

Worth It (Part 1) – John 10:1-21

John 10:1-21. We're continuing our series in the Gospel of John that you may believe and keep believing. Believe and live. And this text is *full* of glorious truth. Not the least of which is two more "I am" statements. We've already seen "*I am the bread of life*" in chapter 6 (35), and "*I am the light of the world*" in chapter 8 (12), and here it's "*I am the door of the sheep*" and "*I am the good shepherd*." This text is full.

And the point I want to make, is that discerning all these truths, and applying them, is worth it. Worth our time, worth our effort, worth the blessing, and worth our life.

John 10 – [1] "*Truly, truly, I say to you* [probably speaking to the same group from chapter 9, the Pharisees], *he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber*. Jesus shifts from speaking in the abstract, at the end of chapter 9, to using another metaphor. This time a **sheepfold**. Which in those days, was a stone-walled enclosure, with no roof and a narrow opening for a door.

And as you might imagine, there were people who tried to steal them. Thieves, who were *covert* about it, and robbers who were *overt*. In your face.

[2] *But* [contrary to such thieves and robbers] *he who enters by the door* [the opening] *is the shepherd of the sheep*. [3] *To him* the gatekeeper opens. [The person guarding the door.] *The sheep hear his voice* [the voice of the shepherd], *and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out*. By name, because sheepfolds were often occupied by several flocks in those days.

But they only followed their shepherd. The one whose voice they heard and *knew*. And the one who knew them. Personally. *By name*. You see where this is going.

[4] *When he has brought out all his own* [from their place of safety and rest], *he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice*. [They trust him.] [5] *A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers*."

That reminds me of a Romanian pastor I knew, who grew up in a shepherding family himself, and said that the first time his dad told him to get the sheep and lead them out to pasture, it was a disaster. Because they didn't know his voice. He had been *around* the sheep, but they only *knew* his *dad's* voice. They only trusted his dad. So they balked, and scattered, and pretty much ignored him. Jesus wasn't making this up.

[6] *This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them*. Saying about himself. They didn't connect the dots.

[7] *So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep*. [8] *All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them*. [9] *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture*.

I'll come back to v8, because the point at hand, on either side of it, is that . . .

Jesus is the door of salvation worth entering (v7, 9, 10b)

He says it two times in two verses. *I am the door of the sheep*, v7; and *I am the door*, v9.

Which *seems* a bit confusing. If he's the door, then who's the gatekeeper? In v3. And if he's also the shepherd, implied in v2, how can he also be the door? How can he be the door, the gatekeeper, and the shepherd all at once?

I think it's best explained by a story **G. Campbell Morgan** once told. Morgan was a famous British preacher in the early 1900's who made more than 50 trips to America on steam ships. And on one of those trips, he ran into a guy named Sir George Adam Smith, a Scottish Theologian and Old Testament scholar.

And in the course of their conversation, Sir George told Morgan about one of his encounters with a shepherd in the Middle East. And I want to read it to you in Morgan's own words, as he retells it.

He was one day traveling with a guide, and came across a shepherd and his sheep. . . . [And] The man showed him the fold into which the sheep were led at night. It consisted of four walls, with a way in [and out]. . . . "But there is no door," said Sir George. "I am the door," said the shepherd. . . . Sir George looked at him and said, "What do you mean by the door?" The shepherd [said], "When the light has gone, and all the sheep are inside, I lie in the open space, and no sheep ever goes out but across my body, and no wolf comes in unless he crosses my body; I am the door." (Morgan, *The Gospel According to John*, 177)

So when Jesus says he's the door and the shepherd both, it makes perfect sense.

But his point, here in verses 7 and 9, is that he's the door to the sheepfold of God. The door of salvation. *If anyone enters by me* [v9], *he will be saved*. Saved from what? Judgment.

Jesus is the door of salvation, and he's worth entering . . .

