

## Gospel of John - episode 19

### Chapter 9 part 2 - chapter 10

Welcome to our sharing on St. John's Gospel. I want to continue with the healing of the man who was born blind. I shared with you the last time that this man represents us, all of us who will be Baptised in water and the Spirit - therefore, everyone who will come to Jesus for life. So, when you go back to the earlier chapters and you hear Jesus saying that he wants to bring people from death to life, as he did in chapter 5; he wants to offer the water of life as he did in chapter 4 and in chapter 7, then you realise that this man does represent us! You will notice that when John gives you this Gospel, he isn't just telling you a surface story. Each person that he has chosen to reveal the mystery of Jesus with - represented somebody or some group or all of us, or they can represent all of us at a certain particular stage. I also told you that the physical healing was the beginning of the real journey that this man had to take from darkness to the light.

We began the journey he had to take in order to discover that Jesus is the light of the world. It's one thing to open your eyes and to see a young man in front of you. It's quite another matter to say, "My Lord and my God!". So, the first stage of his journey was simply to recognise Jesus as the man. That's where everybody starts, but he must move from there. When the Pharisees put pressure on him to say where his sight came from, he began to realise that Jesus was a prophet. This is the next stage of his journey. Then the Pharisees put him on trial, forcing him to tell the story over and over again.

Now, it seems strange that he is asked to testify over and over again, but at the end of this class, I will point out that this reflects what was happening in the early church. The Jewish people were saying to the new Christians, 'but **what is** this new life? How can you see? Tell us about it'. It gave the Christians the opportunity to testify as to what it meant to come to Christ, so, they would have to tell their testimony over and over again in the hope that their listeners would open up and come to Christ. So, then we came to step three, where the leadership put this man under oath to speak the truth as to where he got his eyesight from. We have an amazing event here where an ordinary layman, who has never been in the temple before, stands up to challenge the Jewish leadership. Now, that is very important as well, and I'll explain it later. He has the audacity to say to the Jewish leadership, 'do you want to become his disciples?' When you go into the Acts of the Apostles, you will see and hear Peter, James, John and other Apostles stand up to the Jewish Sanhedrin saying, "it is better for us to listen to God rather than you".

The Sanhedrin are utterly amazed that these Galilean fishermen - who in their eyes know nothing - are speaking to them with authority, and they are looking more and more like Jesus every day. The complete shock that they have is reflected here; the leadership cannot understand why the laity would stand up to them. I want to begin at verse 29. "You can be his disciples, they said. We are disciples of Moses". Oh, dear! That brings you back to the discussions we've had in chapter 7 and 8, where Jesus told them, "you say you are disciples of Moses, but you don't keep the law". If you are a disciple of Moses, you must keep the law. That's the logic. What is being said to the man is that 'you have become an apostate; you have



become a heretic; we have remained faithful to the old religion'. Then they throw at the - man whom they say, you'll remember this from chapters beforehand - they said that 'that rabble knows nothing. They are damned'. This man began to theologize in front of them; they didn't think that the laity were capable of this!

They didn't think the laity could discuss religion, but Jesus proved in Chapter 4 that not only can the men but also women entered into theological debate with him. In their eyes she was a heretic - thus a write-off! So, the Jewish leadership get shock after shock because they see that ordinary people are different to the way they were before. They are no longer passive. They have the courage to stand up to them. The ordinary people seem to know God personally, and are able to defend their faith. This is a complete shock to them. They have never met this before. So, they retort to the man, "as for this man, in other words - the one who healed you - we don't even know where he comes from! This is terribly important. The man replied, "now this is an astonishing thing. He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from". Everybody knew that when the Messiah came, there would be a mystery about his birth, that nobody would know where he came from! And that's precisely the situation we have with Jesus.

