

Good Morning ladies! What a joy it is to be with you this morning and have this privilege to share with you from the book of John.

This morning we're going to be looking at John 10:1-9, where Jesus makes His 3<sup>rd</sup> I AM statement. I AM the door of the sheep. But we're going to spend a bit of time in John 9 as well, so flip there first if you will.

We've already looked at the first two I AM statements in our fellowship mornings this semester, I AM the bread of life, and I AM the light of the World.

We know that Jesus often taught in parables. He used very engaging and readily accessible stories to captivate his audience's attention, teach spiritual lessons- and draw parallels for us between spiritual truths, the kingdom of heaven and also the human heart. For example, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man..." Matthew 13. Or the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. And in our passage today, Jesus uses the setting of a sheepfold. But in the midst of this parable Jesus makes an I AM statement which stands distinct. While parables show parallels, all the I AM statements we have looked at and will continue to look at in the gospel of John point to singular truths. Jesus is not merely pointing to a similarity between Himself and something such as bread, or light, or a door. He is making a truth claim about who he is. So take careful note of these statements when you read this gospel because as we examine these I AM statements, we are studying the person and deity of Christ. Who He says He is, and revealed how He is wanting to reveal Himself. Also remember that each time Jesus says I AM He is using the Personal name God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14 when God said "I am who I am, this is what you are to say to the Israelites, I AM has sent me." In Judaism, "I AM" is unquestionably understood as the name of GOD. So whenever Jesus made an I AM statement, he was publicly identifying himself unquestionably as God- stating "I AM YAHWEH, I do the things my Father does, I say the things my Father says. I and my Father are one." It's glorious. It's awe-inspiring! And in our passage today, Jesus states I AM the door of the sheep.

What do you think of when you hear the word “door”? Well, here in Alberta, we definitely understand the importance of doors! Whatever the season we are constantly ensuring doors are closed to keep our horrid mosquitos, flies- or this year- wasps-, or to keep warmth in, in winter! I grew up constantly hearing close the door! And now as a parent, I hear myself saying those very same words. Maybe you, like myself had quite the temper as a child- and would emphasize your attitude with a door slam. Kind of like a loud, obvious, rude exclamation mark. I remember often opening and closing a door properly 100 times as a consequence! I have a friend who removed her child’s door for a time- after repeated angry door slams, to teach the child that having a door is a privilege. Doors are also protecting! At night when it’s dark- most of us ensure our doors are locked to guard the family from potential intruders. Doors are essential. And really, a privilege, they separate us from what is unwanted or undesirable and protect us from what is dangerous.

Doors can also be exclusive. I’m sure many of you have travelled by plane, and if you’re like me, you travel in economy class. That means when you enter a plane, you turn to the right and begin the long, awkward, shuffle down the aisle with your head cranked at an odd angle to observe the seat numbers and find your place. There is no social distancing. No personal space whatsoever.

Over the years of travel I have had the pleasure of travelling in business class occasionally, but in first class twice. What a difference! When you enter the plane, you are ushered to the left. Through a different door. The aisle is wide and you are personally led not to your seat, but your bed. Yes. The large, plush, motorized seats unfold into full-length beds, and you have blankets, pillows and a privacy curtain that you can pull fully around you while you sleep or watch your movie. It’s glorious. Once we were even brought to a staircase. And would you believe it? First-class was upstairs!!! On another level!!! Doors are exclusive. Doors are also immovable. Have you had the embarrassing experience of

locking yourself out of your vehicle? I have done it many, many times. Far too many to count. Twice while it was running, and once while I had children in the vehicle strapped in their five-point harnesses, so they couldn't get out and unlock it. No matter how I pleaded or cried, that door would not open without either the key, or someone to open it for me. Doors are immovable.

