**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 10-9-2022  
I Am the Gate & I Am the Good Shepherd**

One of the things that Dads and Pastors typically have in common is that they both enjoy corny jokes. I am no exception to this, much to the chagrin of some of my family, I think. But many, deep down, they like the corny jokes.

Anyway, the other day I was blessed to learn several new corny Bible jokes. Do you mind if I share a few with you today? And my family is not aloud to answer. Here’s the first one and I think it is a good one for Paul Hoffman actually.

What did Daniel tell his real estate agent? I’d prefer a house with no den. Here’s another.

What do John the Baptist and Winnie the Pooh have in common? Their middle names.

Okay, two more. Moses’ wife Zipporah – what was she called when she held a dinner party? The hostess with the Moses. I just love that one.

And the last one for today: What do they call pastors in Germany? German shepherds.

While it may be funny to think of a German Shepherd pastoring, there is a spiritual truth about pastors being shepherds as well.

The word pastor simply means shepherd. And truly, I am so honored and blessed to serve a shepherd among you here at Chestnut Grove Church. But I am also reminded that I am and will always be an under shepherd. Christ is the chief shepherd. There is only One ultimate and chief Shepherd. Our great God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Truly, the Lord’s very nature and heart is to shepherd and care for people. From the very beginning, God was seeking to shepherd our first father and mother – Adam and Eve. He wanted to empower them and to guide them. He wanted to protect them and care for them.

And this same shepherding God comes to dwell or tabernacle with humanity in God’s perfect timing. Jesus became Emmanuel “God with us.” And even as a human being, He remained fully God. And in all that Jesus did and said, He did it out of His shepherding heart.

Even as a young child of 12, Jesus was at the Temple and in some ways shepherd many of the religious teachers in Jerusalem. You may recall the story. There Jesus was with many of the teachers of Israel and He was asking them questions that apparently they had trouble answering and He amazed them with answers of His own. So through His teaching and wisdom He was seeking to shepherd the leaders to follow the way of God.

And as Jesus eventually began preaching and teaching and ministering in power and loving compassion, we see the shepherding heart of Jesus in scene after scene.

Today, as we continue exploring the “I Am” sayings of Jesus, we are actually going to highlight two of them together. These are “I Am the Gate” and “I Am the Good Shepherd.” These two statements were both part of the same conversation and they really go hand and hand.

To help set the scene a bit, by this time in Jesus’ ministry, many of the religious leaders had chosen to reject Jesus as their shepherd. Their envy of the attention that Jesus was receiving blinded them from believing in their savior.

**And the real question that is becoming clear is who was the true Shepherd of Israel?** Is it the religious leaders or is it Jesus?

I’m reminded of stories where 2 people are calling an animal to come to them and are seeing if that animal goes toward one or the other. And in this case, are the people to follow Jesus or the recognized religious authorities of the day?

In today’s passage we find Jesus speaking to the most prominent and respected group of religious authorities – the Pharisees. And Jesus says these powerful words to them in John 10:1-16.

**1 “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. 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 the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.**

**7Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A1-16&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-26491a" \o "See footnote a)] They 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.**

**11“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**

**14“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.**

So what’s happening here? First, it is important to note that Jesus says “Very truly I tell you” to the Pharisees here. And in the Bible, whenever Jesus says words along these lines, it is a call to listen and hear, because what will follow is a very important truth.

Jesus then begins to speak about sheep and shepherds and gates and robbers. He used all this imagery because these are familiar concepts to His audience. It was an agrarian culture. There was a lot of farming People who understood what good shepherds did. They protected their flock. And everyone knew of shepherds and was aware of thieves and robbers.

A good shepherd truly cared for their flock. They would lead their flock. They would protect their flock. And those listening to Jesus also understood that sometimes there would be people that would seek to harm the flock. There were robbers and thieves that would seek to steal sheep or other animals. To them, taking from the flock meant more money in their pockets.

Certainly, thieves and robbers would not have the best interests of the flock on their minds. But instead, would only be concerned about themselves.

And then there is the hired hand in this story of Jesus. The hired hand does not truly care about the sheep. Like the thieves, they are really just thinking about themselves.

John writes in verse 6 that the Pharisees did not understand what Jesus was telling them through this figure of speech.

What is Jesus saying here? Who are the hired hands who don’t really care for the sheep? That would be the Pharisees. Instead of caring for the sheep, which is the people of Israel, they were acting like thieves and robbers themselves by only caring for themselves.

