**John 10:1-10** “Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the door, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3The doorkeeper opens the door 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 sheep, he walks ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6Jesus used this illustration in speaking to the people, but they did not understand what he was telling them. 7So Jesus said again, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: I am the door for the sheep. 8All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10“A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

I have to confess that this particular text has always been one that plagues me. It does that because the lesson here is one I consider so difficult to understand. Don’t get me wrong, in my ministry I have written five sermons on this text or various parts of it. If you go back to those sermons you would find that each is slightly different in application and yet each is still the same sermon. What I think will make a difference in this the sixth time I preach on this text is the fact that today, I see the text as two separate lessons. By understanding the text as two separate lessons, I think the point of what Jesus is teaching becomes much clearer. He uses his base picture in the lessons, but without a doubt today I would tell you that there are two separate lessons to think about, a general lesson and then a very pointed lesson. Let’s jump in and see what we can learn. Our theme will be: **HERE IS TRUTH!**

The first thing we need to do is gather context. This is one of those texts that is absolutely unique to the Apostle John and his inspired epistle. John tells us of an instance that erupted with the Pharisees, remember the Pharisees are the religious leaders of the Jewish people. You, I’m sure, recall the instance. Jesus was in Jerusalem and had come across a man who had been born blind. Note that! This is an adult man who had been born blind and who was in the streets working to stay alive by begging. Jesus and the disciple engage in a brief discussion of why this man was born blind, but that’s not important here. What is important is that Jesus will heal this man because as Jesus said, **“That God’s works might be revealed in connection with him.”**

So this man born blind is healed. A wonderful, could you do such a thing, happening that needless to say caused an absolute stir when this blind man came back from washing his eyes in the pool of Siloam, seeing. Everyone knew this blind man could now see and everyone wanted to know what had happened. Such a stir was cause that the Pharisees heard about it and they too began to ask questions. They are not happy! This miracle has been done on a Sabbath! An absolute wonder of God, a miracle done on the Sabbath and they think this contrary to their Jewish laws and ways! Let that sink in. A total marvel, something none of us could have ever done, something no one had ever been recorded as doing and yet these men think that what has happened is evil.

By the way, I love the way the blind man responds to their question of how this was done. He says, **“He put mud on my eyes. I washed, and now I see.”** No hocus pocus, no big show, no demand of confession, just a simple act that results in a complete healing of a man born blind. And they thought this evil. Remember they even throw the healed man out of the Temple because he makes the simple confession that if Jesus were not of God, this miracle couldn’t have been done.

Later on, Jesus finds the man and reveals himself as the Son of God and the Savior to come. It is then that Jesus and the Pharisees clash. Here is the last bit of discussion from John 9. **“Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, in order that those who do not see will see, and those who do see will become blind.’ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and asked, ‘We are not blind too, are we?’ Jesus told them, “If you were blind, you would not hold on to sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”** Right there is a sermon itself!

Now we are at the words of the text that is before us. It is clear these words are intended to teach, to teach a valuable lesson on the nature of true faith and religion. The first lesson is a gentle prod to hear and believe. The second lesson is a clear line in the sand, exposing both unbelief and faith. Let’s go on.

First lesson. **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the door, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3The doorkeeper opens the door 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 sheep, he walks ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6Jesus used this illustration in speaking to the people, but they did not understand what he was telling them.”** So much to say, so little time!

The opening lesson is really about the importance of the Word, or in the words of this parable, about the voice of the Shepherd. Really, the emphasis on the doorkeeper in this part, is that the doorkeeper is the Word of God as the Jews had been given it. The Law and the Prophets, the 39 books of the Old Testament as God has clearly directed them to gather it. Notice that Jesus is quite clear on this. If you don’t enter by the door, that is, by the Word of God, then you have climbed in by some other way. You are illegitimate, illegal, a thief and a robber. You are not there for good and salvation, you are there to hurt and destroy! But I get ahead of myself. In the first lesson, Jesus actually emphasizes the relationship of sheep and shepherd to this Word and its impact.

What a beautiful picture. The Shepherd enters by the door. That means the Shepherd comes and it is the Word of God that is his guide and hope in all things. In this case, the Shepherd is Jesus. Jesus came fulfilling the Word of God. Jesus came in exactly the way the Word of God said he would. Born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, out of Egypt and yet a Nazarene. Jesus came with signs and miracles galore. So many, so often, so in your face that there could be no denying or ignoring them. Jesus came teaching Scripture, so clearly that most would say he taught with an authority that none of their religious leaders had. The Shepherd, the true Shepherd, yes Jesus, is a man of God’s Word!

And believers, those called by the Lord, those given the simple and beautiful gift of faith, the sheep of God’s flock, hear that Shepherd. The shepherd calls them. Notice the shepherd knows his own sheep by name, calls them individually and personally to follow along. And the sheep hear and follow.

