

I am the Gate: John 10.1-10

Context

The opening and closing words of this passage:

v.1 “Truly, truly, I say to you...” and

v.21 “Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

– tie this passage closely to Jesus’ encounter with the blind man and the Pharisees/ Jews. Question: Where is this man (Jesus) from?

1st metaphor the (true) shepherd

Jesus begins by contrasting the shepherd of the sheep with thieves and robbers.

Night time is always a time of danger in John’s Gospel (ch.9:4; ch.13:30; ch.18), as it is for sheep.

The shepherd of the flock enters through the gate, welcomed by the gatekeeper (i.e. God); thieves and robbers come in the night and gain access by other means.

The sheep know the shepherd and so will follow him, but they will flee the voice of the stranger.

Jesus’ hearers, the Jews (ch.9:18 - religious leaders and Pharisees), do not understand him (10.6). The implication is that they are not his sheep or they would know his voice.

More tellingly though, they are the thieves and robbers of Jesus’ allegory. They care nothing for the wellbeing of the sheep, *even opposing their healing*,

As Jesus says in 8.44 “You are of your Father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”

The blind man has heard the good shepherd’s voice and fled from strangers/robbers (Pharisees), and found a fuller life – 9.35-38

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe, and worshiped him.”

Jesus ends with note of judgment v.39 “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”

I am the gate/door

Jesus spells it out in plainer, albeit metaphorical terms:

he is the gate - all others who have claimed to be the way into God's kingdom are thieves and robbers.

Includes false Messiahs but also religious leaders in ch 9:

The means of entry they have controlled, including the Law, synagogue and temple worship, have proven false and are now superseded (ch.3:5; ch.4:21-24; ch.9:22).

God, the gatekeeper, has made his Son the only way for his sheep.

Entering the gate =

- sanctuary/safety for the sheep: *saved* from wild animals and thieves and robbers.

Exiting the gate =

- at the call of the shepherd and under his constant protection
- to find the pasture which will sustain life

Gate = metaphor for

- entry into salvation. Assurance and security.
Assurance = important as other faiths don't offer this because always dependent on human effort: 'doing enough'
Cf. Prayer of humble access – Jesus has opened the way to the Father
- 'going out' to fullness of life:
Christians know a fullness no others do as all life has meaning and purpose, and hope beyond grave, and know loved by God.

Cf. the lot of the non-believer in Jesus – described in Eph 2.1-3

- Dead in sins in which walk
- Following the course of this world
- Following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience
- Living in the passions of the flesh
- Ruled by desires of body and mind
- By nature children of wrath
- Having no hope and without God in the world (v.12)

Julius Caesar and soldier who requested permission to end his life: a wretched, miserable, dispirited creature with no vitality. Cesar looked at him. “Man” he said, “were you ever really alive?”

Fullness of life = freedom – to walk in the light/truth. Free of shame (cf. Gen 3), guilt, alienation. To live in the lie/under Satan’s yoke = to be enslaved to sin.

Jesus as the Bread of Life – and Peter “Lord, to whom shall we go” You have the words of eternal life...” (6.68)

Echoes of first sign at Cana (2. 1-11, new wine), and new aeon in Rev 21.1ff.

Overflowing into eternal life (Gk. = lit. ‘superfluity’ of life)
Entry into eternal life – heavenly kingdom

The exclusiveness of Jesus’ claim

The gate = a person, not a theology, set of rules or even a religion. And only one person is that gate – Jesus – no one comes to the father except by him
Only way to the Father – Jn 14.6; Acts 4.12 “and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Jesus = replaces the Holy of Holies as the conduit between heaven and earth

- John 1.51 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (cf. Jacob’s ladder - **Marc Chagall**)
- John 2.19 – “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... he was speaking about the temple of his body.”
- John 4.23 “But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” i.e not on Mt Gerizim or Jerusalem, but in Jesus

Jesus broke down the dividing wall – Eph 2

Universal hunger:

Jesus spoke of humanity's hunger for true spiritual food when he said to the crowds who had followed him around the lake

Truly, truly I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal. John 6.26

Chesterton: When people stop believing in God they do not then believe in nothing, they believe in anything.

- Greenlane hospital ENT ward meeting: not call chaplains, but open to crystals and colour therapy.

Many 'saviours' offer parodies of this: security and freedom by other means.

Jesus' uniqueness:

- Person: From God, eternal, sinless, perfectly obedient
- Works: miracles

note that 9.32 "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing"

Esp, resurrection

Gate as protection = also judgment: drafting sheep and barring thieves and robbers

Chinese artist – Fan Pu "Christ the Door"**Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. What do you think is required in order to "know the shepherd's voice"?
Why do some know it and heed it while others do not?
2. Who are the thieves and robbers for us today?
3. What does it mean, in practice, for Jesus' sheep to flee the voice of thieves and robbers? What are the challenges Christians face to do that?

4. Is it fair to say that Christians have a better understanding of salvation from sin than of what it means to have life in all its fullness? How do you understand that fullness of life? What might it look like for you?
5. How do you respond to people who say Christianity is too narrow, or exclusive, or that Jesus isn't the *only* way to God?
6. Do you have that deep sense of peace which comes from the assurance of salvation in Christ? How does Satan try to undermine our assurance, and how can we resist him (on what grounds)?