Jesus, in this powerful passage, was calling out the religious leaders for their failure to truly shepherd the people of Israel. The Pharisees knew their Bibles, but many of them did not know the LORD themselves. HOW CAN THEY SHEPHERD WELL IF THEY DO NOT KNOW THE CHIEF SHEPHERD. YES, THEY KNEW A LOT ABOUT HIM AND THEY EVEN KNEW HIS WORD, MEMORIZING MUCH OR ALL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, BUT THEY DIDN’T KNOW THE AUTHOR.

He also points to Himself as the true shepherd of Israel. Jesus is the true shepherd of the sheep. Some of the picture that Jesus is painting in His words points back to God’s words through the prophet Ezekiel. In Ezekiel, the prophet was calling out the religious leaders for their failure to shepherd the people of Israel. And Ezekiel describes how the LORD was going to intervene and shepherd His people directly.

In a similar way, this is what is happening again in John chapter 10. The religious leaders had failed as a group to shepherd Israel in the way of God, and God Himself in Jesus has come to shepherd His people.

Jesus describes Himself in this passage using two “I Am” sayings. First, He calls Himself “**The gate**” and a few verses later He refers to Himself as “**The Good Shepherd**.” Again, we will look at them together because they are so connected.

A good question is “What are gates meant to do?” They are meant to protect. Gates help animals to stay safe from predators and gates help prevent sheep from wandering off. Gates offer a hedge of protection. To get inside a gate, you have to go through the door.

And Jesus is saying He offers spiritual protection to the people of Israel. If they listen to His voice and follow Him, they will live in victory over whatever may come against them. Over whomever would be seeking to lead them astray.

And Jesus goes on to describe why He is the Gate through the other “I Am” saying – “I Am the Good Shepherd.”

Good shepherds do more than just protect, don’t they? Good shepherds also support and lead. In fact, in the first century, shepherd would lead by going ahead of their flock and calling them to follow. Today, shepherds typically go behind their sheep and drive them forward in a particular direction, often using a sheep dog to help with that.

But Jesus, as The Good Shepherd, does not drive the flock, but gently leads them. He goes ahead of them and calls them to follow.

And all true sheep listen to His voice and follow Him. All true sheep will not listen to the stranger’s voice, but instead will follow the voice of the Good Shepherd.

And finally, Jesus teaches the Pharisees that there are other sheep of a different pen and they will be one flock and one shepherd. What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus is speaking about the Gentiles – the non-Jewish people. It is a reminder that Jesus did not just come to only be the true Shepherd of Israel, but the true Shepherd of all the world. Jesus came for everyone. Jesus desires that everyone listen to His voice and follow Him. And in Jesus, Jewish believers and Gentile believers are united into one flock for God. Isn’t that amazing.

So friends, as we think about these “I Am” sayings of Jesus and their importance today, what is the big takeaway for our lives?

**And I believe it is to remember that Jesus desires to shepherd us through life**. No matter our background, He calls us to listen and to follow. He goes ahead of us and seeks to lead us in His path each day. He offers us spiritual protection against those that seek to harm us.

Friends, in this world, we need to look to Jesus to shepherd us each day. There are many thieves and robbers out there that seek to use you for profit. They don’t really care about you, but would love to use you for their own purposes. To many people, we are just commodities. And they are people would love to lead us into sinful living.

There are also hired hands out there that do not really care for you and me either. These people may even call themselves Christians and even Christian leaders, but they do not really care for you, but only for themselves. We are to guard ourselves from them, not listening to them or following them, as Jesus sought to guard people from the Pharisees years ago.

But again, Jesus is the gate and Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Jesus goes before us and calls and seeks to lead us. How is He calling you? Are there things that He is calling you to do? Are there steps that He is wanting you to take?

Jesus’ job is to lead us and our job is to follow and stay close to Him. We do this through prayer and time in His Word. We do this by following His instruction. It is meant to be very simple. He leads and we follow.

There is a song from a few years ago “Jesus Take the Wheel.” He wants us to let Him have the wheel in our lives and to actively yield to His leading. He will protect you and provide for you and guide you. He gives us His Holy Spirit to help us every day in these things.

So, while pastors in Germany may be called German Shepherds, we can remember that Jesus is our Chief Shepherd, He is the Good Shepherd, and we are more precious to Him than anything. Let us joyfully follow Him each day. Amen.

Sources: Grafted video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqw5N1rDiSE&t=352s>; 20 BEST Bible Jokes | Don’t Laugh Challenge! D.A. Carson commentary – The Gospel of John; Jesus Take the Wheel – Song by Carrie Underwood; [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)