

Knock, Knock

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

¹⁹ There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.

²⁰ Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?"

²¹ Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

²² At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,

²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.

²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,

²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

John 10:1-29

The Doors

Jim Morrison started a psychedelic rock band in 1965 called The Doors. He took the name from **Aldous Huxley**'s book *The Doors of Perception*, the title of which

was a reference to a **William Blake** quotation: "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite." Hallucinogenic drugs such as L.S.D. ("Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds") became the door of choice for Morrison and many since the 1960s—gates to the otherworld, the invisible world, the realm of God and angels. There are supposedly many doors to God, many doors to the infinite, and one is just as good as another.

Does it matter which door you choose? Will any good door lead you to God? Though these were not the exact questions Jesus was answering in our passage today, they are nevertheless important questions that our culture is asking which our passage does in fact answer with crystal clear clarity. Our culture is profoundly confused and ignorant about **how to get to God**. It is ignorant about **where God lives**. It is confused about **what his house looks like and how you get inside**. This has all happened because it no longer has any idea who **God is or what he has done in Christ**. Let's move to the text today to see how Jesus puts these things, for he is very much interested in helping us understand the truth.

The Shepherd

Jesus gives a story with deep OT overtones. He pictures a **sheep pen** with walls, a **door**, a **shepherd**, a **gatekeeper**, **sheep**, **thieves and robbers**. There might be no part of this story that our modern world understands properly and a lot of the Christian world is confused about parts of it as well. Therefore, we want to take a look at the various components from the perspective we have just discussed.

Let us start with the Shepherd. As I said, the world is confused about how we get to God because it is confused about God. It doesn't know who he is. So if we want to know how to get to God, we must first know the truth about God and be honest with the claims of Jesus.

The first thing to notice is that **Jesus is the Shepherd**. In **vs. 11**, **"I am the good shepherd."** In our discussion about God, this reference to the Shepherd is a reference to his being God. To say, **"I am the good shepherd"** is to say **"I am God."** Jesus is not a mere shepherd, one shepherd among many. Rather, he is the Good Shepherd.

As we saw last week, this has close connections with the OT. Over and over again, *God* is called the Shepherd. David said, “The LORD is my shepherd” (Ps 23:1). Asaph sings, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth” (Ps 80:1). (Notice that Asaph tells you where God is). Now, it is true that God appoints shepherds in the OT to look after his sheep. So Joshua (Num 27:17), David (2 Sam 5:2), Cyrus (Isa 44:28), and others (1 Chron 17:6) are called shepherds. But each of these is a type or picture of Christ the Good Shepherd, whom God says he will both be and send simultaneously (see Ezek 34:22-23; 37:24).

But throughout Israel’s history, there were false shepherds. These are called thieves and robbers. What makes the Good Shepherd the True Shepherd rather than a thief? Jesus gives several important answers to this vital question. You must ask this question to yourself and find the integrity to answer to it honestly according to Jesus’ teaching. When you see the answers, you can trust what he says about himself. This is a vital part of our work this morning.

First, the true shepherd enters by the door (John 10:2). False shepherds climb in some other way. To enter by the door makes a shepherd the true shepherd. Since we are going to look at the door separately, I'll save some thoughts about it until later. But I'll telegraph some of it here first. It is important that Jesus entered through the door. To give you a preview, consider Hebrews 9:12, “He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” This tells you at least in part what the door is, it is the entrance to heaven itself, the place where God is.

This verse is related to a second reason Jesus gives to prove he is the true shepherd. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11, 15). Jesus is talking here about his death on the cross. Jesus’ entered through his death. This is also what Hebrews 9:12 is talking about. This death was not just any old death, but a sacrifice for sin. “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for

us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7-8). It appeased the wrath of God. It was an offering on behalf of others. It was a substitute, his righteousness for our sin. There is no other shepherd that has ever done this, moreover, because they are all sinful, there is no other shepherd that would be accepted even if he did.

More than this—much more—Jesus goes on “... I lay down my life that I may take it up again” (John 10:17). Here, Jesus refers to his resurrection from the dead. Jesus’ death and resurrection is the heart of the gospel, and it is the one thing the world does not like to talk about. They are confused about God because they refuse to look at what God has done in Christ. Other shepherds are not offensive, but then again no other shepherd has ever raised himself from the dead. That kind of an act demands allegiance, especially when the one doing it commands you to bow before his feet, so it is no wonder they don’t want to talk about him (though they will curse his name all the live-long day). Who can raise themselves from the dead? Yet Jesus can and did. And he even predicted it here, displaying both is

omnipotence to do it and omniscience to know it beforehand saying, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (John 10:18).