So what Word picture is Jesus creating in John 10:7 when He stated that He is the door? Is He speaking in this context of something that is separating, protecting, exclusive and immovable? Yes. He is. Pastor James recently preached a sermon in which he said "Jesus preaches a message that is exclusive, unaccommodating, inflexible, unmodifiable, unalterable and eternally settled." And this is exactly what we are talking about this morning. Jesus is emphatically declaring that He, and He alone, exclusively, protectively, immovably, unalterably, inflexibly and eternally, is the door of the sheep.

As we look at this passage this morning there are six points I'd like to focus on as we strive to understand what Jesus is saying- and how we must respond.

So for my wonderful fellow note-takers, you are near and dear to my heart, these six points are:

The Preface (Chapter 9)

The Picture (10:1-6)

The Proclamation (10:7)

The Pretenders

The Perceptive sheep (10:8)

The Promise (10:9)

And I'll mention them again as we work through this passage.

Let's dive right in to point number 1)

## **The Preface:**

As I'm sure you know, there are no chapter breaks in the gospels. They were written as one long, continuous account. And for those of you who were here last month at our Ladies fellowship, you will remember Dawn Fox explaining to us that right now Jesus is at the feast of Tabernacles. Actually, this entire section of John's gospel- starting in chapter 7, takes place in and around the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the three annual festivals which all Jews from around the entire world were supposed to attend. Although our Bibles all say "Chapter 10" and have nice chapter breaks, the text we're looking at today really is a part of the same encounter Jesus had in chapter 9 with the healing of the blind man. It's the same day, possibly the same hour. So for us to understand the context of Jesus saying "I am the door to the sheep", we really need to familiarize ourselves with this event.

It's the Sabbath. The Jewish holy day, and as was walking along, he saw a blind man. Blind from birth. Pick up with me in John 9:2 and we'll read together to John 10:9.

"And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."<sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.<sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."<sup>6</sup> Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud<sup>7</sup> and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

<sup>8</sup> The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"<sup>9</sup> Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."<sup>10</sup> So they said to him,

“Then how were your eyes opened?” <sup>11</sup> He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” <sup>12</sup> They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

<sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup> and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” <sup>22</sup> (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus<sup>[b]</sup> to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

<sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” <sup>25</sup> He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” <sup>26</sup> They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” <sup>27</sup> He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” <sup>28</sup> And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are

disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” <sup>30</sup> The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” <sup>34</sup> They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt;<sup>[d]</sup> but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

(Chapter 10) “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup> This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not

listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”

Thank you, Father, for your inspired Word. Thank you that it is as alive today as it was when you first spoke it. Please open our hearts now to receive what you have for us today.

Here is our preface. Jesus has just healed a man, blind from birth. And this man reveals more spiritual insight than the religious leaders, reasoning from the scriptures that at the very least, Jesus has been sent by God since sinners couldn't perform miracles like this. This infuriates them, and their response is to kick the newly seeing man out of the synagogue. This is a judicial act, excommunicating him from being a member of the church of Israel. God's chosen people. This is equivalent to anathematizing him. Telling him, he's not saved. This is what the blind man's parents were afraid of in verse 22 of chapter 9. “(His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.)” The pharisees, and the religious leaders of Israel had established themselves as the sentries at the doorway to Salvation. Whatever they said was law, however they interpreted the Old Testament scriptures was to be unquestionably accepted. Whomever they said was in was in, and whomever they said was out, was out. And this man was out. But Jesus came right up to him, in full view of the angry religious leaders and revealed Himself, and gave salvation to this man who now had both his physical and spiritual eyes opened. Can you feel the tension here? Who really is blind? Who really is out of the church?

And that brings us to our second point:

### **The Picture (10:1-6)**

It is crucial to realize Jesus is primarily addressing the Pharisees in this parable. They had just asked him in verse 40 of chapter 9 “Are we also blind?” And Jesus, continuing that conversation paints for them a very familiar, even nostalgic picture- that they would have been familiar with since childhood. He describes for them a scene about shepherding.

