

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

I AM THE GATE | RED LETTER TALKS PART 2

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Hey, feel free to go ahead and grab your Bible and grab your seat and find John, chapter 10.

I want to welcome everybody today gathered across all of our locations, any of you joining us in additional seating, those of you tuning in online, and all of you coming back from spring break where you were someplace warm and sunny. Welcome back to Indiana. We are ready for you. I know it's a little cold and cloudy outside, but we're warming it up in here.

So, grab a Bible if you brought one with you. John, chapter 10 is where we are going to be today.

As you are finding that, fellas, I just want to remind you that registration for Men's Night is open. It's May 2nd Friday night from 5 to 11 p.m. And spots are limited to this. You don't want to miss it. We already have over 1,000 men signed up for Men's Night. It's going to be incredible.

In fact, the thing that we've got planned is borderline insane. If we can pull this off it will be a minor miracle. So, if nothing else you're going to have your life changed or you're going to watch this thing go up in flames. It's going to be amazing. Fellas, come to Men's Night. We're going to be talking about developing godly grit that is meant to go the distance. You do not want to miss it.

Well, today I want to start out with a little bit of an unusual question. And when you hear it you're going to go, "Huh, that's unusual." That's why I'm telling you it's an unusual question. Here's the question: How many doorways did you walk through this morning to get to your seat?

Now, chances are you don't know. You could maybe go back and count. But I know how many doorways I had to walk through this morning to get here, mostly because I knew I was going to start the sermon this way.

So, I just want you to know—nine doorways. I got up, my bathroom door, my closet door, my garage door, a few of the doorways that I had to walk through to get in here—nine doorways.

Now, the reason why that is a weird question is because we never think of them. We walk through dozens of doorways every single day it's one of the most common things that you do. A doorway is a doorway.



But not all doorways are common. There are some that are very uncommon doorways. Here are a few examples. This doorway right here, if you recognize this, is at 10 Downing Street. This is the door to the entry of one of the most famous residences in the world—the home of the British Prime Minister: so, Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair all resided behind that door at one time.

Now, what you may not know about it, it's a really pretty door. It was designed in 1772. Originally a big, black oak, but in 1991 a bomb detonated nearby causing the British government to replace that big oak door with a bullet proof replica.

Sadly, it is no longer made of black oak. It's made out of blast proof steel. And that little gold metal box is no longer functional. They don't want somebody slipping a bomb through there. And the doorknob on the outside is decoration. It doesn't work. That door can only be opened from the inside—very uncommon.

What about this uncommon door right here? This infamous door (anybody recognize this?) is the portal to Narnia in the back of a wardrobe—C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia.

Or maybe this one right here—maybe you've seen the door, but you don't know what it was to—this is the entrance to St. Edwards Church. And this door has been around since the 1200s, rumored to inspire the doors of Durin in Tolkien's Fellowship of the Ring. It is framed between these two epic trees.

I think out of all of those, this one right here is probably my favorite door—Boos door from Monster's Inc. Very uncommon door.

Now, these are not your average doors. The reason why I've given you all of these examples is that as we come to our text today, John, chapter 10, Jesus is going to describe Himself as The Door. Not a door. Not one of many doors. But The Door—the most uncommon door that leads us back to God.

Now, we're in this series called Red Letter Talks where we are looking at the words of Jesus, which are connected to the encounters of Jesus, and we are leading up to Easter weekend. In John, chapter 7 through 10 every single encounter that we see in those chapters happen all at once. It was in a concentrated period of time: one encounter, one conversation after another.

Today's passage, as we arrive to it, is the end of Jesus' public ministry. The next time that we see Jesus publicly He will be riding back into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to His arrest and crucifixion.

At the end of John, chapter 9 Jesus is interrogated with 14 questions following one of His miracles where He had just given sight to a man born blind. And the Pharisees were hacked off at what Jesus was doing so they began to interrogate Him with these questions, really based around His identity. There were like, "By what authority do you do these things?" "Who are you that you think you can do this?"

And as we come to chapter 10 is Jesus speaking to that interrogation—to the questions. And He's going to speak, very clearly, as to His identity.

The context of our text today is the Festival of the Booths, which is the celebration where the Hebrew people would recognize that they had been in Egyptian slavery, God had delivered them, and now they are wandering through the desert to the Promised Land like sheep in need of a shepherd. And God was their Shepherd guiding them through that.

Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And it is against that backdrop that Jesus is going to use the imagery that He does in the text.