Now, Jesus’ death and resurrection lead us to consider a third fact that proves Jesus is the true shepherd. For this message is not offensive to everyone, only to those who stub their toe on it because of their own pride. The third thing that proves Jesus is the true shepherd is that the sheep hear his voice (John 10:3; 16). To hear is to know and to respond in faith, believing that what you are told about him is true and through Christ will bring you to glory.

This is made possible by several things. First, he calls the sheep by name (John 10:3). Before the sheep know him, he knows the sheep. This is explained, with the correct order, in vs. 14, “I know my own and my own know me.” This knowledge is not some abstract, theoretical, trivia of facts like a school boy learns about math or science. It is a personal, relational, intimate knowledge of persons. This is not mere knowledge “of

their name.” He knows them “by name.” He befriends them.

Second, Jesus “leads them out” (10:3) and “brings them in” (John 10:16). In doing these things the shepherd *teaches* the sheep through a relationship, through experiences, through walking with them by the Spirit, through the Scripture, through the means of grace, through fellowship and prayer, that he takes care of them, that he provides for them, and that they can therefore trust him. In other words, they learn because they are with him, and he with them.

To hear his voice is therefore to **respond as the Psalmist does** when he realizes that God is his Shepherd who leads him out and brings him in. It is to no longer want, but to rely. It is to know that he leads you in green pastures, besides quiet waters, even though it may not seem like it or even be that outwardly. You can be poor, sick, afflicted, tormented in all manner of ways. Yet, “He restores my *soul*.” You will be walking on dangerous paths, into sinful thickets, and yet be lead to paths of righteousness, guided by his comforting rod and staff, which are not a burden, all for Christ’s sake. For, he is

the Shepherd and he loves the sheep. David is not talking about “Your Best Life Now” in some outward sense, but in an inward renewal of your mind and heart through the word and faith.

That he **takes care of and provides for his sheep** is explained by the Lord in **John 10:9-10**. “**If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.**” What does it mean to be “saved?” It is a physical metaphor that points to a spiritual reality. As sheep may be saved from robbers or wolves, so you may be saved from hell. “**I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.**” To be saved is to have **abundant life**, which is called in **vs. 28**, “**eternal life.**” This is to know that even in the valley of the shadow of death wherein you walk, you shall fear no evil, for God is with you; that even in the presence of your enemies who surround you on all sides, he prepares a table for you in the church, in the sheep pen; that he anoints your head with oil; and that your cup overflows. It is to believe that goodness and mercy are following you until your days come to an end when you shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The shepherd also **protects** the sheep. Jesus uses the figure of a “**gatekeeper**” (**10:3**). The gatekeeper was the shepherd himself. Once he had the sheep in the pen, he would sit in the doorframe of the pen, with his staff in hand, protecting the sheep from wolves and lions, thieves and robbers. To be a true shepherd is to be a gatekeeper, a protector of the sheep.

Why does Jesus do this? This is also important. It is because the sheep are his sheep. He paid for them. He owns them. He bought them. Notice **vv. 10** and **12-13**. “**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy ... He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**”

The Sheep

This all leads to the next question. Who are the sheep? Jesus is clear that some are sheep and others are goats (see especially **Matt 25:32-46**). A little later in our passage, Jesus tells the Pharisees, “**You do not believe because you are not among my sheep**” (**John 10:26**). The

reference to sheep and goats is not a reference to those who have heard about Jesus vs. those who have never heard, but to those who hear and believe vs. those who hear and have a spurious, false, or untrue belief. These goats will say, “Lord, Lord, did we not do all kinds of things in your name.” But Jesus will say, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matthew attaches this true belief, like James does, to carrying out Christ’s mission on earth in the physical world, by caring about the poor, sick, criminals, and so on. But as we said last week and a moment ago, the physical is a mirror of the spiritual. So John’s focus is on faith and belief, much as Paul’s focus is.