The leadership know, theoretically, that that is true about the Messiah, they are just not accepting this particular Messiah! They have already decided they don't like him for all kinds of reasons that we've dealt with before. So, the man said, "now, here is an astonishing thing. He has opened my eyes and you don't know where he comes from. "We know". Oh, dear! This is a layman speaking! The last time we heard the big 'we know' was in chapter three, where Nicodemus told the layman, Jesus, that 'we know', that is the Sanhedrin knows that you are a prophet from God because you give all the signs. What is this new thing where the laity are saying, 'we know'? These lay people have an authority that the Jewish elders have never seen before. "We know, the man said, that God doesn't listen to sinners". (A sinner is somebody who is actively in rebellion against God). "But God does listen to men who are devout and do His Will. Ever since the world began, it's unheard of for a man to open the eyes of someone who was born blind".

In other words, there had been healings before, but this type of healing - this is off the Richter scale. This has never happened before. Because it is something that never happened before, surely even you, the leadership, can see that this is something that comes from God. This is step four. It would have been utterly and completely astounding for the leadership to hear an ordinary (in their eyes), uneducated layman, able to stand his ground before them, work out his position theologically, and be completely logical and scripturally correct. This is completely new, but that was the reality in the early church. That was the reality that they had to face, that lay people actually knew who they were. They knew who had given them the new life, and they knew how to enter into the new life. They were studying the scriptures. They had looked up all the scriptures about Jesus. **They knew!** This is amazing for the Jewish leadership. So, he comes to a conclusion, all by himself with no help from these false Shepherds: He said, "if this man were not from God, he couldn't don't do a thing"!

What you have seen is that he is journeying into the light, into complete security in God. He is completely sure of his ground. And the amazing thing is, he had never seen Jesus because he was totally blind when Jesus said, 'Go and wash in the pool of Siloam. I went and I washed, and I saw'. All he knew was that the

name of the person was Jesus. He has yet to look Jesus in the face! It's really incredible. At this particular point, the leadership show that they really are false prophets. They replied, "are you trying to teach us?" You see, they have always been on the high platform before; the laity listened passively to them. They were the ones who laid down the law - as we would say. Here was a completely new phenomenon that the laity knew exactly what ground they were standing on and they could defend their position. They knew the scriptures. They knew who Jesus was, and also, they wanted the leadership to come over to Jesus.

Now, I'm going to make a big jump. Did any of the laity succeed in getting any of these men to come over to Jesus? The answer is yes! There's one small little sentence in Acts 6. It's not even a complete sentence. But it's one of the most astounding sentences in the New Testament. Considering the opposition that these men gave to Jesus, it says, "a large number of priests became followers of Jesus". So, this debate going on here between this layman and the leadership is not something that's not going to bear fruit. It will bear fruit. They won't all come over, but if a large number of them came over, then Jesus won a great harvest. Can't you see that when Jesus insisted on dealing with the woman of Samaria, a wonderful harvest came from Samaria. When he dealt with the father of the little boy who was dying, there was a great harvest in that household. Now here, taking this man out of absolute obscurity for nobody would have looked at him before, because after all, he was just a blind beggar; you would throw a few coins at him and walk on. Jesus took him out of absolute nothingness and raised him up. There is a Psalm which says, "He has raised the poor from the dust and put them sitting with princes" - because "the princes of my people", mentioned in that Psalm - are the leadership.

This is what you're looking at here, somebody taken out of nothing, and now speaking authoritatively to the leadership. Then the enormity of the miracle that has happened in this man's life becomes clear. The greater miracle was in his heart, in his innermost being; he was transformed. It wasn't just the fact that he could see with his eyes, because seeing with your physical eyes is still on the level of the flesh. That wouldn't be the great thing, but seeing this utterly transformed human being, yes, that's the miracle. That's the real thing. So, they said, "Are you trying to teach us? And you a sinner through and through from the day you were born?" What a judgement! Remember the beginning of the story? Who is to blame? Who is guilty? This man or his parents, that he was born blind, and you have the leadership saying that he has been a sinner since the day he was born, and therefore, he is guilty because he's blind?