Remember, Jesus has just forgiven a woman caught in the act of adultery. He has just given sight to a man born blind. And He's not just doing nice things or cool party tricks, every one of Jesus' miracles is connected to His mission. Jesus is on a rescue mission, and He's come to set captives free, not just with love and acceptance, but with truth.

You and I are some of those captives. And the truth is not just propositional, the truth is a person. And that's what He's going to stress in this passage. Let's pick it up in verse 1 of chapter 10. Jesus says:

"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold," now a sheepfold is just a pen where sheep would be kept, "rather than going through the gate," now another word that the Bible uses interchangeably for that is door, "must surely be a thief and a robber! But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

"The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice." (NLT)

Now, in this passage there are a couple of things that I want to point out. Number one: Jesus is using and mixing metaphors, and the metaphors overlap. You'll see what I mean here in a minute.

He's using the metaphor of a gate or a door and then the metaphor of a shepherd. And in the text Jesus is saying that He is both. And these two metaphors are going to come together in a way that we didn't see coming and it's going to tell us some truths about who Jesus is.

Jesus is talking a lot about sheep here. And He's not just giving us a Ted Talk on shepherding, He's speaking in metaphors. So, if Jesus is the Shepherd in the metaphor, then who are the sheep? Yeah, a few of you had courage enough to say it—us, you and me. Whenever the Bible talks about sheep, for those of you who do Bible reading, He's talking about you and He's talking about me.

And we might be tempted to think, “Oh, that’s because He just thinks we are so cute.” Right? You look at a picture and go, “Ah, little lambie.” Jesus calls us sheep because we’re His little lambies and He thinks we are so great.”

Listen. I hate to burst your bubble, but when Jesus calls you a sheep that is not a compliment. In fact, it is the least flattering analogy Jesus could come up with to describe you and me.

Do you know what they called a sheep without a shepherd in the wild? A meal. That’s what they called it. Sheep are slow and they are clumsy, and they are dumb. Sheep don’t hunt anything. They are always the ones hunted.

Did you know that if a sheep gets alone by itself and trips over a rock, it lays over on its back like a beetle? It can’t get up. This is why it needs a shepherd to come with the crook in his staff to get it back up on its feet. That’s how vulnerable and stupid they are.

Sheep wonder off. They get lost. And the crazy thing is they are lost, and they don’t even know it. They just follow the dumb sheep in front of them, even into danger.

In 2005 it was reported that there was a flock of 1,500 sheep in Turkey. One of them went over a cliff and the rest of them just kept following the dumb one in front of them over the cliff—1,500 of them. Four hundred and fifty fell to their death. And some of you may be like, “Well, I thought there were 1,500 of them. Why did only 450 die?” Well, because the rest landed on this big, fluffy pile of cotton of their dead buddies. Don’t ah them. They are dumb.

Isaiah says this in chapter 53, verse 6:

“All of us like sheep have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own.”  
(NLT)

Isn’t that the truth? We all wander off into sin, and lies, and addictions, and compromise and we may not really realize that we’re lost. We were just following the sheep in front of us. And we look up and we are like, “Man, I don’t know I got here?” Any of you ever been like that in life? “How did I get here? At the age of 35, I had no idea that I’d be here.” You were lost and you didn’t even know it.

Several weeks ago, I was making a hospital visit. I love all of our people who work in the medical profession. I’m not quite sure of the design of the hallways in hospitals though. They are just so confusing to me. I walked in and what made it worse is that I knew the floor number and I knew the room number, but I got a bunch of text messages as I was walking in, so I was trying to find the room as I was looking down text messaging, like a dumb sheep.

I made my way to the hospital room okay. I met with the person, prayed with him. Thirty minutes later I walk out in the hallway, and I had no clue where I was. I had no clue how I

got there. And I ended up walking down the hallway. I got in the wrong elevator. I went to the wrong floor. I took a wrong turn. I was totally mixed up and backwards.

Thankfully, there was a kind shepherd nurse who guided me along straight paths through crooked hallways, Psalm 23. That's the ASV. The Aaron Standard Version. Right?

Sheep are so vulnerable and so dumb that they are in need of constant supervision and constant protection because they have no way to defend themselves. That's why Jesus describes us as sheep and He's the Shepherd. This is serious business.

See, the only defense that a sheep has is to stay with the flock. The sheep don't attack anything, they don't have fangs, they can't stand and punch. They stay with the flock. In fact, the way to get a sheep isolated is to get it away from the flock where it can be picked off by thieves, robbers, or wolves.