Israel was a nation very familiar with shepherding. They had a long history filled with many note-worthy shepherds. Abel was a shepherd. Their forefather Jacob was a shepherd. Moses was a shepherd; king David was a shepherd. The prophet Isaiah was a shepherd. Furthermore, God referred to Israel as His flock in the Old Testament and had given them this nationally held identity. When the Lord was instructing Moses in Numbers 27 to appoint Joshua as a successor for himself- He said to Moses “that the congregation of the Lord may not be as a sheep that have no shepherd. David wrote in Psalm 23- a passage we know so well “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.” Psalm 95:7 says “For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand.” And in the book of Ezekiel the entirety of chapter 34 is devoted to Israel being the flock of God. Verse 31 says “As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are mankind, and I am your God,” declares the Lord GOD.” So the Jews standing there listening to Jesus would have been intimately familiar with the occupation of a shepherd, and with seeing themselves as the Lord’s sheep.

And Jesus said in verse 1:

“Truly, truly” this literally means “Amen and Amen.” Most assuredly. This saying is most true and of the utmost importance.” You can be sure everyone’s ears pricked up at this point. What was he going to say? “I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he



is a thief and robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

In Israel at that time, there was often one large, central pen or sheepfold in any given community. Probably there were many in a city the size of Jerusalem. At the end of the day, the various shepherds who lived in that area would bring their little flocks and lead them in to the big fold. These were not wealthy men. Shepherding was not a lucrative business, and the flocks were usually quite small. The shepherds who shared the fold would often pool resources and hire a gatekeeper to stay with the sheep overnight to guard them. And in the morning, the gatekeeper opened the door only to the shepherds who had sheep contained in that sheepfold. But there are always “bad guys” as my seven-year-old calls them. Worthless men, thieves, robbers, whose interest is stealing or wounding the sheep- to take by cunning or force that which is not their own. And occasionally at night they would climb the walls of the sheepfold. They would not dare come through the door. They had no interest in doing things the right way. They were fueled by self-interest and greed. So one of the primary jobs of the gatekeeper was to guard the sheep for their rightful shepherds. And in the morning the shepherds would come one by one to retrieve their sheep, and the door would be opened to them.

When I was a little girl I had a lamb named Kimberly. I bottle fed her from a newborn lamb, and she was my pet. Well- after a year or two it got to the point that Kimberly needed a larger fenced area to graze in, and I hoped she would meet a nice ram and have babies, so we gave her back to the neighbour we had first gotten her from. But for years afterward, until Kimberly passed away at the old age of 12, I would walk down the lane to my neighbour’s pasture fence and look out over that field full of hundreds of sheep and call “Kimberley”. I couldn’t even pick her out in that large flock- but she would hear my voice. And suddenly

I'd see her head pop up amongst the flock and she would come running to my voice.

And this is what would happen for the shepherds. When a rightful shepherd came through the sheepfold door, he would look out over that mixed flock and call for his own sheep by name. Their ears would prick up, their heads would lift, and they would eagerly come to the voice of their shepherd.

Verse 5, "When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

At this point Jesus's audience, both his opponents- and the people gathered around may have been looking at each other thinking "what was the purpose of that story? He's just described for us one of the most familiar, everyday scenes we know." We know they didn't understand. Because verse 6 says "They did not understand what he was saying to them." And it's important that we take note. There are two reasons why they didn't understand. Firstly, there was always a veiled meaning in Jesus' parables that needed unpacking, even for the disciples. But also, remember in Matthew 13 and the parable of the Sower and his seed? Afterward Jesus says to his disciples in verse 11 "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them (referring to the crowds) it has not been given." And here in John 10:26 Jesus says to the chief priests and pharisees in the temple "You do not believe because you are not part of my flock." So they couldn't understand. They had not been given understanding- they were not part of His flock. Have you considered understanding a gift from God? If you hear and understand His Word- don't take that lightly. Thank Him! That is a gift.

