

# The AUDACITY of JESUS:

## Embracing His Offensive Identity

Almost everyone has an opinion on who Jesus is. Some say he was a brilliant teacher, a great prophet, or an ethical role model. The only problem with these ideas is that Jesus never claimed to be any of those things; instead, he insisted - repeatedly - that he is God. Few people accepted his bold claim - that he was the one true God in flesh - was offensive, and some accepted it, while others turned back and no longer followed him. (John 6:66) All month long in February, The Story Church will explore the audacious claims that Jesus made about himself in His own words. These controversial statements will leave us with two choices: to take him at his word and accept he is God, or to reject his divine identity and dismiss him as a fraud.

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**February 22, 2026 - I Am the Good Shepherd**

**With this message series, we're focusing on the audacious claims of Jesus. Let's begin with a definition:**

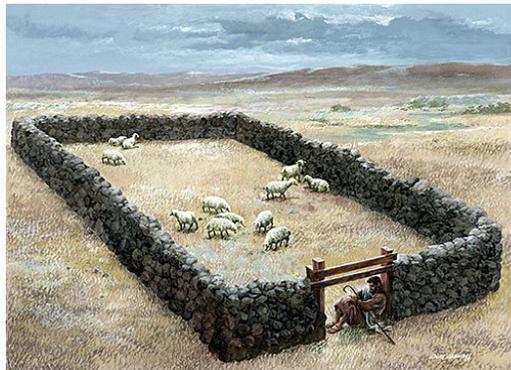
**AUDACITY (noun)** - courage or confidence of a kind that other people find shocking or rude

**How's your social media fast going?**

**John 10:1-10** - "Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

This passage can be confusing (it certainly was for the Pharisees). **What was the larger point that Jesus was making?**

### **"I AM, I AM THE GATE"**



**What was the purpose of the sheep pen? And what was the gatekeeper's job?**

**In this context, what exclusive claim was Jesus making about himself?**

**By calling his people "sheep," what was he saying about us? What were sheep known for? (See Isaiah 53:6)**

**For all they may lack in terms of intelligence and strength, sheep know the voice of their shepherd. Do you know the "voice" of Jesus? How can we distinguish his voice from the voices of others?**

**John 10:11-13** - "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."

## “I AM, I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

How was Jesus differentiating himself from the Pharisees and priests of Judea?

Who’s the “wolf” in this scenario? How do the “hired hands” react when the wolf attacks?

Have you ever been hurt or heartbroken by religious leaders? How did it affect you, and what did you learn from that experience?

**John 10:14-16** I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”

Why did Jesus say, “I lay down my life for the sheep”? How did this set him apart from Israel’s other leaders?

Who were the “other sheep” that belonged to Jesus? Why was this such an audacious claim?

Would you say that Jesus is EXCLUSIVE or INCLUSIVE? Why?

One of the best-known passages in the Bible is Psalm 23.

**Psalm 23** - The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

How do Jesus’ words in John 10 impact or change the way you hear this psalm?

What about your life would change if you fully believed that Jesus is your good shepherd?



### **Starting Point Class**

If you're new to The Story or new to the Christian faith, sign up to join our new class Starting Point, which launches on Sunday March 1 at 12:15pm. Register yourself or your family here: [thestory.church/events](https://thestory.church/events)



### **Women’s Retreat with Wendy Speake**

Save the date to join us for a spring women’s retreat on Saturday, March 21 from 10am to 2:30pm! This retreat is open to women of all ages and life stages. Learn more and register: [thestory.church/events](https://thestory.church/events)



### **Save the Dates: Holy Week & Easter**

Visit our website [thestory.church/easter](https://thestory.church/easter) to save the dates for all of our special Holy Week services and events, and to learn more about serving this Easter!