And Jesus says that the sheep know the voice of their shepherd and the shepherd knows his sheep.

There was a Scottish pastor by the name of Douglas MacMillan who has since passed away. But he actually used to work as a shepherd in Scotland before becoming a pastor. So, he knew a lot about both.

And he said one day he was on a train with a shepherd buddy of his who, three weeks prior, had just sold a number of his sheep to another farmer. They were on a train heading out of town and they passed by a flock of sheep in a pen near the track and the shepherd said, "Hey, four of those were my former sheep." He knew his sheep so well that he could spot four of them out of a flock from a moving train.

I'm not even sure I could spot my own kids from a moving train. That's how well a good shepherd knows his sheep. That's the point that Jesus is driving at.

And if you're confused right now, or if you have questions, then you've got good company with the people listening to Jesus saying this because look at what it says in verse 6:

"Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, so he explained it to them:" here are the words of Jesus, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate" or you could say door, "for the sheep."

So, He sticks to metaphors here. He's the Shepherd and He's the Gate.

Now, right here this is called an: I Am Statement. And what an I Am Statement is is it's a claim to divinity. And there are seven of them in the gospel of John. Now, what an I Am Statement is is when Jesus takes one of the obvious names for God in the Old Testament and claims it for Himself, which really got under the Pharisee's skin. And

then He attaches another name to it that is based upon our greatest need or area of brokenness.

So, when Jesus says, "I Am the bread of life," He's saying, "You need nutrients that only I can give." "I Am the light of the world," meaning you and I are in darkness. When He says, "I Am the vine," He's implying we are the branches. "So, you stay connected to Me." When He says, "I Am the Good Shepherd," we are the sheep that get lost. And right here where He says, "I Am the gate," or the door, that's the third I Am Statement in the gospel of John.

He goes on to explain what that means:

"All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures."

So, in order to understand what Jesus is teaching here, visually we need to recognize that He's talking about in verse 1 when He talks about a sheepfold, and I told you it was like a pen.

Well, there were two kinds of sheepfolds in the first century: city sheepfolds and country sheepfolds. And it's important to understand the function of both to really capture what Jesus is teaching here.

City sheepfolds were big and communal. So, understand at night shepherds would be out in the pastures, they would come into the city, they would bring their flocks to this big, communal sheep pen where a paid sentry would stand guard over the pen so that way the shepherds, exhausted as they were from shepherding, could go check in to the local Holiday Inn and get a good night's sleep. And the sentry would keep watch over the five or six flocks that were together.

Now, if you ever go to Israel you can see the ruins of some of these sheepfolds.

In the morning when the shepherd was rested, with a cup of coffee in hand, he'd go back to the sheepfold where his flock was mixed in together with a bunch of other sheep.

So, the question is: how do they know who's who? Well, sheep may be dumb, but they have remarkable hearing. So, when the shepherd would call out to his sheep, only the sheep in his flock would recognize the voice of their shepherd and come to him. The rest would stay put.

Sometimes thieves would show up to try to steal the sheep by dressing up as shepherds and impersonating him. They could fool the guard sometimes, but they could never fool the sheep. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd, not some loser pretending to be their shepherd, which is why Jesus says what He says in verses 3 and 4:

"The sheep recognize his voice, and they come to him."

There was also something called the country sheepfold. And it actually looked a little more like this. This is a ruin of one. This would be out in the pasture; it's kind of round or square made of stones or some other material. And if you notice there a little opening, there is no doorway or gate and that's not because it's ancient and the doorways have eroded away. That's what it would have looked like then.

And the reason why there was no gate, the reason why there was no door, is because the sheep would go into this pen and the shepherd of that flock would become the gate. He would become the door. He would lead his sheep into that pen and then he would sit or lie down or rest in that opening. And he would keep the sheep in the pen, and maybe more importantly, he would keep thieves, robbers, and wild animals from going in.

That's why Jesus said that if someone was going over the wall, they were not the true shepherd. They were a thief or a robber because only shepherds used that opening in the sheepfold.

And the Pharisees were like thieves trying to climb over the walls to steal the sheep. They were trying to imitate the voice of the shepherd and silence the voice of the real Shepherd. But those who knew His voice, those who were coming to know His voice, like the woman forgiven of adultery and like the man born blind who received his sight, as we walked through those passages you came to see that at first they didn't recognize the voice of their Shepherd and then came to hear it. They recognized that Jesus was the door and is the door back to God's pasture, back into His presence.