Have you ever heard of injustice? Have you ever heard of a wrong judgement? This is it. So, let me see, have I any more thoughts written down so that we get the most out of this wonderful event? Let's look at this layman standing up to the leadership. The man keeps repeating the message. He answers every criticism and every accusation with testimony. That's one of the ways that he is a model for us. He is a model for us on several levels, but that's one of the ways. He also shows us that we should grow interiorly and become fearless witnesses for Christ. He became a fearless witness for Christ. No matter what pressure is put on him, he testified to his Lord and Saviour. So, no matter what the world says to us, no matter what pressure governments put on us, we testify to the truth. We don't do it angrily. This man is very calm. He just give them the truth. He simply followed Jesus, that when pressure was put on him, he remained calm and recollected, and he gave them the truth regardless of the cost.



Now, we are told in verse 34 that the leaders drove him out, with this very unjust judgement. I want to remind you of Chapter 8 that we have just come through - that sinners should not judge sinners. They are accusing him of being a sinner from the day he was born, but since they are not keeping the law - and they are certainly not keeping the law of love, they are sinners, judging sinners, and that is not allowed. Jesus says that if you have to give judgement, your judgement must be sound. It must not be on the basis of prejudice or hatred, which is what is happening here. You remember Matthew 15:14, that they were blind leaders, and they were leading people into the ditch, 'the blind leading the blind'. Well, that's them! So now the man is thrown out of the Synagogue. What happens then?

Let's pick up at verse 35. "Jesus heard that the man had been driven away, and, of course, went looking for him. Why? Because Jesus is the Shepherd of the sheep, as we will hear very soon. When Jesus found him - you get a wonderful dialogue between the man who can now see not only with his physical eyes, but see with his interior eyes. Jesus found him and he said, "do you believe in the Son of Man?" Jesus uses an expression which points to the vision in Daniel 7:13-14 - that the Son of Man will reign with an eternal reign. Therefore, the Messiah is not an earthly king of a material kingdom with a material army. That's the level of below. The Kingdom of God belongs to God's realm of above. So, he says, "do you believe in the Son of Man?" The healed man said, "Lord, tell me who he is, and I will believe in him". This is wonderful! Jesus is the Good Shepherd. We're going to hear that very soon. He went looking for his sheep who was lost in this crowd that wasn't going to do him any Good because he has been judged wrongly by them.

Jesus wants to complete the healing by bringing him fully into the light. So, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Now, this man has received so much grace. You remember at the beginning of this event, people were saying, Yes, he's the man. He looks like him, but something has happened to him. Well, if you look at him now, he has the same physical features outside. Isn't he transformed? He's completely different. He has received so much. So, because he has received so much, he trusts Jesus to tell him the truth. This is the position of all disciples, and this is the position of all who put their faith in Jesus. We trust him to give us the truth. So, he said, "Lord, tell me who he is, and I will believe". His soul is completely open to the truth. It's beautiful to see it. Jesus said something absolutely amazing: "you are looking at him. I am he". It's totally amazing. You are Messiah; you are Lord; you are Shepherd; you are king; you are God! This is the seeing you find in Psalm 36:9, "Lord, with you there is a fountain of life, and in your light we see light".

This man looking into the eyes of Jesus can see the truth. John is saying that we look into the eyes of Jesus in prayer. We open our interior eyes to Jesus in prayer, and when we do, we too will see the truth. We will know the truth. It's a wonderful thing. The man said, "Lord, I believe and worshipped him". Now, this is the highest point anyone has reached in responding to Jesus in this Gospel. There are only two people who fell at the feet of Jesus and worshipped him, this man and Thomas - after the Resurrection. To reach this point of actually worshipping Jesus means he has come fully into the truth. "You are looking at him". The man opened his eyes to **the presence of the GREAT I AM**, because we have been talking

about that all the time. He is looking at the Giver of new life. He is looking at the source of living water. He is looking **at the God of Israel in human flesh!** He can see!

No wonder he would worship him because he was a true believer. If you remember that wonderful text from Isaiah 12, this man can now drink deeply from the well of salvation. He has opened up completely. This nobody has become a very big somebody in the eyes of God. He has become a child of God. He has become an inheritor for the Kingdom of God. You will remember that Jesus said in those controversies from chapter 6 to 8, that, “whoever the Father gives me, I will accept, and I will raise him up on the last day”. What a wonderful future this man has!