• **To escape judgment**

It's the first of *four* aspects of the salvation he offers us. We are saved, to escape the judgment we deserve for our sin. Judgment in hell. Characterized by darkness, fire, weeping, gnashing of teeth, and demons. And the only way to escape it is through Jesus; entering the sheepfold of God through *faith* in him, trust in him. Giving up your life for his. *Condemnation* for salvation.

All of which makes it worth it. Only through him can we be safe. Saved.

Second, Jesus is the door of salvation worth entering . . .

• **To be free**

Or as Jesus said it in v9, we are saved to go *in and out* of the sheepfold. To live *free* in Christ. And free *through* Christ. Gathering *in here* for worship and fellowship, and going *out there* for work and ministry. *In and out*. Back and forth. This is the sheepfold, the place of safety and rest, and that's the world.

We don't enter the door of salvation to turn our sheepfold into a bunker. To hunker down and never leave; avoid the world at all costs; obsess over our safety. We're saved to be free. To go *in and out* for worship and work. Not to keep one foot in the world and indulge with it, but give *up* the ways of the world and change it. Bless it. Influence it.

And it's worth it. Free *in* Christ and free *through* Christ, entering the door of salvation is worth it.

Third, we enter the door of salvation . . .

- **To receive sustenance**

Spiritual sustenance. Or as Jesus said it in v9, *pasture. If anyone enters by me, he will . . . find pasture.* Green pastures. Provision. Food for our soul. Everything we need for life and godliness. Refreshment by still waters. (Ps 23:2) Peace beyond understanding. Joy beyond words. And the list goes on.

The sustenance of God on the other side of the door of salvation can't be overstated. God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and the pasture is heavenly. All of which makes entering the door of salvation worth it. *Infinitely* worth it.

And fourth, is . . .

- **To have life**

Jesus is the door of salvation worth entering, to have life. [10] *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.* [I'll come back to that in a minute.] *I came* [Jesus said] *that they may have life and have it abundantly.* Jesus came so that those who enter the door of salvation would have *Life*. Eternal life. Full life. Glorious life. Life writ large.

Jesus didn't come to just *barely* save you. Or to give you a *pittance* for an inheritance. Nor did he come to "pen" you in and make you miserable. Or string you along and hold out the *carrot* of life.

He came that you would *have* life. To save you, and raise you, and pick you up, and turn you around, and set you free, and send you off. He came to give you life to the full and life forever, for his glory and your joy.

I love how the **ESV Study Bible** puts it: "Jesus calls his followers, not to a dour, lifeless, miserable existence that squashes human potential, but to a rich, full, joyful life; one overflowing with meaningful activities under the personal favor and blessing of God, in continual fellowship with his people."

Amen. No wonder Jesus is the door of salvation worth entering.

So whatever you do, don't wait. Don't miss it. The grass really is greener on the other side of the fence. The pasture really is better.

And if you're already grazing, praise God. Praise him for opening a way through Christ, and wooing you to enter. Pulling you through and saving your soul. That's the first takeaway.

The second, is that . . .

- **Thieves are false teachers worth avoiding (v8, 10a)**

Jesus said in v8 – *All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.* Now, he could be referring to all the false prophets in days of old; or to the various revolutionaries along the way; or the Pharisees and Sadducees standing right in front of him; or maybe all the above. *Anyone* who led the sheep of God astray. Deliberately *or* inadvertently.

And the fact that God's people of old didn't *listen* to them, make the *thieves and robbers* false teachers. People worth avoiding. Then *and* now.

Especially so because of what Jesus says about them in v10 – *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.* Still referring, most likely, to *earthly* thieves. False teachers and deceptive leaders with ill-motives.

But it also applies to Satan, doesn't it? *The* thief. *The* robber. The one who *exists* to steal us away from the truth. The one who *lives* to kill God's people. The one who *works* to destroy churches. It applies to Satan to a "T."