Jesus said, "I am the door." And if you notice in the passage, He says, "All who come in through Me will be saved." Not might be saved. Not it is a good possibility they will be saved. But they will be saved. That's promise talk. He is the gateway; He is the door back into the presence, the provision, and the protection of God.

I know that now a days it is wildly unpopular to say that there is only one way to God. In fact, even for those of us who are Christians we might even get a little bit squeamish saying that. Maybe it's difficult for you to say that with any sort of courage or clarity because it sounds, at least in this day and age, so intolerant to say something like that or even arrogant.

It is much more popular or palatable to say that God is sort of like a mountain. And there are multiple pathways up to the top of the mountain and all religions, all beliefs, all worldview systems basically teach the same thing. They just call God different names, they have different rules and traditions, but just as long as somebody sincerely believes their truth, and they don't hurt anybody else, then we'll all eventually get to the same place.

That's just simply not true. Understand when we say that Jesus is the only way we are not saying that like, "Well, this is just our truth and our opinion," sort of like you go into an ice cream shop and you are like, "I just think Rocky Road ice cream is the only kind of

ice cream out of all different kinds.” And they’d be like, “Well, that’s just your truth. That’s just your opinion.” That’s not what we are saying. It’s a bad metaphor.

Saying Jesus is the only way is not to suggest that other ways are inferior. It is to say clearly that they are irrelevant to save.

So, you may be like, “Well, what are you talking about?” You’ve got to understand that there is only one Creator God and you and I are the pinnacles of His creation—men and women made in His image. And in our sin and rebellion our connection to God was severed. And the Old Testament was all about God pursuing His people so that we might be reconciled to Him once again.

And so, in the Old Testament there was this place called the Holy of Holies, which was the innermost and most sacred part of the ancient temple where the Spirit of God resided. The Spirit of God, in the Old Testament, resided in the Holy of Holies.

Now, just testing you to see if you were listening to me a couple of weeks ago—those of us who are Christians this side of the resurrection, where does the Holy Spirit reside? Yeah, in us. In you. If you’ve given your life to Jesus, then the Holy Spirit takes up residence.

He’s no longer living in the Holy of Holies in a temple somewhere. But pre-crucifixion that’s where the Holy Spirit resided. It was a very sacred, very holy place. The only person who was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies was the High Priest.

He went once a year to make atonement for the people’s sins. And when he went it was so sacred that they would tie a rope around his ankle just in the event that he had a brain aneurism or something and died. Nobody would be allowed to go in to retrieve the body because they would die. So, they would just pull his dead body out with the rope. That’s how seriously they took this.

The High Priest would go in once a year on the Day of Atonement, and he would take the shed blood of an animal, and he would sprinkle it over the mercy seat, which sat over the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the law of God. And it was this event in which the blood of an animal covered over the law that was broken by the people before God’s eyes that reconciled them back to God, because payment had to be made.

So, understand that when Jesus died on the cross, and He breathed His last, the Bible says that the curtain that guarded or separated us from the Holy of Holies, (the doorway was a curtain) was ripped in two, not from the bottom to top symbolizing man’s effort to get to God, but from top to bottom showing us God’s effort to get to you and to me. God did it all.

So, when that curtain was ripped apart what that demonstrated was that Jesus’ torn body is now our entryway back into the presence of God. It wasn’t the shed blood of an

animal that went over the Mercy Seat; it was the shed blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, that covered sin once and for all.

So, now we don't need a High Priest pointing to a Holy of Holies anymore. Jesus has become our High Priest. He is the doorway back into God's presence so that we can be reconciled to Him.

I can take this a step further. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were in the Garden, and God removed them from the Garden after their sin and rebellion. And if you recall, God put a couple of angels with flaming swords at the entry or the doorway of the Garden to prevent re-entry. Images of those angels were put over the Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

And a little detail that John includes in His resurrection scene that most people overlook is that when Mary first arrived at the empty tomb (it says this in John 20, verse 12) she saw two white-robed angels one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying.

Do you see what's been recreated? Jesus' resurrected body is the new Mercy Seat. He took God's judgment meant for us, in our place, and He took on our sinfulness and exchanged it—He gave us His righteousness.

That is what is called propitiation for our sins, a fancy word for this phrase: a payment that satisfies. You have to say it like that too, otherwise it doesn't work.

How many of you have ever gotten steeped in credit card debt with 18 percent interest? And you start chipping away at that thing. And then you finally paid it off, it's a payment that satisfies.