The reaction to this is very interesting. The Scribes and Pharisees are present when Jesus finds the man. In verse 39-41: “Jesus said, it is for judgement that I have come into the world so that those without sight may see, and those with sight become blind. The man has come from blindness to sight. The leadership are going from sight to blindness. There are two completely different, opposite journeys happening here. The Pharisees understood everything Jesus said. They were scripture scholars. They knew, so they said to him, “we’re not blind, surely? Jesus said, blind? If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty”. Oh, there’s Jesus’s answer to the very beginning.... this man was born blind. Who is guilty? Jesus said, “if you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty, but since you claim to see, your blindness remains”.

Here is another way of reading this text which is important. John is doing a double take here. Do you remember I said in chapter 6, that John was also superimposing the Christian Eucharist on top of it? Well, in this case he is superimposing what is going on in the early church into this text. Hence there is a lot about Baptism and coming into the church here. We are dealing with two stages of history here: a) what’s going on at the time of Christ and b) what’s going on at the time of John. When you go back to the time of Christ there were no expulsions from the Synagogue; the expulsions from the Synagogue only happened at the time of the early Church.

When the Church began to separate from the Synagogue, it realised that it couldn’t stay in the Synagogue. But if you look at Acts 1-5, you will find that in the very earliest days, they did go to the temple and they did participate in the feasts until the persecution of the Sanhedrin drove them all out of the land. They had to go and disperse. So, when they meet the Jewish people in all the different lands they dispersed to, these discussions and disputes began. You will see that if you look at all the travels of Saint Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, how he was opposed by the Jews of the diaspora and how he was accepted by the Gentiles. What you have here in this text is that some Christians were able to boldly proclaim Christ. There were others - like the parents of this man - who wanted to stay in the Synagogue and still be Christian so, they opted out of these discussions. That is where the parents come in in this particular story. What John is saying to them is that you lose nothing by going over to Christ. In fact, you gain everything. So, he is trying to encourage the early Christians to step out no matter what opposition they experience and to bear witness to Christ. Thank you for listening. God bless you.

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Welcome to our sharing on St. John's Gospel. We are now going into Chapter 10, where we meet the revelation about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Chapter 10 continues the dialogue at the end of Chapter 9, because the healed man has to discover his new Shepherd, and the new sheepfold also. He also needs to discover how to live on the level of above. So, all that we have dealt with up to now in this Gospel, this man has to discover for himself. Jesus is going to compare himself here with the false shepherds that are in Israel who have rejected the saved man, and they have thrown him out. But the saved man discovers that he has a Good Shepherd in Jesus, and that through this Good Shepherd, he will have access to the Father. Now, the thing that all the chosen people dreamed about, of course, was having access to God. That was the most incredible thing for them. They knew that God himself was the true Shepherd of Israel, and they cried out to him all down the centuries to show His Face. Here he is, and they are rejecting him. It's amazing. Listen to this in Psalm 80:1, "O Shepherd of Israel, hear us, you who lead Joseph - that is the chosen people - like a flock. You who sit enthroned among the Cherubim shine forth. Awake you mighty One, come and save us". It's so clear, isn't it? They have asked the Lord to come, and they have asked him to come as a Shepherd. He has come, and now they reject him. It doesn't make sense. They say, "Restore us, O God, and make your face shine on us that we may be saved". This prayer has been answered by Jesus and answered fully. The Feast of Dedication in chapter 10, that was also the Feast of Lights, but it was in December. Don't forget now that this is the last December of Jesus's life. He will die the following March, April, at Passover. So, keep in mind that he only has months to live, and you will realise the enormity of his courage, patience, kindness, and humility in dealing with all the opposition that he is getting.