Again he says, “You do not believe because you are not my sheep.” This is how John thinks about being a sheep. It does not begin with works, but with faith, and works are the fruit of faith. Therefore, for John, true sheep are those who have faith in Christ, those who believe—Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, child or adult. You can be sure that in one sense that if you do not trust in the things you are hearing about

Christ today, that you have not yet come into the sheep pen, that you have not yet heard the voice of the shepherd, and that you have no hope of salvation until you do. You must believe in Christ for who he is, what he has done for you, and what he says about himself. But watch out that your faith is not in the wrong thing, for many have fooled themselves in this regard and their souls are in peril.

There is a word of encouragement that is given to the sheep, both here and in Matthew. “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34). The word here is that the sheep are blessed. They have been shown grace. And this was something in God’s mind to show them before the foundation of the world.

In John it is very similar. The sheep hear Christ’s voice and that others do not is because eternal life has been given to Christ to give to those given to him by the Father. Or to put it more simply: **predestination**. Along with predestination is **perseverance** or **preservation**, “No one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28, 29). For the Father is greater than all: greater than Satan,

greater than sin, greater than snares, greater than you. Paul asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35-39).

What is a **comfort** for the Christian must have been quite **maddening** to the Pharisees. There is no way around it. They couldn't believe *because* they were not his sheep. First you are a sheep. Then you believe. So do not trust in your faith or in your freewill. You are not to have faith in faith. You are not to have faith in freewill. Both are to have faith in yourself. Your faith must be in Christ, not yourself.

I offer a second caution. Only Jesus has a right to say such things to a person, and even he is speaking generally, for among them were some who would believe, like Nicodemus. Just because you do not yet believe, it does not mean you may not be a sheep. It is

not that goats somehow transform into sheep upon faith; that is the Arminian error. It is that the sheep are not born believing. Jesus must come to them, speak to them, lead them, and then they will know him as their shepherd.

Notice, Jesus is speaking to a group, and is not calling anyone by name here. This is unlike what he does with the sheep. Therefore, no preacher has a right to tell someone that they will never believe. No person knows who the elect are or are not and you are not supposed to speculate about such things. I get angry when I hear someone call any living person a reprobate. How on earth could anyone know this, they aren't dead yet? This goes not only for judging others, but yourselves. You have no right to say that you are a reprobate who can't believe. This is patently unbiblical. The Bible everywhere and always calls you to look to Christ, not to election, for salvation. You must look outward to him, and not inward to yourself, your sin, your doubts, your woes. This is the gospel. Look to Christ. Election is given so that you may know that nothing can snatch you out of God's hand, not even your own sinful activities,

for God loves his sheep and if one in a hundred is lost, he will go and find it and bring it back home.

The Sheep Pen

What is home? It is the sheep pen. In **John 10:16** Jesus says, “**I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.**”



A painting and photograph of sheep pens

A word about this verse and its “other sheep.” I remember as a kid a **Mormon commercial** using this verse in a rather bizarre way, to refer to the separated flock of the house of Joseph, who, around the destruction of the first temple (600 B.C.), had left the Jewish fold and been taken via a miracle to the American

continent.”¹ But Jesus isn’t talking about some lost tribe of Israel in America. He is talking about the mission he will soon send the disciples on to gather in Gentiles from around the world. These Gentiles will come into his fold. The fold is the home.

Home is eternal life in the future. It is being in the presence of God in fellowship forever. It is to be in heaven. But eternal life is also a present possibility and all who have faith in Christ have eternal life now. The closest we reach this future home today is in the church. We looked last week at how the sheep pen is the church. The visible church is a reflection of the eternal invisible church we all one day hope to see. Yet, the visible church is still the real church, and God’s people here are the same people you will see there (ideally). When you gather together, you come home in a very real sense. Therefore, you must look at one another not merely as fellow sheep, but as family, all brought into the sheep pen by the great shepherd who loves the sheep. Jesus is

¹ For example, Apostle James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 419. <http://www.mrm.org/john-10-16>. See 3 Nephi 15:17, 21; 16:1; *Doctrine and Covenants* 10:59.

speaking about the unity of his church. We are all in one pen.