Or you've got student loans—up to your eyeballs in debt. You finally paid that bad boy off 10 years later: a payment that satisfies. A Disney vacation you finally get that thing paid off—that's how you've got to think of this. You and I had a debt that we could not possibly repay.

So, when we say Jesus is the doorway back to God... Here's what is different from Jesus and every other god or deity or belief system. Every other belief system outside of Christianity says: do enough, be enough, be good enough and maybe they will let you in. Christianity says it's been paid for. He has paid it once and for all. And now you can approach His throne of grace with confidence.

Some of you are like, "Well, I don't feel like I deserve it." It's because you don't. That's why it's so good. That's why it is so kind. That's why it's called grace. Think about it. A gracious... You say, "Well, that's a little bit unfair for God to be the only way." No, no, no. A gracious and fair God would never leave us to guess how to get to Him. He tells us very clearly.

Saying that Jesus is the only way is not to suggest that other ways are inferior, it is to say that they are irrelevant to save.

Now, if that didn't offend you, let me try this. Not only is it irrelevant to save, I would even go as far as to say that saying that there is another way to God other than Jesus is deceptive. It's a lie.

If any of you have ever been traveling overseas or you go to a foreign country a foreign city and are riding in the subway and you don't know where to go, and you're turned around and confused, and you walk up to somebody and you say, "Hey, can you give me directions?" Let's just say that the local there gives you directions but they are misguided, and they give you wrong directions. They didn't mean to, they just got turned around. That's different. That was just that they didn't have the ability to get you on the right path.

But it's an entirely different thing if you walk up to somebody and they know you are a foreigner, and they see this as an opportunity to take advantage of you and they intentionally give you wrong directions to lead you down an alleyway to beat you and to rob you. That's deceptive.

And there is the spirit of the age that wants us to suggest that there is another way to God other than Jesus and it is deceptive because Satan wants to steal and kill and rob from you. So, you are like, "Where did you get that?" In the very next verse—Jesus says in verse 10:

"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." (NLT)

When Jesus mentions the thieves in verse 1 who jump over the wall in the sheepfold, there is a chief thief among them who desires to lead us, as sheep, astray. And the best way to outsmart a thief is to understand who that thief is, do a little recon on him.

And our thief... We have an enemy. His name is Satan. He's not a cartoon character with horns and a pitchfork running around playing pranks on people. He is a very serious threat. He was originally an angel with a name, his name was Lucifer, and ironically that means son of light. And we know that he stood in the presence of God.

Instead of having awe and glory and respect for God, he wanted to be like God. That envy and that pride got him cast out of heaven. And there were a bunch of other angels who kind of sided with him, so they got cast out with him and now they are demons. And now Satan has limited power and influence.

I John, chapter 5, verse 19 puts it like this:

"We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one." (NLT)

So, what I need you to know is that God is all powerful and He's already won the victory on our behalf, I'm going to get to that in a minute. Here, in this domain in the world Satan—the world is under his control, but it is limited in its nature. It's limited like this. Maybe you remember the story of Job. Satan had to get God's permission to afflict him. He has power but he doesn't have complete power. He has limited power.

Understand that Satan hates God, and he hates God's creation, but he can't get to God. So, the next best thing that he'll do is he'll go after God's creation; he'll go after God's pinnacle of creation, men and women made in His image.

It's kind of like if you really, really hated me, which I hope that you don't, there is a chance, maybe even after today, that you hate me, but you can't get to me you are like, "Oh, I'll just go after his kids." That's what is going on.

Satan hates God. He knows he can't get to Him. So, he goes after the image of God that has been imprinted upon you. So, he is seeking to steal, to kill, and to destroy what Jesus died for you to have: joy, peace, devotion, righteousness, contentment, and purpose.

I've said this before. Satan cannot take a church from the outside in. The only way he can take down a church is from the inside out. So, he gets you to believe in false teaching. He'll go after marriages; he'll just disintegrate them. He'll go after your personal holiness. He'll just get you to compromise; get you addicted to your sins. And he has got more experience and more knowledge than you will ever seek to attain because he's been doing this for centuries. Your couple of decades here are no match for him.

In fact, Ephesians, chapter 2 describes it this way:

"Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world."

There is an unseen world, by the way.

"He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who choose to obey God." (NLT)

So, if somebody refuses to obey it says that the spirit of Satan is at work within their hearts, manipulating them even if they don't know it. This should be a really sobering, smelling salts wake up call for us.