It was in this feast that they commemorated the rededication of the altar after its desecration. You find this in 2 Maccabees 10:5. This day of the purification of the temple fell on the very day on which the temple had been profaned by the foreigners. It was the 25th of the month of Chislev, the 25th of December. Isn't that interesting? That's the day in which the Church celebrates the birth of Christ. Israel had celebrated the re-consecration of the altar. John tells us that Jesus himself **is** the altar of God. So many people don't realise why we celebrate the birth of Jesus on the 25th of Chislev. This was a recent feast because the Maccabees were only one or two centuries before this. So, during the Feast - the readings were from Ezekiel 34 about the good versus the bad shepherds! You will notice that, again, John is showing us that Jesus fulfils, surpasses, replaces all of the Jewish feasts.

The reason for that was, that at the time when the altar was desecrated by the foreigners, there were bad shepherds in Israel. So, they read Ezekiel 34:1-31, a text that was written during the exile in Babylon. Of course, the exile in Babylon came as a result of bad shepherds in Israel also! The reading of Ezekiel 34 is so close to John 10, that I want to read parts of it for you. The reading is too long, so I'm only going to give you some statements out of it; you can go back and read the whole thing yourself. There, it is God Himself - that is God the Father - who is speaking: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Disaster is in store for the shepherds who feed themselves. Aren't shepherds meant to feed the flock? But they have sacrificed the fattest sheep, but they failed to feed the flock. You have treated them cruelly and harshly - and we have just seen the healed man in Chapter 9 treated cruelly and harshly - and for lack of a true shepherd, my sheep are scattered. I am against the shepherds. I shall take my flock out of their charge". In Matthew 21:43 Jesus told the leadership of Israel that he was taking the flock into his own

charge. He was taking the care of the flock himself. So, John 10 fits this whole situation where the Lord has come and he is taking the flock away from them. We see that progression as we go into the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of the New Testament.

Continuing Ezekiel 34, the Lord says, "I myself will take care of my flock. I shall rescue them. I will pasture them. I will look after the lost one". Now, we've seen that in chapter 4, 5, and 9, that the Lord would go after the lost one, the one that was the most needy, and take care of them. "I shall be a true Shepherd to them so that they will know that 'I your God', I am with them. You, my sheep, are the flock of my human pasture, and I am your God". Well, that's as clear as it can get, and that is the basis for John 10. You will hear Jesus saying that everything I have read from Ezekiel 34, he is doing. Since this scripture was widely known, they looked forward to the day when it would be fulfilled, when the people and the leaders would have a True Shepherd taking care of them.

They all wanted this Good Shepherd, so, the language of Good Shepherd was very much part of their thinking, and it is part of the teaching of the prophets also. Here are a few examples: Isaiah 40:1-11, told them that the Messiah would be like a Shepherd, feeding his flock, gathering the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his breast, and leading to their rest the mother ewes. In other words, a very gentle, very humble, very loving approach to the needs of the people. This is exactly what they have witnessed in Jesus. Psalm 23 told them that this Shepherd that they were looking forward to would not be distant from them as the Sanhedrin was.....they were a different class of society altogether. As we have already discovered, they utterly despised ordinary people. Instead of that, this great Shepherd they looked forward to meeting was going to be personally involved with each disciple, as if nobody else existed! We have seen that with the Samaritan woman, also with the man who was 38 years sick, and the man who was born blind, Jesus treated them as if nobody else existed.

That's why Psalm 23 says, "the Lord is my Shepherd, I have a personal relationship with him. I shall not want, because he makes me lie down in green pastures". So, the sheep have no concern whatsoever if they are in lovely green pastures. "He leads me beside the quiet waters, and he restores my soul". Now, you know the Psalm, so I'm not going to read the rest of it. Also, Jeremiah 23:1-6, warned against the false shepherds, and that judgement was coming. Now, we have heard Jesus warning them in the great controversies of this particular Gospel. Jeremiah told them that God said to him, "I will raise a virtuous branch for the house of David, who will reign and be a true king. In his days, Judah will be saved, and he will be called the Lord, my integrity". Isn't that the way Jesus has presented himself? 'Can anyone convict me of sin?' In the days of Jesus, people were saved because he was the one who brought them Redemption. Zechariah 11:4-7, warns that their Messiah will be betrayed and that he will be sold for 30 pieces of silver. He also says that when the Shepherd is struck, the sheep will scatter, which, when we get to the second half of the gospel, you will see that as soon as Jesus is arrested in Gethsemane, all the Apostles scatter. Only John returns.

