because they have come in through the Door. Jesus is the only One who can offer salvation as a free gift because He is the One who made that salvation possible by paying the price for sin.

There had been many false prophets and false teachers who had come before Jesus just as there are many false teachers today. That is why Jesus had warned, in Matthew 7:15, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” Then, in Luke 6:26 He said, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” Jesus said that those who know the voice of the Shepherd will not hear such false prophets and teachers and will not be deceived by them. This is why it is so important for every follower of Jesus to get to know His voice by asking the Lord to give them understanding of His Word.

Jesus said that those who are true sheep enter through Him. This means that they receive Jesus by repenting of their sin of unbelief and believing that the Father raised Christ from the dead. Jesus said that all who come to Him will be saved. Jesus also promised that all who come to Him will be fed. Ezekiel spoke about the ministry of Christ when He said in Ezekiel 34:15-16, “I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord GOD. ‘I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.’” Here, we see that the Lord will feed the flock as well as meet the other needs of those who follow Him.

Jesus also explained the goal of Satan by describing three things that Satan does. First, he comes to steal. The word translated “steal” means *to take something away by stealth or trickery*. Second, Satan came to kill. The word translated “kill” means *to slay or sacrifice*. Third, Satan came to destroy. The word translated “destroy” means *to bring to ruin, to put to death or to destroy in hell*. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Satan wants people to perish.

In contrast, Jesus came that we might have life. John 3:15 says that Jesus was lifted up on the cross so “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” In fact, Jesus came to give abundant life, which is beyond what we can imagine because it is eternal. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly to others how they can also have this abundant life by repenting of their unbelief and coming to God through Jesus because He is the Door to eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain to others how to have eternal life.