

Week Four: 'I am the gate for the sheep.'

OPENING PRAYER

READ | *John 10:1-10*

¹"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³The watchman 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. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

DISCUSS

1. Verses 4-5 point to an intimacy between the sheep and their shepherd. *His sheep follow him because they know his voice.* What's the role of discernment for the sheep (Christ followers), since there are more voices calling to them in life than just their own shepherd's (Christ)? What are some characteristics of a relationship with someone whose voice you always immediately recognize?
2. In this passage, Jesus is speaking with Pharisees, the first-century religious elite. They were people who claimed to be able to 'see,' but their inability to understand Jesus illustrates their spiritual blindness (v. 6). How does Jesus respond when they don't 'get it'? How does Jesus respond to a person today when she is slow to truly grasp His nature and mission?

APPLY

1. In verse 9, Jesus makes a statement that the modern reader might interpret as exclusive. *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.* Christianity is often criticized for its perceived 'exclusivity,' yet its inclusiveness is unparalleled: anyone who rests their salvation wholly on the merits of Christ enters into a loving relationship with the Triune¹ God of the universe, based on *His* acceptance of us by *His* grace alone. Why do you think Jesus' certainty about his identity can be interpreted as suspicious or exclusive rather than reliable? What might this reveal about our posture toward trusting God or wisdom beyond our own?

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer suggestions: > that Jesus, 'the gate for the sheep', would lead and shepherd us as we grow to more readily rely on His identity and benevolence, and on God's love and mercy (grace), both in seasons of abundance and need; both in seasons of confusion and direction

¹ God three in one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Trinity