

# Jesus Is the Gate and the Good Shepherd

**John 10:1-21**

**Key Verse: 11, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”**

This is the third lesson in this IAM series. Through Matt Groter’s message, we heard Jesus’ declaration “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” Jesus promised to quench our thirst and fill our hunger when we come to him. Through Daniel Park’s message, we heard Jesus declare, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Jesus promised to shine his light into our darkness when we follow him. What a claim and what a promise!!

In today’s passage we will hear two more of Jesus’ seven IAM claims. “I am the gate” and “I am the good shepherd.” And both of these claims are closely related to sheep. In order to better understand Jesus’ claims in this passage, we need to know some basic information about sheep first. Then we will consider why Jesus is the gate and the good shepherd.

## 1. Sheep and shepherd

Do you know that sheep have a field of vision of around 300 degrees, allowing them to see behind themselves without having to turn their head? But they are near-sighted like me without glasses and can only see well up to 20 feet away. In order to make up for their poor vision, they have excellent senses of hearing and smell. Sheep can rotate their ears 180 degrees to hear around them and can hear as far as 2.5 miles. Like dogs, sheep can recognize their names and remember up to 50 individuals. Sheep rely heavily on their shepherd for their protection since they are prey animals. When they sense danger, they panic and run from the predators and gather in a herd. Sheep have a strong instinct to follow the sheep in front of them. When one sheep decides to go somewhere, the rest of the flock usually follows, even if it is not a good “decision”. (reference: [sheep101.info](http://sheep101.info), [savvyfarmlife.com](http://savvyfarmlife.com))

Okay, then with this basic knowledge, let’s take a look at the passage. Look at verses 1-6. “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. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Here I learned two things. First, the shepherd calls his sheep by name. I don’t know about you, but for me remembering names has always been a struggle. I have been teaching at IIT as an

adjunct lecturer for the past 6 years. Each semester when I teach at IIT, I try hard to remember the names of the students, who are mostly from India. I memorize their names and faces and practice, but at the end of each semester, I only remember a handful of names. Still by calling someone by name I feel more connected and personal. But unlike me, Jesus, the good shepherd knows all of us by name. Doesn't that make you feel special?

Second, the shepherd goes ahead of the sheep and his sheep follow him. The good shepherd does not drive his sheep, instead he always goes ahead of his sheep to lead. Then the sheep out of trust follow their shepherd. People of position and power have a tendency to order others around, rather than to lead. But Jesus, the creator God, King of kings and Lord of lords, came to be the shepherd of his sheep. He led the way to God, to eternal life, and to the kingdom of God through his life, suffering, death and resurrection. He went ahead of his sheep. And he calls his sheep to follow him. What a wonderful savior we have who leads us as our shepherd!!

## **2. Jesus, the gate**

Jesus continued to explain who he is in relation to his sheep. Look at verses 7-10. Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Recently when the US army exited from Afghanistan, people were desperate to get into the Kabul airport in the hope of being saved from the Taliban regime. For them, getting inside the airport border meant safety and salvation from the Taliban. In the same way, sheep need to be inside the sheep pen for their safety and protection from predators such as wolves and coyotes. And how do the sheep enter the sheep pen? Of course by the gate. Jesus declared, "I am the gate for the sheep." By this, he meant that those who enter through him will be protected from their predators. Jesus repeated again. "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." Jesus guaranteed salvation for those who enter through him, salvation from the power of sin and death, salvation from the power of the devil, our enemy. Apostle Paul cried out, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? But thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Ro 7:24-25)

So who can enter through Jesus? Who is invited to come to him? Jesus said, "Whoever enters through me will be saved." Anyone is welcomed, whether young or old, whether rich or poor, whether good or bad, and especially those who are lost and messed up.

