

John Chapter 10 v 1 - 10

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[0 : 0 0] In a moment or two, there's an opportunity for children to go out to Sunday school and to Cresc. But before we do that, we're going to read from God's Word.

And so if you have a Bible to hand, please turn with me to the Gospel of John and Chapter 10. Just as a sort of a mini-series over the summer, we are looking at the I Am sayings of Jesus.

And we've looked at three of them so far, and we're going to look at what is actually the third, but we're looking at it in fourth. But I explained that last week, so I'm not explaining it again.

So we're going to be reading from John Chapter 10, first ten verses. And here is the word of truth, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.

[1 : 0 1] The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman 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 they did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said to them again, I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. And all who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

[2 : 0 4] I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. So we're in the Gospel of John and Chapter 10.

As I said, we've been looking at the I Am sayings of Jesus just by way of a summer sort of series. And last week we thought about Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

Now from 1976 through to 1999, one man and his dog was an integral part of UK television, drawing 8 million viewers at its peak in the 1980s.

Admittedly, there were only three channels at the time, so there wasn't a lot of choice, but still that was quite a remarkable thing. It was the original reality show. But since it ceased in 1999 to be weekly viewing, it's continued with several special programs per year, has become a regular feature on Countryfile, has led to a spin-off series involving celebrity shepherds called Flock Stars.

There's some great minds out there in the TV world. For those unfamiliar with the concept of one man and his dog, though I imagine most of us are, but some of us younger ones may not be, it was a competition each week in which a shepherd along with his sheepdog had to round up a small herd, half a dozen or so sheep, guide them around several posts in a field, and especially bring them, corral them into a sheep pen and shut the gate.

[3 : 38] And once the gate was shut, the timer was stopped, and the fastest shepherd with his dog was declared the winner of that round and went on to become the next round. The goal of every contest, the goal of every attempt by the shepherd and his sheep was to get the sheep in the pen and shut the gate.

That was the goal. Well, here Jesus, in his third eye am saying, says, I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

He says that twice there in verse 7 and again in verse 9. I am the gate, as we looked at with the children. Whoever enters through me will be saved. And it comes within this section of chapter 10 where Jesus is talking about sheep and particularly himself as the good shepherd.

And as I say, last week we looked at what that meant, who were the sheep that Jesus is speaking of, and who is the shepherd. And these other sorts of shepherds he talks about, these hired men and so on.

And Jesus has been speaking to illustrate the relationship between the Lord God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his people, those who trust in him and follow him. We are his sheep.

[4 : 48] He is the shepherd. And sheep and shepherds were not only common to those around about in Jesus' day, just as they're common to us. If you've traveled here, then you've seen sheep undoubtedly over the moors.

But especially throughout the Old Testament, throughout the Bible, the concept of Lord God as a shepherd and his people as sheep permeates all the way through. From Isaiah 53, we all like sheep have gone astray, all the way through to Ezekiel 34, where God says, the shepherds, the rulers of his people have not been good, and that he himself will come as the best and final shepherd, and that is Jesus himself.

And we know, of course, that in this conversation, Jesus was speaking not only to his disciples, not only to the crowds, but particularly to that group of religious leaders, the shepherds of their day.

And this, as we saw last week particularly, there is quite a debate and a discussion between Jesus and them about who was the good shepherd and who were the sheep. And it's because these religious leaders, who were steeped in the Old Testament, and knew all about the sheep and the shepherd that Jesus spoke in this way.

But, as we read there in verse 6, Jesus used this figure of speech, something that they would have known and understood, but they did not understand what he was telling them. They still couldn't grasp the illustration.

[6 : 08] They couldn't get hold of what Jesus was saying. And it's so important that we do, so vital that we do understand what Jesus is saying. One of the great sadnesses is, even as Jesus proclaims and spoke in the Scriptures, the clarity, the simplicity of his language, there was still the need, ultimately, for those ears to be opened, those eyes to be given sight, those hearts to be quickened.

And so it is for us. We need God's help to understand his word. We can't understand it. We can't conceive of it. We can't act upon it unless God works in our hearts by his Spirit, which is why Jesus, as we saw, sorry, keep going on about last week, but we talked about how Jesus spoke about they will listen to my voice.

And so what I hope and pray is that this morning, dear friends, that we will be those who are listening, not to my voice, but to the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, listening to what he has to say about himself as the gate, and that rather than going away, as these people did, without understanding, we might understand and act and with faith receive these very words of blessing that Jesus has for us.

Now, the gate of which Jesus refers was a very important part of the shepherd's life. The sort of sheep pen that Jesus is speaking about and thinking about in verses 7 and following is a different sort of pen to the one earlier on.

In the earlier pen, he's thinking about this sort of almost sheep car park in town in which the shepherd would place his sheep amongst many other flocks as well, and there would be a guard upon them.

[7 : 45] But now, when he gets to verse 7, he's thinking about this more personal pen. Really, it was not much more than a few piles of stones in a circle out in the field or on the hills.

It had no door, but just an opening, a small opening wide enough for one sheep to pass through. And the shepherd himself would lie across the front of that opening each night, acting therefore as the gate, the door of protection for the sheep.

He barred the way for sheep to go out and get themselves into all sorts of trouble, but he barred the way as well from animals that would seek to come in to steal, to kill, and so on, the sheep.

And so Jesus says, I'm that sort of gate. I'm that sort of door. I'm the one who, in one sense, personally, physically, is the way in and out of the pen.

So what does Jesus want us to understand? What is it that we're to grasp from this? What is it that he wanted his readers to grasp, his hearers to grasp, and us as well? Well, the first thing that's clear is this.

[8 : 50] When Jesus says, I am the gate for the sheep, his words declare that he has come to bring a separation. The door acts as a separation, just as we did with the children. The front doors of our home act as a separating barrier from us and the rest of the world.