When I was in Israel many years ago this relationship of Shepherd and sheep was spoken of. There are quite a number of books that speak about the very same thing. Often, the sheep pens were pretty big affairs, where the sheep of numerous shepherds were brought at night for safety. There would have been a “door” or entranceway that was guarded and the perimeter of the sheep pen was also guarded. In the morning, a shepherd would walk in, give his call, talk to his flock and they would gather around him and as he walked out they would literally follow him. The Shepherd would stand by the gate and watch and any sheep that wasn’t his, caught up in the crowd of sheep, would be herded to stay in the pen. But in essence we were told that the process was pretty straight forward. What Jesus says here is an exact picture of just how shepherding was done in this day! Sheep followed the shepherd. Followed his voice and person clearly in an attached way. And I was told and have read that rarely was their confusion among the sheep and shepherds. And again, just let that sink in.

Now, if we are sheep, who are we hearing and who are we following? Remember, in the background of what Jesus has said here are those thieves and robbers! In other words, there are those who don’t want you to hear and follow. There are those who want to take you away from the true shepherd! Just who are you following? Is it the True Shepherd, the Shepherd who speaks and reveals the wonder and grace of God or…what is it you are doing? Let me just give a pointed illustration or two here. Do we Christians really think it is okay to live together outside of the bonds of marriage? Do we now think that living together is just some sort of marriage trial run so much so, so that when our kids do it we don’t even put up a single fuss to what God says is a “you have closed the gates of heaven to yourself (1 Cor. 6:9-10, Eph 5:3-5)” reality? Nor is that the only sin we seem to be embracing and supporting. We seem to be okay with a little cheating, some cleaver white lies, with despising God’s Word and Church and on and on. I know, I know, we have our excuses and our pitiful reasons for all of this, but finally, if there is no repentance in the matter, then….are you listening…Whose voice are you following? I can guarantee that if the voice leads in what is contrary to God’s Word, it is not the true Shepherd, the voice of God, the Word of God that you follow! This illustration of the Shepherd and sheep is so very wonderful and informative and we need to appreciate and heed what it says.

It is with distress that I have to say, “Hey, did you see that very disturbing verse here? It is a verse that tears up my soul.” It said, **“Jesus used this illustration in speaking to the people, but they did not understand what he was telling them.”** That verse isn’t just about the Pharisees and religious leaders. That verse is telling us that the majority of the people listening to Jesus didn’t get his point. You know why? For some it is because there is such a sound of cackling disharmony from the thieves and robbers that the people were confused and didn’t get the message! For some, it is just outright refusal to hear the truth of what Jesus said. For others it is born of an attitude that doesn’t care and doesn’t think it important. So many who didn’t hear the Shepherd’s voice! So Jesus is going to speak an even plainer truth to them.

He says, **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: I am the door for the sheep. 8All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10“A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”** Again notice the double “amen” marking this as a statement of irrefutable truth from Jesus.

Jesus is the door! It fits with what was said before, but Jesus has slammed the door on any kind of “well, I think this means this or that” from his previous words. That door that needs to be entered is Jesus. There is no other way, no other salvation, no other religion outside of the truth of Jesus. Jesus is it. Not what you think, not what you want, not anything you! Jesus is it. And, of course, recognize that Jesus is the only revelation of the Father, the only source of the Word, Jesus is the Word, the Living Word that came to reveal all truth. Jesus is it. You want life, and abundantly, you need Jesus. You want the peace, the comfort of God, the protection, preservation, salvation, and sanctification of God that is Jesus. He is the only source of salvation there is and ever will be. Go Jesus or there is no go!

Notice again the pointed lesson on the false teachers. They come to steal, kill and destroy. True sheep of God do not listen to the false teachers. They can tell who the false teachers are because they measure everything by the Word of God. You don’t need trickery and convoluted explanations when dealing with God’s Word, its plain truth is there for even the simplest to understand. When a so called teacher of God’s Word leads you to rely on yourself, to enjoy and participate in sin, to deny the horror of sin, to deny the reality of hell or the facts of the Judgment Day, or to no longer worry about repentance and contrition, I pray you are wise enough to run! I can’t tell you exactly how many sections of the New Testament warn you against false teachers and such, but do realize there are quite a few of them and it is clear they are still very much a present danger for our very souls.

All of this means we need to pay attention to the “voice” we are hearing and following. Is that voice about Jesus? Is that voice believing that Jesus is the fullness of the deity in bodily form? Is Jesus your Lord and Savior or are you following some voice that is really Satan disguised as an angel of light. Your soul, dear sheep, is what is at stake. Is Jesus your door or isn’t He?

Jesus came for our salvation. Jesus came to be our life and hope. Jesus is the door. You are the sheep. You and I need to listen and follow that beautiful voice of comfort and peace only heard in Jesus. Amen.