I thank God who saved me from the empty way of life through Jesus. Growing up my desire was to own a comic bookstore. I thought that was the best life in this lonely, empty, and meaningless life on earth. Then through Genesis Bible study during my college years, I accepted the creator God who made me with meaning and purpose. Through Genesis 12:2, God spoke to me. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a

blessing.” At first I didn’t listen to his word and didn’t understand what he was saying. But later I accepted his word and said. “Oh God, I have no idea what it means to be a blessing. But whatever it is, I will submit my life to you.” Soon after that, I met Jesus, who suffered and died for my sins. When I met Jesus, I came to know the meaning of being a blessing.

In the past I couldn’t love my parents. I was ashamed of their lack of education. My father’s habit of drinking and gambling, and my parents’ fighting loudly made me timid and self-conscious. This made me fatalistic about my life. But when I entered through Jesus, Jesus took away my fatalism and loneliness. Instead he filled me with the love of God. I could love my parents from my heart and pray for them to know Jesus. My Buddhist mother noticed changes in me and wanted to come to church and she was later baptized before she went to be with the Lord. Praise Jesus who is the gate for salvation. Amen.

Jesus is not only the gate for protection, but also the gate for provision. In order for sheep to find green pastures, they need to go out through the gate and follow the shepherd. Jesus said, “They will come in, and go out, and find pasture.” Psalm 23:1-3 illustrate this very well. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake (ESV).” When we come to Jesus, he fills our hunger and quenches our thirst. He restores our soul and renews our spirit.

Last year, I was frustrated, bitter, and helpless because my children were unhappy, and my friends were wounded and hurt while serving the ministry in addition to the stress from the pandemic. I didn’t know what to do. However even in the midst of troubles, Jesus led us into green pastures and still waters through family testimony sharing and fellowship meetings with friends. Especially Jesus spoke to me through James 1:2, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds”. I couldn’t believe this at first. “Trials and joy?” However I accepted God’s good and perfect sovereignty by faith. When I did so, I could find joy, peace, and hope. Praise Jesus, the gate, who leads us into green pastures. Amen.

Jesus the gate also reminds me of Matthew 7:13-14. “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” The world offers many alternative gates that look tempting and attractive. But according to Jesus, they are thieves and robbers that lead us to destruction. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; Jesus came that we may have life, and have it to the full.

The current Covid-19 pandemic reveals how fragile our lives are. We trusted science and technology. But a small invisible virus turned the world upside down and forced our lives to change. Many people lost their loved ones and many others lost their jobs. We are still learning to adjust to our lives. Surely this virus made us humble before God. When we realize the false security and safety of this world, we can learn to trust Jesus and his word. “I am the Gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in, and go out, and find pasture.” Let us enter through Jesus for protection and provision. Amen.

### 3. Jesus, the good shepherd

Then Jesus declared his second I AM in this passage. Look at verse 11. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Here the word "good" is "kalos" in Greek. It means attractively good, or beautiful, as an outward sign of inward goodness. And Jesus proved his goodness by laying down his life for the sheep. There are people who pretend to be good to impress others though they are not. There are people who pretend to be shepherds though they are not. Look at verses 12-13. "The 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. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

Here we learn two things about the good shepherd. First, Jesus, the good shepherd, never abandons his sheep. Sheep are known as very needy animals. They cannot protect themselves. If predators come and attack, they need their shepherd to protect them. This can happen anytime, anywhere. Sometimes sheep fall down especially if they are fat or pregnant. If the shepherd does not notice and immediately help them to get back up, they will die either by suffocation or by predators. Some sheep are stubborn and do not follow the shepherd. They go on their own way and get lost. If the shepherd does not notice that they are missing and find them, they will get lost forever. In 2005, in Istanbul, Turkey, shepherds had left around 1500 sheep to graze as they relaxed while having their breakfasts. One sheep decided to jump off a cliff. In a few moments, they saw all the 1500 sheep following the first one and jumping off the same cliff. The sheep always need the shepherd. Jesus promised his disciples, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b) The risen Jesus who ascended into heaven will be with us now and forever.

