The “I am” declarations of Jesus shepherd Week 4 SBC 12 24

To play a sport well one needs to know the rules. When you don’t, you are constantly being stopped. The same is true with life. When we follow the “rules” that Jeus has given us, we understand more about how the world works and can find true freedom. The “freedom” the world is looking for is outside the rules of how the world truly operates and can only lead to death and bondage.

Perhaps the understanding of freedom is not found in the absence of boundaries but in the ability to reach my potential with the loving parameters of someone who has my best at his heart.

How do we enter this safe place?

Last week …. Way truth life …. Jesus says He is the way. We find the Father through Him. This week we are extending that analogy as Jesus says, “I am the gate”. But what does that mean?

**John 10 The Good Shepherd and His Sheep**

**10**“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen 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 recognize 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. 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.

In the days of Jesus, Shepherds took the sheep off for the day to graze and they returned to the pen at night. This way they were safe from all the predators that roamed at night. Away from the Pens they were vulnerable and an easy meal.

**Who are the gatekeepers?**

*The pharisees had set themselves up as the gatekeepers to God.* They made the rules, judged good and bad, right and wrong. Said who was in and out of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is pointing out … to the Pharisees… that He sees through their words and promises and their presentation of religious holiness and into their dark and sinful hearts. He is accusing them of pursuing their own self-interests over the good of the people … and even the interests of the God they claim to serve.

Jesus uses an analogy they would be very familiar with to show people the danger around them that they are unaware of. The people are coasting through life assuming everything is happy and ok, not realising the lie they are being sold.

Paul also identifies people who are setting themselves up to be gatekeepers. He criticizes the circumcision party and the Gnostics amongst others.

There are those who set themselves up as the gatekeepers. Within religions and within our communities.

Do we truly believe that the people around us in our society are here to build us up and strengthen us? Are they here for my best interests? Is the media all about what is best for me? Is big business about serving me for my best interests?

*If we are the gatekeepers to the Kingdom (or our church), who are we letting in? We say it is Jesus but is it really?*

How do people come into our community? Do we create a maze of unwritten expectations for people? To look right? To speak right? To know all the correct words actions and responses? To laugh at the right jokes and frown at others? Are we willing to let anyone in? Or is it just those who will not offend me? Those who don’t make a mess of my nice culture and religion? Is it only if I am not inconvenienced too much…..

*The door to the church is decorated to look inviting. But is there a maze grown in front of it, designed to make it harder for people to even find the door.*

Rev 3: 20. **“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.**

Jesus is at the door and inviting us in. How awesome! We assume He is speaking to the community outside the church. *But, what is the context?* He is speaking to the church! He is speaking to us. He is speaking to the church who is supposed to be passionate about God, chasing after Him and yet happy in their practices and liking the easy comfortable life.

The Message to the Church in Laodicea Rev 3: 15 - 21

“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

 **“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.** Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

Jesus is speaking to the church, to us. He is offering a relationship with Him if we are willing to let go of the things that we value away from Him. He hates the lukewarm. He calls us to be passionate for Him.

**Who (or what) is your gatekeeper?** Jesus is offering us safety and protection, through HIs body. He is the gate, the entry point into this place of refuge so we can be free to graze tomorrow.

Jesus is holding the gate open to us. What is stopping us from whole heartedly following after Him?

 **John 10**

**11**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12**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. **13**The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

**14**“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— **15**just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16**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. **17**The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. **18**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. This command I received from my Father.”

The shepherd was the guide and protector of the flock. In many ways, he was the chief Sheep. The sheep followed him, listened to him, obeyed him and relied on him. Without the shepherd, the sheep knew they were lost.

***Jesus is more than a bouncer at the door to Heaven.*** He is far more than just the gatekeeper.

Jesus said …… “I am the good Shepherd”

Jesus calls us. Do we know His call?

Rather than seeking his own self interests, Jesus proclaims He lies down His life for the sheep, both predicting His own future as well as the model of love and reflection of the love of the God they follow.

Jesus is our shepherd. He personally knows and protects us so we can go about doing His will in this world. We are not a number or a crowd or an audience. We are his friends, known by Him, loved by Him and built by Him.

**Ways Christ Is the Good Shepherd**

Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14). The relationship of believers with Jesus Christ is that of sheep to a shepherd. The Lord is our shepherd; we are his flock. But what does that mean?

**1. Christ has received you as a gift from the Father.**

*“My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” (John 10:29)*

Christ’s sheep are a gift that he receives from the Father. Now how would you know if you are one of Christ’s sheep? How would you know if you have been given by the Father to the Son?

The identifying marks of Christ’s sheep are stated clearly in these verses: **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me**” (10:27). But what does it mean to hear his voice?

So, if you believe and follow Jesus Christ, you are one of Christ’s sheep. You have been given by the Father to the Son.

**2. Christ knows you completely.**

*“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father…” (10:14-15)*

In the Psalms we read, “The Lord knows our frame…” (Psalm 103:14). Christ knows your temperament, your moods. He knows what lifts you up, and he knows what gets you down. There is nothing you could ever tell Jesus about yourself that he does not already know completely.

Because he knows you completely, he is able to lead you effectively. The good shepherd knows what you need, and he is able to give you what you need at precisely the time that you need it.

**3. Christ gave himself for you.**

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.…I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10: 11, 15)*

Here is something very wonderful: The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Never forget that Jesus chose to suffer and die for you. This was not imposed on him. He gave himself willingly. “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (10:18). Jesus accomplished everything he had come to do and then he *gave* himself into death.

**4. Christ called you and brought you to himself.**

*“And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.” (John 10:16)*

Is the verse here I believe He is referring to the sheep who are not Jews. Jesus is saying that He is not only called to the Israelites but to the whole world. The Father is reaching out to ALL people, not just to who the Pharisees value.

You come through the door when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But when you believe, you will very quickly have an awareness that there was something going on beyond your believing.

**5. Christ gives you eternal life.**

*“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish…” (John 10:28)*

If Christ is your shepherd, this precious gift of eternal life is already yours.

And notice the word *give*. In other words, you did not earn this priceless gift. Eternal life is freely given by the shepherd and freely received by his sheep, simply because he is the shepherd and we are the sheep.

The life Jesus gives is *eternal*. Eternal life, by definition, is a life that never ends, and if you have this life, it’s yours forever!

**6. Christ guards you and will never abandon you and will keep you forever.**

*“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” (John 10:28-29)*

The hired hand “does not own the sheep” (10:12). He shepherds the flock because he is paid to do so. There is a point when the hired hand may say, “It’s just not worth it.” There are limits to his commitment.

Christ does not care for you because of what he can get out of you. That would be the spirit of the hired hand. Christ cares for you because you are his. There will never be a time when he will say, “You’re not worth it.” He made you his own, at the cost of his life and, having made you his own, he will never leave you; he will never forsake you.

With such a shepherd committed to you for life, what do you have to fear?

We have for confidence as a Christian when all the pressure stands against me. Nothing that is ours in Christ can be taken away.

Christ’s sheep are in his hand. That’s the answer! And as if that wasn’t enough, our Lord adds, “No one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (10:29-30).

**We have been welcomed into the Kingdom of God**

**We walk with the shepherd each and every day**

**We abide in Jesus and He abides in us.**