But here we have the religious leaders of the day-unable to grasp this truth. This is sobering. One commentator said "Frequently the greatest pretenders to

knowledge are actually the most ignorant in the things of God.” This is so true is it not? The people leading our society- even those most vocal in mainstream evangelicalism are revealing by the way they live and the way they lead that they are most ignorant in the things of God.

It’s important for us to pause and consider: what are we revealing about our own lives by how we live- and lead those whom the Lord has given us influence over. Has it been given to us to understand the things of God? Do our lives reflect this? If we understand, we must obey. Do we dig into the Word of the Lord eager to understand what He is saying to us? Psalm 119:130 says “The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple..” Do we take time to unfold His Word? James 1:5 Says that if any man lacks wisdom He should ask God who gives generously to all and it will be given to him.”

And Jesus, who knows all things, knows they don’t understand- and He spells it out for them.

This is our third point, the proclamation starting in verse 7.

### **The Proclamation (10:7)**

Jesus again says to them “Truly, truly, - Amen and Amen, most assuredly, I say to you. I AM the door of the sheep.” And things begin to become clear. Jesus is calling himself I AM; The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob- the precious name revealed to Moses saying that He is the door of the sheep. At this point those gathered around knew Jesus was not actually giving them a lesson on how to protect their flocks at night. He was referring to them, the flock in the was Israel. He was using their God-given identity as sheep and radically declaring that He, and He alone, exclusively, protectively, immovably, unalterably, inflexibly and eternally, was the doorway into the covenant people of Israel.

Now as much as the nation was both familiar with shepherding and being the flock of God, doors also held a significant role in their history. Many OT passages

speak about going through doors- or gates into the house of God, or into His righteousness.

Psalms 118:19-20 "Open to me the gates (or doors) of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it."

Isaiah 26:2 says "Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in."

Proverbs 8:34 "Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors."

As believers on this side of the New Testament we are yet more familiar with the language of doors. John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me."

Matthew 7:13-14 says it another way. "Enter by the narrow gate (or door). For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

Isn't this a glorious truth? Glorious yet sobering. There is but one door. His name is Jesus. You enter through him only as a needy, helpless, sin-dirty and defenseless sheep. Pious deeds, faithful adherence to religion, being baptised, or praying the sinners prayer are only filthy rags and mean nothing if you have not truly come in repentance to the true, Jesus Christ of the Bible and accepted Him for whom He says He is. If you have not entered through Jesus, you are not his sheep.

But probably the most meaningful reference to a door- at least for the Pharisees and Jewish people standing around Jesus that day would have been the

Passover account in Exodus 12. I'll just quickly reference it- You don't need to turn there.

It was the final plague that Yahweh sent on the Egyptians for their refusal to let the nation of Israel go free after their 400 years of slavery. Yahweh sent his angel of death. He gave the Israelites instructions to slaughter one lamb per household, and with a hyssop branch paint some of the lamb's blood over the doorposts of their dwellings. That night, the angel of death went throughout the land of Egypt killing every firstborn from the house of pharaoh, to the house of the lowliest servant. However, the blood on the doorway was to be a sign to the Lord, and whomever was inside that closed door was safe from the angel of death.

Now we under the new covenant know that that blood-stained doorway was pointing to the Lamb of God himself. Jesus Christ, who is both the sacrificial lamb, and the door we are to go through to escape eternal judgement which will be far greater judgement than the angel of death who went through Egypt that horrible night.

Jesus said I am the door of the sheep. What an offensive slap in the face of the Pharisees who thought their burdensome, legalistic self-interpretation of how best to keep the law of Moses, was the doorway to Israel. Jesus was not the door they were looking for. Mere minutes before they had effectively kicked hi out of the sheepfold the man born blind. But Jesus says "No, no, no. I'm the door of the Israel. I alone decide who's in the fold and who's out."

And this brings us to our fourth point.