The hired hand, on the other hand, abandons the sheep and runs away when the situation becomes dangerous, risky and life-threatening. Since they are not the owner of the sheep, they don't really care about them. However the good shepherd never abandons his sheep because he cares for them. When Jesus was crucified on the cross to carry our sins away, those who passed by hurled insults at him, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself." Jesus could have saved himself at that crucial moment. But he didn't. He bore our sins and suffered on our behalf and laid down his life for us. Jesus never abandons his sheep.

Sometimes, we feel abandoned and betrayed by those whom we trust. Sometimes, we feel no one really cares about us even in the church. And this hurts us deeply. However no matter what happens in our life, Jesus never abandons his sheep because he laid down his life for the sheep. Amen.

Second, Jesus, the good shepherd, defends his sheep from the predators. The Bible is filled with stories about God protecting his people from their enemies. God told Abram, "I am your shield and your very great reward." In the wilderness, Moses said "The Lord is my banner" because the Lord fought for his people against their enemies.

About 20 years ago, I was in a very difficult situation. I could not sleep at night without sleeping pills for many months. I couldn't find a permanent job, so I worked as a temp on campus for more than 2 years with no insurance and two small babies. Though I never missed Bible study, testimony, and church meetings, I thought that I lost my faith. I felt like I was in a dark tunnel without seeing the end and suffered from frequent suicidal thoughts. One elder missionary told me that it would be impossible for me to be fully restored. I thought that I failed God and he abandoned me. Then my pastor, the late Dr. Samuel Lee, encouraged me to read the Bible one hour a day at the church after work. And one day God spoke to me through his word from Exodus 14:13-14. Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." When I heard these verses, I believed that God was speaking to me. And God fulfilled his promise. He fought for me when I was helpless and giving in. He was with me when I felt lost and broken. He provided a campus job for me in his time and made me a Bible teacher for Northwestern students despite my many weaknesses. Praise Jesus, my good shepherd, who never abandons me and who always defends me and fights for me.

Look at verses 14 and 15. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep." Here the word "I know" is in Greek "Ginosko". It means properly, to know, especially through personal experience or by first-hand acquaintance. Jesus knows us, not about us. He knows us by first-hand experience. He knows us because he suffered our sin, shame and guilt. He endured our pain, agony and suffering. He knows and understands us very well because he bore our sins and suffered for us. Jesus knows us more than we do. He prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34a) Sometimes we feel like no one knows or understands us. But it is comforting to know that Jesus knows us.

As Jesus knows his sheep, his sheep also know Jesus personally. Knowing someone personally takes time and effort, especially when you spend quality time together. After 24 years of marriage, I came to know my wife personally, but I am still amazed when I see my wife's kindness to serve even above and beyond her comfort level. I am blessed to know her and also blessed to know many of you personally. As his sheep, Jesus invites each of us to come to him and get to know him. Jesus invites us to listen to his word. As we spend time in his word, we come to know Jesus. Apostle John who came to know Jesus personally confessed, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Likewise, when we spend time in Jesus' word, we come to know him more. And when we come to know Jesus, we begin to love him as he knows us and loves us. Jesus laid down his life for us out of love. May God help us to know Jesus more and love him more.

Look at verse 16. "I 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." Bible scholars say that other sheep here refer to the Gentiles. And both the Jews and the Gentiles are Jesus' sheep.

Look at verses 17 and 18. “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” In this passage, Jesus repeated 5 times the phrase “I lay down my life”. Twice he said, “I lay down my life for the sheep” in order to prove that he is the good shepherd. Then here he repeated the phrase 3 times in order to prove his love and obedience to God. Jesus obeyed God and laid down his life willingly because of his hope and faith in the resurrection. If we have the same hope and faith in the resurrection, we can also lay down our lives willingly for God. May God help us to lay down our lives to God with hope and faith in the resurrection.

Look at verses 19-21. “The Jews who heard these words were again divided. Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?” But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

From this passage, we learned that Jesus is the Gate who protects and provides. We also learned that Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. Our good shepherd Jesus never abandons us, instead he is always with us and fights for us against our enemies. May God help us to enter through Jesus the gate. May God help us to listen to and follow Jesus, our good shepherd.