

I AM the Gate

John 10:1-10

INTRODUCTION

If my count is correct, there are 31 entrance doors into this building. Most of you come through the same door every time you come. I know I always do.

- There are 13 doors that give you access to this sanctuary. You will have to trust me on that because I am sure you can't see them all from where you are sitting. Plus I don't want you to be counting them as I preach the rest of this sermon.
 - But you probably use the same door almost every time.

We are all creatures of habit. We use the same doors. We drive the same routes. We shop the same stores. We have our morning routines and our evenings ones too.

When Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem on that day that we have since named Palm Sunday, He had a choice of 8 gates through which He could enter. There were actually 12 total gates, but four of them were never used by anyone.

- The Scriptures seem to indicate that Jesus used the same gate every time He entered. It is known as "east gate."

The East Gate is the oldest gate in Jerusalem. And it holds a lot of significance for the Jewish people and for Jesus Himself.

- In the special ceremony that happened on the Day of Atonement, this was the gate the Temple Messenger used to lead the sacrificial lamb out of the city and into the desert (carrying the sins of the people with it).
- Because of the words of some of the prophets, the Jewish people were convinced that the Messiah – when He came – would enter the city through that gate.
- When Jesus left the Last Supper and went with His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, He left through that gate.
- When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane – "Not my will but Thine be done" – He would have been able to see that gate.

Most importantly, for our purposes today, this gate is the one that gave you the most direct access to the Temple. As you entered the city through that gate you could see the Temple directly in front of you.

Now, with that truth in mind, let me read to you words in John 10 where Jesus uses the I AM statement that is my focus this morning:

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. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When 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.

- During that feast During that feast He taught at the Temple.
- During that feast the religious leaders demanded to know if He was the Messiah.

If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly! (John 10:24)

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe." (John 10:25)

- During that feast ... just inside that East Gate... Jesus had His life threatened by the religious leaders who accused Him of blasphemy.
- The next time He would come through that gate was Palm Sunday, and by the end of that week they followed through on their threats. He would die.

Picture all that background information, as you listen again to His message ringing out.

I AM the gate.

Anyone who came through that gate in the walls of Jerusalem was looking directly at the Temple – the dwelling place of God.

Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, you and I think of God being everywhere. But the Holy Spirit hasn't come yet. That is Pentecost – which we celebrate on May 28 this year. This is only Passover.

- So the mindset of the people was that God was in the Temple.
 - If you wanted to be in the presence of God, you went to the Temple
 - And to get to the Temple, you went through the East Gate.

Ask any first century Jew how to come into the presence of God, they would direct you through the East Gate.

- Your GPS would steer you though the East Gate.
- So don't miss the important truth communicated in this I AM statement:

It is through Jesus – and only through Jesus – that you have access to God.

People may try to use other gates, but Jesus says I AM **THE** gate. It is through Him you have access.

That access brings with it THREE PROMISES, found in John 10:9:

PROMISE #1: THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE

I AM the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved... (John 10:9)

In an earlier sermon in this series, Jesus stated clearly:

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

Now, some people will not like that. They will say we Christians have a very narrow intolerance.

- The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day certainly felt that way. Ultimately that is why they plotted His death. Up to that point they had a monopoly (or so they thought) on the salvation market.
 - They got to decide who was in and who was out.
 - They wrote the rules that were a burden to the ordinary person but provided loopholes for themselves.

There are many today who want to go to heaven, but they reject Jesus. It is not a narrow intolerance. It is a narrow truth. Access to the Father happens only through Jesus.

- If we believe – and we do – that Jesus is the Son of God sent to earth for our salvation, he is the only way.

The gate is open to "any one" who is willing to walk through it, but Jesus is the only gate.

PROMISE #2: THE PROMISE OF A GUARDED LIFE

I AM the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out ... (John 10:9)

That is not saying people go in and out of a relationship with Jesus. Instead it is talking about how we live our lives. This promise is a picture of someone who feels safe and secure.

A man named Isaac Butterworth writes:

I was all alone. I lived with four other guys in a huge, old house just off the campus of Baylor University, but I was the only one home. I must have been twenty-one or twenty-two – a grown man, practically a college graduate – but I was afraid. There was usually a surplus of noise in the house, but, with everyone gone, it was quiet. And that's when you could hear the creaking and the other sounds.

I tried sleeping with the lights out, but I just lay there, listening. In the dark, the unknown imposed itself on my imagination, and I, who knew better, convinced myself that I would be safer in the light. So, I got up and turned on – not just the light in my room – but every light in the house. Upstairs and downstairs. That old barn was lit up like a Christmas tree!

I lay across the bed, fully clothed--dressed for action, I guess--and I refused to close my eyes. If anything was going to 'get' me, it had to show itself in the full light of incandescent splendor. And...it had to catch me!

I lay there, like a child, waiting for the dawn, waiting for morning, waiting for day to come. If only daylight would come, everything would be better.

Our lives can be dictated by fear, or they can be lived in confidence knowing that God is with us every step of our journey. Psalm 23 proclaims:

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

When the Apostle Paul wrote to his young protégé Timothy, he reminded him that:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

As we walk through the gate that is Jesus into the presence of God, we have nothing to fear.

PROMISE #3: THE PROMISE OF A PROVIDED LIFE

I AM the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. (John 10:9)

Sheep need good places to graze. It is the responsibility of the shepherd to lead them to places where the grass is green and luscious. It is the responsibility of the shepherd to provide for their needs.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1)

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

That is one of the first verses my parents encouraged me to memorize. And I have relied on it for more than 60 years.

Pastor Charles Spurgeon tells of a man who had a large sum of money and wanted to use it for the benefit of a poor minister. He thought it would be best to distribute the gift, instead of sending it all at once. So he mailed the poor minister a small but significant sum of money. Inside the envelope, he placed a little slip of paper on which was written, "More to follow."

And so it was for a very long time. The old minister received regularly his little package of money, always with the "More to follow" note inside.

Spurgeon writes: *And this is how God deals with us. That which was provided today is but a pledge of that which will be given tomorrow. And that which we receive tomorrow will likewise be stamped, "More to follow."*

All because we have entered into the presence of God through the gate that is Jesus.

APPLICATION

The Jews believed that the Messiah would enter that East Gate on the day He came to establish His kingdom. And on Palm Sunday, nearly 2000 years ago, He did just that. And the people celebrated!

Hosanna to the Son of David!

'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Hosanna in the highest! (Matthew 21:9)

Jesus came through the gate. But He also WAS the gate. Through Him the kingdom of God would be established – not by political power, but by providing a way to God through the forgiveness of sin.

Behold the Lamb.

Amen.