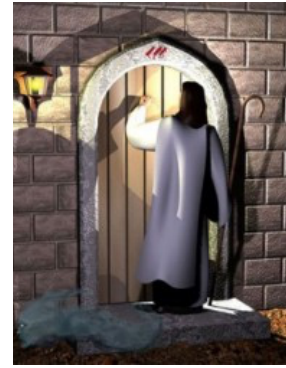
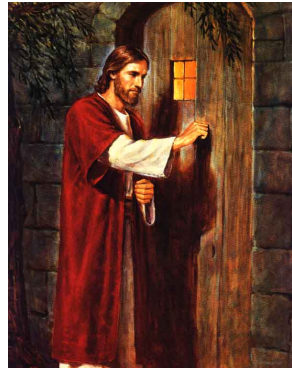
The Door

But how do we get into the pen? Here we return to our opening dilemma. We get in through the door. But what door? What is the door? A huge segment of Evangelical Christianity couldn't get this more wrong. What's I'm about to tell you could have been said in about three different places already, because it is confused about so much of what we have looked at. I've chosen to tell you at the end because you are now ready to see just how confused it is.

Contrary to popular opinion, the door isn't your will, just as the pen isn't your heart. Listen to the beginning of a children's song called *Jesus is a Gentlemen*, a song that many years ago was performed by me in a play we did in this very building (shows you how far I've come and why I need to be patient with others in things like this, for I was a Christian who simply didn't know what he was singing about). "God doesn't go barging in on their house, he goes knocking on the door to wait till they'd answer. Our Shepherd's a gentlemen, the gentlest of

men ... Jesus is a gentlemen, who never forces his way in, he stands knocking at your door until you let him in.”²

This view is often attached to John 10 and to **Revelation 3:20**, “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” There is a famous painting often replicated of Jesus knocking on a person’s door (i.e. symbolically, their heart):



Where are the knobs and handles? How did these people ever get into their houses in the first place?

The paintings are like a bad Knock, Knock joke. There is no knob on the outside where Jesus is knocking. Why?

One person answers, “He knocks, but you have to open the door from your side. He’s a gentleman...He will not force His way in.”³ Another person ties this directly to the sheep pen in John 10. Listen to how badly

² Kathie Hill, “Jesus is a Gentlemen,” in *We Like Sheep (A Musical)*.

³ <http://www.shadesofsafhire.com/faith.html>

they pervert this passage, “Christians are similar to sheep as we follow Jesus Christ. God enters into our life through the gate [meaning that we are the sheep pen] because He is a gentleman and does not force His way in against our will.”⁴ Thus, the children’s song has reached the level of authoritative Scripture and is quoted regularly on the internet. But Jesus isn’t talking about you or your heart in either passage, but rather, as we have seen, the church.⁵ So the question remains, how did we get in here? How do you get to church? How do you get to God? Where does God live? Do all religions lead you to him?

Jesus makes the remarkable comment, “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7). You see how wrong the sentiment is? It is exactly backwards. You aren’t the

⁴ The Gospel of John: Jesus and his Flock, <http://jcs.org/LBU/GospelofJohn/JesusandHisFlock.htm>

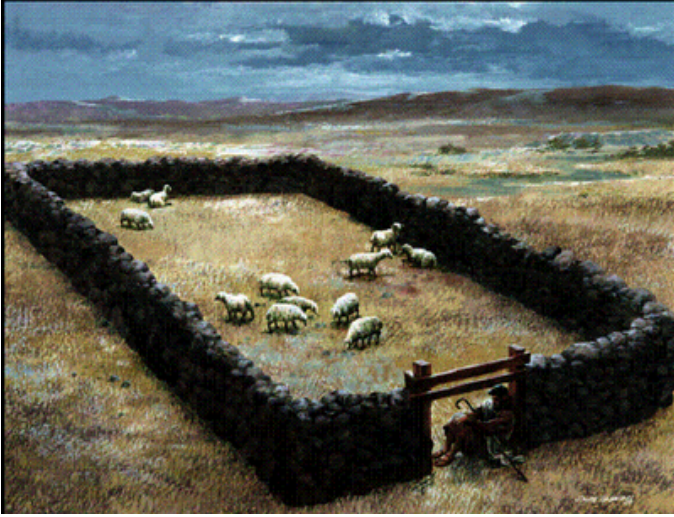
⁵ G.K. Beale writes of Revelation 3:20, “This is an invitation not for the readers to be converted but to renew themselves in a relationship with Christ that has already begun, as is apparent from v 19” (Beale, Revelation, 308). As he notes, this is basically a quote from Song of Solomon 5:2 (“The voice of my beloved, he knocks on the door. Open to me, my beloved”). The bride and groom are already married, already have a relationship. The door is not the door of your heart, but of their bed chamber where they will renew their love for one another. I’ve never seen this image painted as a bed chamber door! The bride and groom, of course, is deeper than two people, but is a picture of Christ and his church, which is why Christ says what he says to the church of Laodicea.

door. Jesus is. Not only is he the shepherd, not only is he the gatekeeper, but he is the door.