But even then, he usually works through false teachers. Like it says in **2 Peter 2:1–3**. Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit – [1] *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies* [unbiblical falsehoods about God and his ways], *even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.*

[2] *And many will follow their sensuality* [the license and hedonism they teach and preach; the lack of devotion they model], *and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed* [referring to the Gospel and how to live; it will be twisted]. [3] *And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle* [it's operative, it's coming], *and their destruction is not asleep.*

Massive deceiver that he is, Satan and his demons most often steal from the shadows. Through the work of false teachers who unwittingly do their bidding. People who preach and promote *license* in the Christian life instead of devotion. People who deny the authority of God's Word. People who twist the truth to suit their *thinking*, or to gather a crowd, or to line their pockets, or to support their experience.

And I don't think I need to tell you they're legion these days. False teachers abound. Professing to *know* God, but denying him by their works. People who are *disobedient* and *unfit for any good work*, Paul says. (Titus 1:16) Worth avoiding for sure.

But sometimes it's hard to spot them. They sound good, they look good, and they make you feel good. But there are certain "tells," certain indicators, that they're thieves. Robbers. Wolves in sheep's clothing.

- **Like those who spread a false gospel**

A false gospel like the "social gospel." Emphasizing the social aspects of the Good News, more than the personal ones. Like saying that Jesus came to bring about social reform and "social justice," instead of personal transformation through faith and repentance and discipleship.

In fact, false teachers in this camp often minimize or deny the *need* for such repentance. "Man's not depraved," they say. "The sin people manifest isn't *their* fault, they're just corrupted by unjust social conditions. They don't need a *personal* Savior, they need a social one." All of which makes them false teachers worth avoiding.

Same for the "prosperity gospel." The teaching that if you give your life to Christ, money cometh. Jesus saves to bring you health, wealth, and parking spots. You just need the right

amount of faith. You just need to sow a bigger seed. Name it and claim it with more conviction. It's a false gospel from false teachers, and worth avoiding.

You Are Loved

Another group are . . .

• **Like those who deny core biblical doctrines**

Doctrines like the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. That he died in our place as our substitute, to take our punishment for our sin, and appease God's wrath for our salvation. It's a core doctrine that couldn't be clearer in the Bible, and those who deny it are false teachers.

Same for those who deny the truth about hell and judgment. Ranging from a belief in purgatory, to outright annihilation after a time. And those who say salvation equals faith *plus* works. Or truth equals the Bible *plus* tradition. False teachers. All of them.

And then there are those who deny the inspiration of the Scriptures altogether. Saying that the Bible is just a compilation of various perspectives, all true to themselves and what they knew at the time, but not necessarily true for all time. Or, that it's just *one* take on God, among many others; *equally* valid. Or that *some* parts are good, but others aren't. Because it's full of errors and can't be trusted.

People who deny core biblical doctrines like that, either explicitly or by implication, are false teachers worth avoiding. Because their heresies are destructive and their way leads to death.

And last, are . . .

• **Like those who claim apostolic power and authority**

Some of them covertly, and others overtly. Like the New Apostolic Reformation. The poster child of which would be Bethel Church in Redding, CA. The one who puts out a lot of worship songs. Some of which are good and some of which are off. Way off. But they're not the only ones.

If somebody claims that new apostles and prophets are legit these days, run. They're a false teacher. If somebody claims "new revelation" on par with the Bible, run. If somebody promotes a deliverance ministry, supposedly casting demons out of believers, run. If somebody obsesses on signs and wonders, like speaking in tongues and miracles on demand, run. And if somebody claims the power to raise people from the dead, avoid them like the plague. Because they're false teachers. Thieves and robbers.

Don't listen to them and don't "follow" them; even out of curiosity. Treat them just like the saints of old Jesus cites in v8. Because they will lead you astray, and exploit you.

Summary

Far better, is listening to the truth. Far better, is following Jesus. The *true* door of salvation. Worthy of it all and worth entering. Because *the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy*. [Jesus] *came that [we] may have life and have it abundantly*.

Prayer – Father, how precious that life is. How worth it to have. To escape judgment, and enjoy freedom, and receive sustenance. How good it is to know you and be known. Impress these truths on our heart, by any and every means, because it's worth it and you're worthy.