Finally, the term Shepherd was used by the chosen people to mean a good leader, a leader who was a hands-on person. He would lead the people with very personal communication with them. He wouldn't be far away and up in his own pedestal. But the good shepherds were going to be spiritual leaders. They

weren't just material, social, or political leaders. Examples of these good shepherds were the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David - just to give you some examples. These were good shepherds, and they were all spiritual leaders of their people. God was able to speak to the people through these men. So, they knew that the Great Shepherd who was coming would be all that they had seen in these other good shepherds and all that the Holy Spirit had inspired in them to look forward to. Let's read a few verses: "Jesus said, I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the Shepherd of the flock. The gatekeeper lets him in. The sheep hear his voice. One by one, he calls his own sheep and leads them out. And when he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him; they do not recognise the voice of strangers". Now, I'm not doing the second half of the gospel with you right now, but I do need to tell you ahead of time that when you go to the Resurrection account in Chapter 20, and you meet Mary of Magdala looking for Jesus, the way John describes Mary discovering Jesus is exactly what is said here in chapter 10! She sees a strange person standing in front of her, whom she doesn't recognise. The only thing she recognises is the voice of the Shepherd. When the Shepherd calls her, she responds. There's a lot more, but I just want to hint because I will keep telling you that with each chapter that we do, we have to remember all that has gone before, and we also realise that there's a forward thrust to it as well.

John tells us that all the scriptures are leading to Jesus. No matter what title you give him, they all lead to him. He is the new Moses, leading a new Exodus and a new people out of the slavery of sin, through the wilderness of this world, into the promised land that is Heaven. On this journey he is the one who gathers his sheep into the sheepfold at night, where they are safe. Now, if you are wandering in a wilderness you are not safe! The imagery that John is using here is important. Here is Micah 2:12-13, where the Lord says, "I am going to gather all Jacob together, that is the whole people. I will gather the remnant of Israel, those who are left over after the apostasy. I will bring them together like sheep in a sheepfold" - that is the Kingdom of God. "He who walks at the head will lead the way in front". That is Jesus leading them, and he leads from the front. "He will walk at their head. They will pass through the gate, and they will go out by it. Their King will go in front of them. The Lord is at their head".

That's exactly what we have just read. John is saying that the more you speak about Jesus, the more the scriptures come alive. This text that I've just read describes Jesus's ministry perfectly. John told us from Chapter 2, that Jesus is the new temple, and we have gone through the feasts of Israel where He fulfils and replaces them. The present leaders in Jerusalem are walking in the footsteps of the false shepherds, and they have prevented the people from trying to penetrate the light that Jesus is shining. The false shepherds try to confuse the people with their wrong reactions to Jesus. He, the Beloved Son, is about to take the flock away from the leadership.

It took the Church quite a bit of time in the acts of the Apostles to realise that they did, in fact, have to leave Judaism. In the early days, they were still attending the temple and attending its feasts. You have stories in the early days of the Acts of the Apostles, of Peter and John in the temple healing somebody. When you get up to Chapter 15 of the Acts, the decision has to be taken: we've got to go. The decision to



go out of the temple and into the sheepfold completely was huge on the part of the disciples. They had to do this themselves, but they realised that Jesus had prepared them. He had told them that when the Spirit came, It would remind them of everything that he had said. That is why John can give it so clearly now, because at the end of the first century, looking back and seeing the struggle of the church to get free from the Synagogue, John can look back and realise that the scriptures were fulfilled in this as well. So, Jesus has taken the leadership; he took the Samaritan woman figuratively by the hand and took her out into his own fold. He took the man who was 38 years sick, again, figuratively by the hand and took him out of the Synagogue into his own fold, and the same with the man born blind.