Let me look at this in a couple different ways. First, how many doors do sheep pens have? One (see images above). So how many entrances are there for a sheep pen? One. You can't get into the sheep pen through a secret door in the back or a trap door in the floor, because there isn't one. If you attempt to get in by going over the fence, it shows that you are a thief. This, quite sadly, is what all false shepherds (including different religions with different leaders) do. They lead people to doors that do not exist or over walls whereby they will get themselves shot by the gatekeeper. If you want to get in, you have to go through the door.

Second, I want you to picture where it is that God says he lives. The sheep pen is a remarkable image, because the structure so closely reflects the the tabernacle/temple. In fact, "door" is the same Greek word for both structures.⁶ So the sheep pen (the church) is a reflection of God's heavenly abode.

⁶ Greek: *thura* (Ex 29:4; 33:9; 40:5-6 LXX etc; read with Moses "entering" the tent; Ex 33:9; 40:35 and Jesus "entering" the Most Holy place by his blood; Heb 9:24). This is only an interesting parallel. I'm not saying that Jesus has in mind the tabernacle door. But consider this kind of language, "When Moses entered into the tabernacle,



The tabernacle/temple had one entrance, and you had to go in through it to get inside. But, as Asaph said, God the Shepherd of Israel sits enthroned above the cherubim. This was pictured in the temple as being inside the Holy place, which had one door, inside the Most Holy Place, which had one door, above the ark of the covenant. This is where God dwells in heaven and is reflected on earth. It is remarkable that Jesus' half-brother James was actually thrown from the top of the temple for answering the question, "What is the gate of Jesus?" by saying, "What do you ask me about Jesus, the Son of man who sits in heaven at the right hand of the

great Power, and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven” (see **Matt 26:64**).⁷

Yes, as Jesus stated, and his own brother was put to death for testifying that Jesus is the door. This is the kind of image the Bible teaches about getting to God. This is Jesus’ own confession, take it or leave it. It is either the truth or a lie. It cannot be both. He cannot be just a door, because there is only one door. You must use the correct image.

You want a **false shepherd**, some prophet, some antichrist, some messianic hijacker, someone who isn’t himself God getting you there? He will have to go through Jesus. All under shepherds must enter and answer by The Door. Any who do not are thieves and robbers. You want the law, that powerless, helpless, weak, and beggarly shadow of the truth getting you there? **The law** is not the door, but a map. It can only show you where the door is. You want **yourself**, a sinful, wretched, pathetic robber and stealer of God’s glory getting you there? You think you are the gatekeeper?

⁷ Hegesippus, Cited in Eusebius, Church History 23: *The Martyrdom of James 8-14*.

That's a demonic thought.⁸ You will have to face Jesus Christ and tell him that yourself. These are the only options other religions offer you for getting into the pen: false teachers, laws, or yourself. These are incompatible with Christ.

Conclusion

Since Jesus has proven conclusively that he is these things, it is absurd and dishonest to think that you can get to God through any door of your choosing. But let's say you still want to. Let's say there are other doors. What is behind them? [Let's Make a Deal](#). Remember that game show? In it, you get to choose three doors. Behind one door is the grand prize, perhaps \$50,000 or something. But behind the other two are things like chickens and toasters. In the game you don't know which door has the prize.

But I'm the host of a new [Let's Make a Deal](#). I've told you which door the grand prize is behind. This is the remarkable thing about God's revelation to us, about the work of Christ for us, and about the grace of God

⁸ In the movie *Ghostbusters* it is the demon Zul, inhabiting Sigourney Weaver's character's body who says, "I am the gatekeeper."

shown to us. Now, you can either believe me or not. You can believe Jesus or not. I've told you which door is correct and Jesus has proved it conclusively, for I'm just the messenger, telling you what he said and why you must believe him.

But know this, if you choose any other door, you will be gravely disappointed. Not only will you get the booby (Spanish from *bobo*) prize, but you will be thrown out of the audience, outside the set, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Fortunately, God knows the sheep, calls them by name, leads them to green pastures, and protects them to the end. Have you heard the voice of the Shepherd today? May he lead you through pearly gates to pastures of green and streets of gold. For as the Psalmist says, “This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it” (Ps 118:20). Thus, may you praise him for his marvelous grace and love towards you.