

The Door to Life

The Church is expanding rapidly around the world. There are six times as many Anglicans in Nigeria than in the US and UK together! There are more Presbyterians in Ghana than in Scotland and the US combined. The number of believers in China is exploding, and the percentage of real Christian believers in India is growing very steadily. Why is it, then, that growth in the West seems to be so slow? The answer is that there are some peculiar resistances to the Gospel embedded in our particular culture. In our text today Jesus clearly shows us that some of the things toward which the West is particularly hostile are essential to belief in Jesus Christ.

John 10:7-10

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.

I. Jesus is the Door (vv. 7-8)

Jesus has been talking about good shepherds and bad shepherds, and that the good shepherds are the ones who come in legitimately through the door (the night watchman). In verses 7-10, He switches the metaphor to suggest that He Himself is the Door through which the sheep must come in and go out. Western civilization would be fine with His statement if He had said “I am a door”; but Jesus did not say this. He claimed to be the only door to salvation, life, and reconciliation with God. The Western idea that all religions are striving for the same result and worshipping the same god comes from a particularly Western, pluralistic framework which suggests that all claims to truth have equal validity and none of them can claim priority over another. Western commentators also suggest that our religious commitments are largely shaped by our cultural location; that is, we are Christians because we grew up in a Christian environment, just as Muslims are Muslims because they grew up in a Muslim environment. What Western commentators fail to notice is that they grew up in a pluralistic environment, which radically shapes their viewpoint! Their very claim to relativism undermines their own viewpoint, which is relativized by their own cultural location. Jesus claims to transcend all of our cultural locations and all of our philosophical worldviews by claiming that He, and He alone, is the Door to God.

II. Jesus is the Door to Salvation (v. 9)

In the Old Testament, the word “salvation” pertains commonly to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, our deliverance from famine, and our deliverance from captivity in Babylon. The idea of salvation is that we are rescued or delivered from circumstances that we could not solve. In the New Testament, the word “salvation” is used to refer to our deliverance from the consequences of our sin. In Westminster Shorter Catechisms questions 17-19, one can read about our sin and misery from which God delivers us. We are delivered from His condemnation, our own moral corruption, and the miseries stemming from our sin including death itself. Notice the lovely word “anyone” in verse 9, reminding us that we are all welcomed to come through the door regardless of our background.

III. Jesus is the Door to Life (v. 10)

Unfortunately, in the West, our extraordinary wealth has anesthetized us to our deepest need for real life. We have satisfied ourselves with cheap tawdry toys, rather than the deep provisions that God makes for us in our salvation.

First of all, Jesus gives us *eternal life*. We are all going to die (unless Jesus comes back before our deaths), but we can traverse the veil of death simply by putting our trust in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Jesus promises us a new quality of life. He calls it the “abundant life.” Even now, in this broken world, we experience the great blessing of faith in Jesus Christ: we are delivered from the burden of the guilt of all of our sins, we have moral clarity now from God’s Word to face every life situation, we have a new moral power to live for God, we now have a new community of fellow believers, and we have a clear mission in life. All of these are blessings of new life that Jesus gives us as we come through Him as the Door.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the believing Church is growing in other regions of the world, rather than in the US?
2. How do we know that Jesus is the only door to salvation (vv. 7-8)?
3. What does Jesus mean in verse 9 when He says we “will be saved”?
4. Explain the abundant life that Jesus promises in verse 10.

Going Deeper

1. How have you allowed the particular perspectives of the pluralistic West to shape your opinions or dull your faith or dampen your zeal for the Gospel?
2. How can you better appropriate the abundant life Jesus promises His sheep?