### **The Pretenders (10:8)**

Jesus said "I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers..." This is a crucial verse. Jesus is not only the door that the flock of God goes through, he is the door all true shepherds must go through too. This is a direct link to verse 1 of this passage. John 10:1 "Truly truly I say to you, he who

does not enter the sheepfold BY THE DOOR, Jesus Christ, but climbs in another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” Now in a few verses Jesus will declare himself THE good shepherd. The 4<sup>th</sup> I AM statement in John’s gospel. Jesus is The Great Shepherd of all Shepherds and Dorothy will be speaking to us on that topic at our ladies Christmas tea. But this is a separate parable, and the shepherds he is referring to here are the under-shepherds. The pastors. The ministers. The men to whom God had entrusted with His flock while on this earth. The Greek word for Pastor is “Poimen” which is literally the word “Shepherd.” He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

When Jesus says “All who came before me are thieves and robbers” He is specifically rebuking false- shepherds. Any religious leader of Israel both past and present who led his flock astray and did not themselves come obediently through the door of repentance and faith in God- but as a thief and robber climbed in another way with the purpose of selfish gain.

Not all previous leaders in Israel were false shepherds. Some did point Israel to Christ! The faithful old-testament prophets pointed to Christ. Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.... The entire purpose of the Levitical law in fact, all of the imagery and the sacrifices pointed to the Holiness of God and to His one, final lamb who would be slain for the salvation of his people. We just looked at the Passover door imagery- pointing to salvation only in Christ. Acts 4:12 tells us that “Salvation is found in NO one else, there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” This was true for all Old Testament saints as well. They looked forward to the cross for their salvation although they saw only a shadow of what was to come. And we, 2000 years after Christ’s death and resurrection look back to the cross for our Salvation, having the privilege of seeing far more clearly. Whether before Christ or after Christ, all true under-shepherds, past, present and future must enter through Christ, and

take their flock through the door of Christ. Salvation is in Christ alone and through faith alone.

The pharisees in Israel were thieves and robbers. Jesus had incredibly harsh words for them. He called them “white-washed tombs” and accused them of turning their converts into twice as much sons of hell as they were. He called them the blind leading the blind, and said they were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. The entire chapter of Matthew 23 is Jesus pronouncing woes on the pharisees. The false under-shepherds of Israel.

What are the marks in this passage of false shepherds? We can see two in these verses they are marked by what they do, and what they say.

1) What they do: In Matthew 7:15-16 Jesus assures us that we will know false believers by their fruit. That means it will become visibly evidenced in their lives. And here in John 10:1 it says that they climbed over the wall. They have not come through Christ the door. They have come in some other way- so the gospel hasn't transformed their life. False shepherds can disguise and hide their bad fruit for a while behind biblical knowledge, and “christian” conversation. They can even cover it by associating with Christian leaders and by talking about Biblical things. But they will eventually expose their true colours. Their false and corrupt view of God will result in a corrupt life. It is impossible to be spiritually dead and not start to smell dead. Galatians 6:7 says “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

2) By what they say. Verses 5 and 8 say that their speech is foreign to the true sheep. This is especially evidenced when faced with difficulty, pressures or persecutions that require a biblical stand to be taken- as we have seen recently with Black lives matter, critical race theory, WOKE and of course, Covid. When called to take a stand on Biblical truth- false shepherds will vocalise ideas that are unscriptural, and the absence of a strong, clear theology will be evident.

False ideas and even heresy will be taught, or at the very least important truths will be glossed over, misapplied or even omitted all together.

The prophet Jeremiah 23:16-17 said this to the people of Israel “Thus says the Lord of Hosts, Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the Word of the Lord, It shall be well with you; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say “No disaster shall come upon you...”

These false shepherds were liars. That could have been written yesterday, couldn't it? Do we not see this in our own day? Men calling themselves shepherds of God but ignoring or condoning evil, and filling people with vain hopes and false peace. They are the shepherds who despise the Word of the Lord, and they are shepherding people who “despise the Word of the Lord”. Things aren't getting better. We are living in an increasingly pagan society.