John has had a very important double message to give us all the way, that is what was happening at the time of Christ and what was happening in the late first century in the Church. Here in Chapter 10:1-5, is the first time that John uses a parable. We are so used to parables from the Synoptic Gospels that we are quite shocked that we get as far as chapter 10 in John's Gospel, without a parable in sight! There will be another one, that of the Vine in Chapter 15. The reason why he is using the image of the sheepfold was that shepherds in Israel did not own the sheep. They would have several flocks belonging to different farmers to care for. All the flocks would be put into a corral at night. It was very important to have a sentry or a gatekeeper so that thieves and brigands couldn't come along stealing the sheep. The only person that the gatekeeper would let in or out was the actual shepherd.

You might ask the question, if there were several sheepfolds put into this one corral, how on earth would the shepherd get them out? It was very simple! Every one of the sheep and lambs had a name. The first lesson the lamb had to learn in life was how to recognise the voice of the shepherd! The Shepherd would even hold a lamb up in front of his own face and talk to the lamb directly so that the lamb recognised his voice. People have witnessed this in Israel. I've even witnessed it a little myself, that a shepherd would walk away from the flock, and he would call them one by one. The sheep, appeared to pay no attention to him but as soon as they heard the name that they recognised for themselves, they followed the voice of the Shepherd. So, all the flocks could be separated very simply because they only followed the voice of the Shepherd. That is the parable John is using to explain the one-to-one relationship that each disciple has with Jesus.

Each one of us is called by name. Each one of us is personally known by the Lord, and each one of us has only one way to get to Heaven, and that is through the gate that is Jesus. Jesus says, "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life". The gatekeeper appears to be the Holy Spirit who guides everything in the Kingdom of God. It is absolutely essential that each one of us have a personal relationship with Jesus so that when you hear the voices of the world or the voices of the Kingdom of darkness, that you don't listen to them. In Chapter 10:1-5, Jesus declares that it is his intention to create a flock. Now, put that into our language, he intends creating the Church. He intends putting all his disciples into a new situation, into a new family, and he himself is going to be in charge. He himself is going to take care of them. He himself is going to feed them with the Manna of the Word and the Eucharistic miracle. So, it is essential for each one of us to know who the Shepherd is.

Let's read another bit for you. The leadership are not going to understand this but you are used to it now. In Chapter 7, 8, also Chapter 6, they don't understand, and we know from Chapter 9 that their blindness is going deeper. So, they're not going to get what Jesus is saying. Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by it, so, he told them again, "I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate to the sheepfold". Jesus is telling the Jewish leadership that is rejecting him, absolutely, that there is no way to have access to God except through him. That means that Jesus is the **one and only mediator between us and God**. That means you go back to Chapter 1:51, and remember the meaning of Jacob's ladder - with the angels of God going up and down. Jesus is the one and only mediator, and the church has been saying it ever since; everything is through him, with him, and in him. So, all others who have come are thieves and brigands. Now, Jesus is referring to the false shepherds.

"All others are thieves and brigands. But the sheep took no notice of them". Now, you saw that in the crowds that are in Jerusalem, do not pay attention to the teaching of the false shepherds. We saw that the crowds were going over to Jesus, and listening to him; in fact, the more Jesus taught them - even the guards in the temple said, "nobody has ever spoken like this" - the more people began to realise, 'we are listening to the truth here, and we are listening to something that's not right in the others. The people are in the position of having to discern the true Shepherd from the false shepherds. 'All the others are thieves and brigands'. In other words, they appear to be in charge of the flock of God, but a thief is somebody who steals for himself and we have seen in Ezekiel 34, that the false Shepherds were looking after themselves. They weren't looking after the flock.

So, Jesus says very clearly in verse 9, "I am the gate". There is no other gate to heaven. I am the gate. He is the only mediator. "Anyone who enters through me will be safe". That means you will be safe not just for time, but for eternity. "He will go freely in and out". So, in this sheepfold, there is an up and down access like in Jacob's ladder, that we have access to God, and God comes to us. We also have the freedom to go in and out of the sheepfold. We will look at this in our next sharing. Thank you for listening. God bless you.