

“Jesus Opens the Way!”—John 10:7-10

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Jesus Opens the Way!”, is John 10:7-10. Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Consider the following statements: “There is only one God and we’re all just trying to get to Him in different ways. So it really doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe in God.”

How does a Christian respond to such statements? At face value the concept or doctrine expressed in these statements sounds very “logical.” At the same time, something just doesn’t seem quite right with their teaching. They assume that a relationship with God is based upon a person’s search for God, which leads to the next question: “How does one make that search?”

Of course, everyone knows that if you’re going to search for something you . . . Google it . . . or . . . ask Siri. There you will find

thousands of sites with thousands of opinions and teaching about God and how to “find Him.” Completely overwhelmed you wonder how you’re going to “sift through” such a wealth of information. If you choose to put the time and work into researching all the teaching about God in this way, you will soon discover some commonalities and differences in these teachings. They all generally talk about god, worship, prayer, angels and the afterlife. These are generic concepts in every religious system. However, you also discover that there are very different idea about these subjects, **including God**. In fact, “Googling” in your search for God and truth only complicates things more.

Or maybe your search takes you to the History Channel. They have “religious” documentaries. Again, if you are listening close, you discover a plethora of opinions and teachings which are not necessarily consistent with each other. Even an encounter with religious media leaves you feeling like there really is not just one God to whom everyone is trying to get in different ways and apparently what you believe does matter. It is a complicated process which leave you defining your relationship with God on your own terms, never really sure if you’ve found Him.

I am so thankful that God has not complicated having a relationship with Him eternally like so many do on their “search” for Him. Since people complicate this search so much only to end up in despair and the

guilt of their sin even more, **God came to us**. He took on human flesh in the Person of Jesus and made an eternal relationship with God right again through simple faith in Christ!

The Pharisees, to whom Jesus was speaking in our text, had really complicated the relationship with God. They taught that you had to “get right with God” and stay right with Him by following meticulous rules based upon His Laws which God gave to His people in the Old Testament Scriptures. Many of them also used their legalistic system to take advantage of God’s people instead of leading them properly. While making them think they were following Yahweh they actually led them away from an eternal life with Him. Jesus came to open the way to God.

Using a *figure of speech* Jesus challenged them, comparing them to *thieves and robbers who do not enter the sheepfold by the door but climb in by another way in order to steal and kill and destroy. . . the sheep*. The “door” they offered to the people was not opening the way to a relationship with God **as their loving Father**. Rather, it gave them a relationship with God as their punishing Judge because it left them with the guilt of their sin in their inability to keep God’s Laws perfectly. Jesus came to open the way for you to have a relationship with God **as your loving Father**.

While many of the people of Jesus’ day truly believed that they had

a proper relationship with God it was based upon how they chose to define that relationship. Unfortunately, trying to define a relationship with God overlooks your need for what God gives you to establish that relationship—the work of Jesus for your sins. Satan complicates your search by doing everything possible to keep you from recognizing your sin and your need for Jesus’ “pasture” where you receive the forgiveness of your sins.

While the picture of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep was a very visible part everyday life in Jesus’ day, many Christians today find this picture very meaningful today as well. Since sheep herding was a very common vocation of many in the Old Testament Church, it was used to picture their relationship with Yahweh then too. Our first thoughts may move us to Psalm 23 which describes the LORD as our Shepherd Who protects and provides all our needs. Psalm 95:6-7 invites us to *come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.*

Notice the worship context in our relationship with *the LORD, our Maker*. Have we gathered in worship today simply because it’s “the thing to do?” Have we gathered in worship today because it’s Sunday? Have we gathered in worship today because we want to see our friends here? Or, even in the midst of these reasons for being here today, have we

primarily come to *kneel before the LORD our Maker as the flock of His making*—because we know our Good Shepherd, Jesus?

Jesus said in verse 9 of our text: *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* The LORD wants us to seek Him continually (cf. Isaiah 55:6-7; Psalm 195:4; Amos 5:4; Matthew 6:33) **on His terms**. Jesus is laying down those terms in our text. He is *the door*. The only way to enter eternal life is by faith in Jesus—a faith which He gives when He comes to you, according the verse 10 of our text: *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* Here in worship with the Church you find this abundant life because here **He comes to you** in Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed. Here **He comes to you** in the Absolution, the pronouncement of Jesus that your sins are forgiven, as you confess your sins and trust in His atoning work for you. Here **He comes to you** in Baptism giving you His Holy Spirit, faith and the forgiveness of sins. Here **He comes to you** in the Lord's Supper giving you forgiveness of sins. Here **He comes to you** to give you life abundant eternally **now!**

Jesus takes the complication out of your search because He comes and opens the way for you to have a right relationship with God as your loving father. It is unique from all other religious systems, ideas, concepts and teachings which place the burden upon you to get to God.

Instead, God comes to you to give you an eternal relationship with Him as your loving Shepherd through faith in Jesus, your good Shepherd, Who *lays down His life for the sheep!* Amen.

*Open to me the gates 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.

*I thank You, O LORD, that You have answered me
and have become my salvation.*

(Psalm 118:19-21)

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