When Jesus said, "You are either for me or against me," He meant it. There is no straddling the fence on this. You are either seeking and following after Jesus, being guided by His Spirit or you are seeking and following after the unseen spirit of the evil realm.

We know about the Holy Spirit, but this says that Satan is a spirit as well, an unholy spirit working within our hearts. So, I want you to understand the dichotomy, the difference between God and Satan.

Creator/counterfeit

Heaven/world

Holy Spirit/unholy spirits

Repentance/tolerance

Clarity/confusion

God is creator; Satan is a counterfeit. Romans 1 says that he exchanges the truth of God for a lie.

Yahweh is the one true God of heaven; Satan is the counterfeit god of this world.

God provides the Holy Spirit; Satan counterfeits with unholy spirits called demons.

God calls us to repentance; Satan counters with tolerance.

God gives clarity; Satan stirs up confusion.

The word for devil in the Greek is:

Diablos = diabolical (deception)

And it means diabolical, it's deceptive.

Now, I know at this point your response and reaction to all of this has been the same every single hour. You're so glad you came to church today, "You first insulted us calling us dumb sheep. And now this talk about Satan..."

I get all of that. Listen to me. If the Good News is not good to you it's because you really don't understand how bad the bad news really is. And the bad news is really bad. Listen. It makes the Good News all the sweeter.

Are you guys ready for some good news? Of course you are ready for some good news. That was a ton of bad news. Here's the good news with all of this talk about what Satan is, we need to know equally what he is not.

Here's what I mean. Satan is not any of the omni(s). What are you talking about Pastor? Well God is described this way: He is omnipresent, which means He's everywhere. He is omniscient, which means He is all knowing. He's omnipotent, which means He's all powerful. Satan is none of those things.

I think that often times we think that Satan is God's equal opposite. But he is not. Satan is not Darth Vader and God is not Luke Skywalker. Alright? That's what I mean. He is not God's equal opposite. He is far inferior, and he has already been defeated.

So, in the Garden of Eden, the prophecy was that the serpent would strike His heel and that the Son of Man would crush the serpent's head. That was referring to Satan and it was fulfilled in Scripture. Colossians 2:14 says this: God cancelled the record of charges that were against you and me, nailing them to the cross. I love this next part—disarming the spiritual rulers and authorities. Disarming them—

I don't know if this is just me. Whenever I read that I get the image of Liam Neeson in the movie Taken who has a very specific set of skills. Satan points the gun, and Jesus just walks up and disarms him. And He shamed him publicly by His victory over him on the cross. I'm talking like a humiliation.

Ever since Jesus came on the scene, Satan was trying to get rid of Him. Mary is pregnant, ready to give birth to Jesus and King Herod says, "We're going to kill all of the babies. That's Satan. It didn't work.

Jesus begins His public ministry, goes out in the desert, 40 days and 40 nights, who is there with Him? Satan. Satan isn't scared of you. He went toe to toe with the Son of God and thought he could take Him down. And Jesus, every single time, resisted the temptation from the enemy through the Word of God.

And then you get to the cross. I think Satan thought he had Him: arrested, beaten, nailed to a tree Jesus breathed His last breath and Satan and all of his crony demons—I think they thought that they had won, high fiving each other. We got Him. We finally got Him.

And then all of a sudden three days later, the stone rolls away and Jesus reappears. This was a blood on your face, big disgrace, kicking your can all over the place kind of a moment. That's what that was. They are like, "Oh, no."

Listen, man. You either love me right now or you are rolling your eyes right now. I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that.

Listen. His power is limited, but he can still strike you. It's kind of like a chained up, rabid dog. Its chain only goes so far. But if you get close to it, it will still bite.

If any of you have ever run into a snake in your barn or shed or whatever and you cut the head off of the snake it still writhes around and, actually, it can still bite you if you are not careful.

Which is why, as Christians, you stay close to the Holy Spirit keeping in step with Him. 1 John 4:4 says the Spirit that is in you (remember, you are the temple of God) is greater than the lower case "s" spirit of Satan who lives in the world. You keep your head up high.

Recognize that what this means is that, as Christians, there are far too many of you right now playing defense rather than offense. You are walking around tentatively. Taking little baby steps. You're only here, I don't know, maybe once a month: life gets hard, you retreat like a dumb sheep tripping over a rock. Come back to the flock, man.

You just believe everything on social media. You don't really know the voice of your Shepherd. You just kind of blindly follow the sheep in front of you. You're just living on defense saying, "I hope Satan doesn't get me. I don't really know how to do this thing."

