

## Lesson Four

### *“I Am the Gate”*

#### Jesus is the focus of all truly Christian ministry

*John 10:1-10*

### Worship

#### Responsive Reading (Psalm 78:70-72)

A: [The Lord] chose David his servant

**B: And took him from the sheep pens;**

A: From tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob,

**B: Of Israel his inheritance.**

A: And David shepherded them with integrity of heart;

**B: With skillful hands he led them.**

#### Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you have come  
A teacher sent from heaven  
And by both word and deed  
God's truth to us have given.  
You wisely have ordained  
The holy ministry  
That we, your flock, may know  
The truth that sets us free.

Bring those into your fold  
Who still to you are strangers;  
Guard those who are within  
Against offense and dangers.  
Press onward with your Word  
Till pastor and his fold  
Through faith in you, O Christ,  
Your glory shall behold.  
(CW 546:1,5)

### Introduction

How do you know your pastor is leading you in the way God wants? Discuss the following answers:

- He has a valid call from our congregation, and that call is divine.
- He uses many Bible passages in his preaching and teaching.

- I feel as if I am growing as a Christian under our pastor's care.
- His preaching and teaching are focused on Christ and his work for us.

## Distinguishing between thieves and shepherds

In chapter 9 Jesus healed a man who was born blind. The Pharisees challenged the healing and criticized the fact that it was done on the Sabbath. They interrogated the man who was healed and ended up throwing him out of the synagogue. Jesus saw the man later, and the man confessed his faith in Jesus. Jesus accused the Pharisees of being spiritually blind. Now he begins speaking to a group of people that includes the Pharisees, the blind man, his disciples, and other Jews nearby.

In John 10:1-6 Jesus paints a picture, but we are told that the people did not understand it. In verses 7 to 10, Jesus explains it. Note that two "I Am" statements are intertwined in this picture. Jesus is both the gate and the good shepherd. In this lesson we will focus on Jesus as the gate. However, the picture of Jesus as the good shepherd will enter into the discussion. We will look at that picture more closely in the next lesson.

**Read John 10:1,2** and discuss the picture in the light of John 10:7.

1. What does Jesus want to represent by the sheep pen?
2. In this picture, who is the one who does not enter by the gate?
3. Why can the shepherd enter through the gate?
4. What or who is the gate?
5. Who is the one who enters by the gate?
6. Discuss this statement:  
"When you are preaching, never look out at a congregation directly. Always plant the cross between yourselves and it, so you have to look around, or over, or under, or through it. You have no reason to be up there except for the fact that they would see the cross of Christ in your preaching."—Advice once given by an old Missouri Synod pastor

## Sheep listen to the voice of their shepherd

**Read John 10:3,4.**

1. Who is the watchman, or doorkeeper?
2. What is the voice that the sheep hear and know?

"Faith does not enter the heart unless the Word of God brings it there. This is why our lords are now mad and foolish for trying to drive people to faith with force and the sword; for Christ wants the sheep to come of their own accord, because they recognize His voice. The heart of those who are forced bodily is not compelled or captured."—Luther

3. Why do you think Jesus includes the detail of calling the sheep by name?

## Sheep do not listen to the voice of a stranger

**Read John 10:5.**

1. Who is the stranger?
2. How will believers react to such people?

## Jesus is the true gate

**Read John 10:6-8.**

1. What is Jesus telling us about himself when he calls himself the gate?
2. Whom does Jesus mean by "all who came before me"?
3. In what way is the picture of a thief or robber appropriate for a false teacher?

## Those sheep who are led through the gate are blessed

**Read John 10:9,10.**

1. Consider the following words or phrases. What blessings are there for those who enter through the gate?
  - "saved"
  - "will come in and go out"
  - "find pasture"
  - "life to the full"
2. What is the one goal of the thief? What warning is there for us?

## Summary

God has given us one certain way of testing those who teach his Word: Do we hear in their voices the voice of our Savior? Does the content of their teaching focus us upon Jesus himself? Jesus himself is the only way into the kingdom of God. He alone is the true gate. Those who lead people to believe in him are leading them into the church and into eternal life.

## For further discussion

1. Consider Luther's words above about not forcing people into the faith. Recall Jesus' words about the sheep hearing his voice and willingly following him. How do you feel about the idea of parents forcing their children to go to church?
2. In light of Jesus' words about the "thieves and robbers," compare and discuss these statements:
  - "Lutheran Christians shouldn't read too much of the materials written by those of other faiths."
  - "Lutheran Christians should be familiar with the materials written by those of other faiths."
3. Agree or disagree: Even when money is tight, health is poor, and relationships are rocky, Jesus is giving us abundant, full life.