

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
‘The Patient Discipline of our Lord’
John 9:35-10:33
September 6, 2026
By Keith Marcy

Chapter 10 of John’s Gospel is a continuation of chapter 9. We covered it last week and discovered that Jesus gave sight to a man who was born blind. While the man happily rejoiced, his exuberance was cut short by the religious Pharisees who denied the miracle even though the evidence was staring them in the face. Jesus condemned them strongly in the last verse of chapter 9. Chapter 10:21 is the key that Jesus is still addressing the same group when one of them says *“Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”*

John 1:10 – Jesus continues to address the Pharisees who willfully made 3 false claims:

1. They did not believe the blind man had received his sight.
2. They said Jesus was a sinner and not able to give sight to a man born blind.
3. When the blind man verbally backed the Pharisees into a corner by saying, *“If Jesus was not from God, He could do nothing,”* they hurled insults at him and put him out of the synagogue, which meant the man lost his standing as one of the Chosen People.

For these reasons Jesus pronounces judgement on the sect of the Pharisees. Because they claim to know the truth but deny Jesus is Lord of All, their guilt remains. They are not in a right standing with God. He would have been right and just to leave them to wallow in their self-appointed predicament – the results of unbelief – no forgiveness, no hope, no salvation.

Rather, our Lord tells them a parable. A parable is a story that could happen in the physical realm but contains a spiritual meaning.

Jesus begins, *“Verily, verily I say unto you...”* (King James Version.) The New International Version reads, *“I tell you the truth...”* You might say to your teenager regarding the use of your car, *“Now listen up!”* or *“Mark my words!”* *“Miss this point and the consequences will be dire.”*

With that, Jesus uses a familiar example from agriculture – something everyone in Palestine would be familiar with – a sheepfold – a pen usually made with sturdy stone walls. It had one opening called a ‘gate.’ At dusk, a shepherd would lead his flock into the fold, and the gate would be shut. Sometimes several shepherds would use the same fold. They would hire a night watchman to ward off any would-be thieves and wild animals, and to make sure the gate remained secure. In the morning the watchman would open the gate for each shepherd who would call his own sheep. The sheep would recognize his voice and follow him. He would lead them out to lush pasture and cool, clear water because they are **his** sheep. Their health and well-being are important to him. That was the model for shepherding. That is the model for Jesus’ story. Jesus does not beat around the bush. He gets right to the point. The one who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in over the wall is a thief and a robber. His goal – steal a lamb. Verse 2. On the other hand, the shepherd enters through the gate. He calls! His own sheep recognize his voice and follow him because they trust him. They will not follow a stranger because they know the stranger’s voice does not belong to the one whom they can trust.

The Pharisees missed the point. Jesus’ point is that they threw the blind man out for no legitimate reason. They are the thieves and robbers.

Why did they miss the point?

Because they were not interested in learning from Jesus. They were only interested in shutting Him up.

So, Jesus presents the same story with a few more details. He is being patient.

Verse 7: *“I am the gate for the sheep.” ‘I am the way through which My people will pass into safety. I am the One who will keep the wolves in sheep’s clothing out. In my fold they will be protected from false prophets – those who are instruments of Satan.’*

Verse 8: *“All who came before me were thieves and robbers...”*

Who came before Christ? The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the teachers of the law – who distorted God’s Word. And the priests who accepted blemished lambs for a sacrifice; the money changers who robbed the poor and the widows by being dishonest. They came before Christ and before John the Baptist and turned the people away from God-honouring worship.

They were the thieves and robbers. They were the ones who denied Jesus' rightful place as the Messiah.

Verse 10: *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and that more abundantly."*

Then Jesus enlarges the parable. Not only am I the gate, (verse 11), *"Others will run away and leave the sheep exposed to danger."* But (verse 14), *"I am the good Shepherd. I will lay down my life for them"* – to save them. *"Then I will take my life back again."*

Read verses 17-18.

Some of the Jews flatly discount Jesus' claims. Others, however, remember the miracle of the blind man receiving his sight. *"A demon cannot do that."* So, there is a hint of openness among them. Some time elapses. The feast of Hanukah comes. Jesus is walking around the border of the Temple in Solomon's Colonnade. Jews, it would seem the same group, stop Him. *"How long will you keep us in suspense? Are you the Christ or not? Tell us."*

"I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do prove that I am the Christ. You do not believe them either." Remember the man born blind? You threw him out because he spoke truth to you. You are not my sheep. My sheep believe. You do not. I give my sheep eternal life; they will never perish. *"No one can snatch them out of my hand"* – or My Father's hand!

What of those who refuse to believe? Jesus has given them a simple explanation in the form of parables. Yet they refused even though the evidence of one miracle stared them in the face. Literally!

The Jews picked up stones to stone Him.

I close today with the positive.

If you believe, no one can snatch you from the hand of Almighty God. No one puts it better than Fanny Crosby in her beautiful hymn, *'He Hideth My soul.'* We will open with it next week, but this afternoon, Google it on your computer or phone.