Instead, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Man, start playing some offense.

So, a scarcity mindset plus your own will power always equals failure. But when you know who you are, the Spirit of God living in you, you've got the Word and you've got worship, and you've got prayer, and you've got confession and repentance then you are constantly putting Satan on the defense. And it contrasts to the stealing and the killing and the destroying.

Like Jesus says in verse 10:

"My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."

That's His purpose for you.

Some of you have been believing the lies of an enemy who says, "No, really what God wants is just to ruin your life." "Really what God wants is to make you the more boring version of your true self."

That's what I honestly used to think—just confessing that to you. I grew up in church (this is the most dangerous part of any person's life). I knew all about God, I believed in God, I read the Bible, was in church every week, but I didn't know Jesus Pre Jesus I didn't even understand that I was lost. I didn't know that I needed Him.

Here's what was keeping me back from full surrender. I thought if I fully surrendered to Jesus He would make me the boring, vanilla version of me. That's a lie from the enemy.

No, God wants to give you a rich and abundant and satisfying life. The Greek word for rich there for abundance is this word:

Perissos = over the top

It means over the top. He wants to give you an over-the-top kind of life. Now, that over-the-top life is not a problem free life. It's not that God wants to give you a six-figure income, a 10,000 square foot house with a yacht kind of a life.

No, it's the over-the-top kind of life that is knowing that you are bullet proof. Knowing that the One who created you and loves you and has a purpose for you has offered you

the assurance that your life is secure. Regardless of whatever this life throws at you, you are like, "Man, bring it on because I serve a God who can work this out for me."

And Jesus didn't go to a cross just to put your soul into heaven one day. Jesus went to a cross so that you might begin to live in such a way that the kingdom of God would begin to be ushered in down here. You're living your life in a fundamentally different way now. You give your life to Jesus and from that day forward you are being formed into the image and likeness of God's Son.

The other way is deformed away from the image and likeness of God's Son, which is what sin does. Sin deforms the image and likeness of God in you.

But with spiritual disciplines like confession and repentance when you mess up, you are continuing to be formed into the image and likeness of God.

Now, here's the deal. Don't expect the enemy to roll over and give that to you. Some of you were told, "Hey, man. Just become a Christian and your life will be easy." Yeah, the people who are laughing know. That's a lie. "Oh, man. Just give your life to Jesus and it's just going to be puppies and rainbows from now on." That's a lie.

No, actually you just signed up for a war. The birthmark of every believer is a bullseye. And actually, you should take it as confirmation of your salvation that if the spiritual intensity just ratcheted up that you are a threat to the enemy, because the enemy leaves people alone who are not God's.

Listen. As a Christian, here's the assurance you need to have. If you're experiencing lots of spiritual oppression and warfare right now, take that as a sign that God is well pleased with you. And He has equipped you for the battle. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

I also want to say this. If you are a Christian, a true Christian, not in name only, the Spirit of God resides in you, you are His temple, which means that He occupies this address so you cannot be demon possessed. You might be demon oppressed, and you likely are because he wants to deform the image of God within you. You've got to learn to fight the battles in the right way.

So, let me end with this. Right at the first of the year I started taking Jujitsu. I know just enough Jujitsu at this point to basically hurt myself. That's pretty much all I know.

I don't know how many of you are in Martial arts or anything like that or if you watched Karate Kid, Jujitsu actually has nothing to do with Karate, but the belt system is very similar.

When you start a Martial art you start as a white belt. It means that you are a beginner. And then you progress to a blue belt and beyond all the way up to black belt. Black belt is the expert.

I'm a solid white belt right now. And white belts—here is what you do. White belts just learn moves. So, every single class I'm going in for about 45 minutes or an hour, they are teaching me a move or two, and I just practice it through repetition over and over and over and over again. It's muscle repetition.

And the opponent that you are doing it on, they just let you do it to the point where you actually begin to think, "I'm pretty good." And then, at the end of the class, you do what it called the live round. They set a timer for five minutes and they say, "Go."

And you just match up with anybody. Most of the time I've been rolling with blue belts and beyond. So, the move that I'd just learned that I got so proficient and good at when nobody was giving me resistance, all of a sudden it doesn't work anymore. The opponent turns it on. It doesn't work. It is not doing what it is supposed to be doing. I'm in the place now in my Jujitsu journey where I'm honestly so frustrated and I'm beginning to wonder if I'm ever going to get this. Does this even work?