Matthew Henry said “They are thieves and robbers, and steal those hearts which they have no title to, defrauding the rightful owner of his property. They condemned our saviour as a thief and a robber because he did not come in by them as the door.”

John Calvin said 400 years ago “This warning has been highly useful in all ages, and in the present day it is especially necessary. No plague is more destructive to the Church than when wolves ravage dressed in the garb of shepherds. We know also how grievous an offense it is, when illegitimate or wicked Israelites pretend to be the sons of the Church, and, by this pretense, they insult believers. But in the present day, weak and ignorant persons are not alarmed when they see the sanctuary of God occupied by the greatest enemies of the Church; for it is not easy to make them understand that it is actually the doctrine of Christ which the false shepherds of the Church so fiercely resist.” This is so true. It is



the doctrine of Christ that false shepherds hate. They hate the exclusivity of His claim. I AM the door He says. Salvation is through Him, His way, His rules, and for His glory.

This is a very serious problem right now in Canada, and the divide is only growing wider by the day between faithful shepherds and false shepherds.

What are the marks of the faithful shepherds that we see in this passage? They are also marked by what they do, and what they say.

1) What they do: Faithful shepherds' good fruit is evidence of the transforming work of the gospel. This means they have come in by Christ, the door. And as a result, will visibly bear good fruit- as we see in Galatians 5, the fruit of the spirit. They have not tampered with Christ, adding anything to him or subtracting anything from Him. Colossians 2:3 says that "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ." True shepherds are men who lead their flock straight to Christ; and through Christ, that they may be safely sheltered in the fold of Christ.

2) by what they say. Their speech is recognized by the sheep because they are the very words of Christ, the great Shepherd of the Shepherds. A faithful shepherd will preach the Word. Not his own words. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Being under a false shepherd is incredibly dangerous. Jesus in John 8:44 when speaking to the false shepherds of the day said "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. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Do you know, dear sister Christ if you are under faithful shepherding? Are you evaluating your shepherds- and evaluating what you are being taught? Are you being taught?

We as sheep have a huge responsibility. A privilege really, and this brings us to our second last point-

### **The Perceptive Sheep (10:8b)**

“All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.”

The sheep did not listen. Verses 4-5 shed more light on this. “When he (the faithful shepherd) has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him. For they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Can you see the perceptiveness of the sheep in these verses? We see here four perceptive behaviours of the sheep.

- 1- Verse 3: They hear the faithful shepherd,
- 2- Verse 4: They follow the faithful shepherd,
- 3- Verse 5: They flee the false shepherd, and
- 4- Verse 8: They don't even listen to the false shepherd.

Let's briefly consider the first behavior. The sheep hear the faithful shepherd. For an Israelite, the word “hear” in Hebrew “shema” and “obey” are almost the same word. In fact, nearly every place we see the word “obey” in the Bible, it is derived from the word “hear” shema. It's like “listen and listening.”

Listening to someone in our western culture is largely a mental activity, and if we're honest, hearing means that our ears are simply picking up audio. But in

Hebrew, the word *Shema* describes both the hearing and its intended effects – the taking heed, the doing what is asked. Any parent who says to their child “Weren’t you listening?” when they ignore understands that listening should result in action. Jesus said in Matthew 11:15 “He who has ears to hear, let him hear...” He was also calling for a response. An action.

And we see in our text that the sheep did respond with action. That’s the second behaviour of the perceptive sheep. They heard their shepherd call, and they followed. Their hearing resulted in instant obedience. Is this true of us? When the Holy Spirit stirs our hearts through something we’re heard in a sermon, or read in the Word, does it result in action from us? Or do we shift in our seats uncomfortably for a moment and wait for the feeling to pass? That is not obedience.

The last two intentional behaviours of the faithful sheep really mirror Psalm 1:1-2. I’ll read it.