And some of you are white belt Christians right now. You've been learning the moves, man. And way to go. That's where you've got to start. You've been coming ready every single week. You've been bringing your Bible. You've been jumping into a Bible reading plan. You went through Rooted. You got baptized. You're trying to trust God with the tithe. You're learning the moves.

And then you go out into the real world, and you get a little bit of resistance from the enemy, or you have a smart, savvy co-worker who is a militant atheist who has read more than you and you are like, "Ahh." You get chocked up. And you're beginning to go, "Man, I just don't know if I'm ever going to get this. I actually don't know if this is really worth it."

This last week I was rolling with a friend of mine who is a blue belt. He actually goes to church here. And at one point when I... I would say that learning Jujitsu is kind of like learning a new language. They teach you a sentence and then when you get to the end of the sentence you don't know what else to say.

I did my move. It didn't work. And I got frustrated. And he said to me, "Hey, you know what you are doing every time at the end of that?" I was like, "No." And he goes, "You just flex. You just keep flexing." He's like, "I feel your body get tense around me like you are just squeezing me to death. You're just trying to muscle the move. You're trying to muscle me." And he goes, "You're just making yourself vulnerable."

And I go, "What do you mean?" And he goes, "Well, Aaron, what's harder to flip, a stiff two by four or a bag of water? When you flex up like that I can just flip you right over and do whatever I want. But if you relax a little bit, it's much harder for me to flip you over."

Here's the difference between a white belt and a blue belt. White belts learn moves. Blue belts learn how to adapt when the move isn't working. And you actually take what the opponent gives you and use it against them. You have a weapon.

You have every weapon you need to defeat Satan. There is a reason why the Bible refers to itself as a sword. So, I want to end with this. I need you to hear this:

Satan seeking whom he may devour is no match for a Savior seeking whom He may deliver!

And in those moments you don't try harder, you start confessing harder. In those moments, you start crying out as a sheep to its Shepherd, "I need you. I've wandered away. I've tripped over the rock. I've followed the wrong crowd. God, would you please hear my voice and call me back as a sheep." And He'll listen to that prayer because He's a Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and they know His voice.

Here's what I want to ask you to do at all of our locations. If you would, just bow your head and close your eyes. I want to just lead you in what I call the sheep prayer. I just want you to make this prayer your own.

Father, God. I come to You today and I just recognize that when you called me a sheep, that's not a compliment but I will gladly refer to myself as one of Your sheep any day of the week because you are the true Shepherd. You are the Door that leads me back to God that leads me to greener pastures.

So, I want to ask for You to forgive me for going my own way, for believing in the lies of an enemy rather than listening to the voice of my true Shepherd. God, quite honestly, I'm just going to be very, very honest here. I'm new to this whole Christian faith thing. In fact, I'm a solid white belt. I'm trying to learn the moves, but it feels like I'm never going to get it.

I'm struggling to understand. I've got all of these questions, and I've got all of this pain and I'm fearful of what's ahead. Right now, I just ask that You would help me to lean more into Your Spirit and less of me trying to will power my way through this thing. Would You take control? More of Jesus, less of me until it is Christ alone.

So, I confess my sins. I repent of my sins. I ask you into my heart. Help me to learn to discern Your voice from the voice of an enemy. I want to take my next step of obedience, whatever it may be. Would you please meet me and equip me for the battle that lies ahead? I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, with your heads still bowed and your eyes still closed, if you prayed that prayer, claimed that promise, would you just slip up your hand? At all of our locations slip up your hand.



Around the room, at every single service, we've had people praying the sheep prayer. And we want to celebrate that with you. We want to come around you. We want to help you progress to your next step. We want to help you progress in growing more and more into the likeness of Jesus. So, whatever your next step is, we want to help you identify that and take it.

Right now, I want to celebrate the fact that there are people who prayed that prayer for themselves, maybe even for the very first time. So, let me just pray over you right now.

Father, we come to You today and thank You for this tender moment where after listening to the Word of God we might be open to the Spirit of God so that our lives might never be the same ever again.

Father, we know that this is not a passive battle. This is an active battle where the enemy is advancing against those of us who desire to follow after Jesus. So, would You please equip us for that battle? Help us to know the true voice of our Shepherd so that we might have the courage and the clarity to live for Him in this world that is dominated by a power that is limited but still effective, claiming the victory that Jesus won for us on the cross. In the power of King Jesus' name everybody says: Amen and Amen.

Hey, would you please stand to your feet? Let's celebrate those who prayed that prayer. We're going to worship together across all of our locations.