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.”

Blessed is the man who doesn’t listen to the counsel of the wicked. Doesn’t flirt with a false gospel, gives no attention to false teachers- which is the wisdom of the world. What is the faithful sheep’s delight? The law of the Lord. This faithful sheep wants to learn from faithful shepherds who will lead them even more into the law of the Lord! They flee false shepherds, and don’t even listen to them.

Have you ever seen a small child running with their fingers in their ears yelling “la la la la”? It’s actually really annoying if it’s your child, but if our children were hearing wickedness- and stuck their fingers in their ears and ran away yelling “la la la la!!!” we as parents would all be so pleased! They were discerning! And

this is the idea here. Do not put yourself underneath the influence of a false shepherd.

We often think far too highly of ourselves as Christians- and I am speaking about myself here as well. We tell ourselves “Well, the teaching isn’t ALL bad. I’m sure there’s truth here. I’m mature enough to chew the meat and spit out the bones. No pastor is FULLY without error.” This is true, no faithful shepherd is perfect- or has the monopoly on truth.

And there are tertiary, or “side” issues that are not central to the gospel. Issues like eschatology, baptism, head coverings, modes of schooling children, etc. Many godly pastors have disagreed on these issues for generations. However, when it comes to core, biblical truths; salvation, the sufficiency and inerrancy of scripture, the deity of Christ, etc. really, the five solas: by Scripture alone, by faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone, and to the glory of God alone. These are not side issues. And God will give his sheep discernment. As soon as it became apparent that the person was a thief, the sheep acted. And I would urge you dear sister, that if you know by their actions or their words that a certain teacher, pastor, author or even church is slowly drifting, I ask you to seriously consider stepping out from under that influence. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked. And the apostle Paul said in Colossians 2:8 “See that no man robs you through vain philosophy.” Sitting under vain philosophy, empty words, is actually robbing you of enjoying the richness that is available to you in Christ.

Amos 8:11 says “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land- not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD”.

We are in these days. We can see it happening before our very eyes. The true, faithful preaching of the Word of the Lord is growing scarce. Faithful sheep are

having to go far and wide to find faithful shepherds who will lead them. Many of you ladies here today can attest to that personally. Some of you have even moved across the country to be a part of a biblically, sound church.

And this leads us into our final point

### **The Promise (10:9)**

“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” Here we have the blessed gospel. Plain, clear, direction as to how to come into the true fold, the true Church of Christ. And how do we do it? We must enter through Christ. By faith in Him- the only mediator between man and God. Ephesians 1:7 says “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace.”

And if anyone enters by Him, he WILL be saved. This is the doctrine of eternal security. Once saved, always saved. What a blessed comfort! You cannot lose your salvation. Jesus says in John 10:28-30 speaking about His sheep; “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. I and the Father are one.”

Ephesians 1:13-14 says “In Him you also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.” Once you are in Christ, you are eternally secure.

“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” This is the privilege of all who are in Christ, he will go in and out and find pasture! This means that we have the great joy of doing things for Christ. Isaiah 55:12 says “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace”. Jesus’ promise of an abundant life is not only for eternity, but for the here and now. Jesus does not call us out of the World into a dour, lifeless, joyless

existence. No! We aren't "stuck" in the sheepfold. He calls us out of slavery to sin, from being deceived by all the world has to offer- into a life of joyful ministry, meaningful and precious relationships, fulfilling work, adventure, creativity. We will go in and out and we will also find pasture. Psalm 23 "He makes me lie down in green pastures." Jesus says "Come to me, all 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." He gives us rest. We learn from him. Jesus says "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."

Have you trusted in Christ dear sister? Have you entered through Christ- the only door into freedom from sin and into eternal life? He is calling to all who have ears, let them hear His words and obey! His yoke is easy and His burden is light. But the door will not always be open. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." There will come a day when this open door of salvation is closed. Won't you come to Christ while you can?

Let's pray.