There are those who are on the inside, in the home, and there are those who are on the outside. There are those who we want to welcome in, who come through the door, and there are those we want to keep out to whom we bar the door and lock the door.

So Jesus acts, in that sense, as a wall of separation. He is the dividing line between the people of this world. Jesus himself made this very clear when he spoke in Luke, in chapter 12, verse 51.

He says there, Do not think I came to bring peace on earth. In other words, no struggle, no problems. No, I tell you, but division.

Christ came into the world to be a divider, to be a divider between men and women. The sheep, as we again, last week, sheep and goats, Jesus' illustration, and parable in Matthew 25, showed us again that all of humanity is divided.

[10 : 06] We're not divided over race. We're not divided over intellectual ability. We're not divided over language or wealth, but we are divided as to whether we are in or out of Christ.

That is the major, the main, the chief division between all people. In Christ is the commonest expression used in the New Testament to describe somebody who is a Christian.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 17, If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone. Behold, all things have become new.

And so practically, this means that there are those that are inside, and there are those that are outside of the flock, of the sheep pen, of the church of Jesus Christ.

As Jesus himself says here about bringing other sheep, he says in verse 16, I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.

[11 : 08] They too will listen to my voice. There will be one flock, one shepherd. There is but one church. 1 Corinthians, in chapter 5, Jesus speaks about this.

Sorry, Paul writes this about the reality of those that are in and out. He says, What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

God will judge those outside. There is an inside and an outside. You are either in or you are out. A person is a member of Christ, in Christ, a member of his church, not by being baptized, whether that be an infant or an adult, not by attending church regularly, Sunday by Sunday, not by taking communion, the Lord's Supper, not even by committing themselves to membership.

All these things are good and right, but none of them make you a Christian. None of them make you a member of the church of Jesus Christ. It is only when we are in Christ, when we are brought into Christ himself.

Ephesians in chapter 2, verse 13, Paul writes, reminding the people, Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

[12 : 26] That's outside. But now in Christ, you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Jesus Christ. There's a separation that takes place.

That is real. That is definite. And only when God, by his Spirit, brings us into Christ through repentance and faith, only when we come and enter through the door of Jesus do we enter into the church, there is no other way of entering in.

And Jesus is making that very clear. A wall of separation. So the first thing I've got to ask you this morning, dear friends, is this. Are you in or out? Is that advert, isn't it, about pensions?

I think it is on the telly. We're in, they say. We're in, I'm in, we're in. Are you in or are you out? Are you outside of Christ, outside of the church, or are you in?

You're not in the church by being in this building. Okay. This isn't a church. This was a dance hall, I think. It was a furniture warehouse. It was a carpet warehouse, all sorts of things.

[13 : 29] So this building has no special value. You're not in church. We use the phrase, but we're not. It's when we come to Christ and enter in to faith in him. Now, what's so great about being in Christ?

What's so great about entering through the gate, the door that is Jesus Christ? That's what Jesus wants us to see. That's what he wants us to understand here, particularly in these verses 7 to 10, when he talks about being his sheep and being and entering in through the gate.

Well, the first thing that he speaks about, the first thing I want to draw attention to this, is verse 9. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. See, all those sheep who went into that enclosure, into that pen, were safe from attack because guarding them over the entrance was the shepherd himself, the very barrier to animals and thieves.

And so too, dear friends, whoever puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ has eternal safety, eternal security. Jesus alone is the one who can save us and protect us, and that for all time.

Later on in the chapter, Jesus says this about his sheep, verse 28, I give them eternal life. They shall never perish.

[14 : 50] That's a bit confident, isn't it? You've got to be confident to say that. Not many shepherds can say, well, my sheep, you know, nobody's going to get to them. Nobody's going to rustle them.

Nobody's going to kill them. They're not going to come to it. No shepherd can say that. He knows the dangers of having his sheep on the moor side. He knows the dangers of rustlers and the dangers of gullies and of rivers.

I think the very first time we came to Whitby, in all its beauty and glory, we stood on the side by the swing bridge and looked over into the river, and there floating along was a dead sheep.

Yes, it's one of the appealing sights of Whitby is dead sheep in the river. No, it's not. Sorry. I haven't seen one since. I have to say that. But we saw it there. No, but here's Jesus with certainty and confidence, saying, whoever enters through me will be saved.

We can put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. It's a lovely picture of that, in one sense, back in Genesis, when Noah was commanded to build the ark.

[15 : 57] Read that story again. Sometimes we think we know that story. We don't know it very well at all. We may have learned it at Sunday school, but we don't go back to it. Read it again. There's a lovely place in Genesis 7, 16, when after Noah's built the ark, about a hundred years it took him to build it or so, and the animals come, and they're in, and Noah's in, and his family are in.

God shuts the door. God shuts the door. That's what we're told. We're not told Noah pulled up the drawbridge or he wheeled it in. We're told God shut the door. From then on, every one of those animals and every one of those people was safe through all the flood, through the death and destruction of every other creature on the planet.

But those that were shut in were safe. See, Jesus is the complete saviour. He's the one who saves perfectly, completely.

A lovely verse in Hebrews 7, verse 25, speaking about Jesus being still alive. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him to the fullest extent, completely, absolutely, trustworthy.

We live in a world, don't we, sadly, where many people want us to trust them, want us to entrust our money to them mainly, but also our lives, our circumstances, our homes, whatever it may be.

[17 : 17] But because we have found people to let us down, and because we in ourselves know we let others down, there is an element in which we draw back, an element in which we say, well, I don't think I can fully entrust myself.

It's hard enough when we see people to trust them, but there's somebody that we've never seen to put our faith and trust in him, how hard that is. But let me encourage you, let me urge you to put your faith in Jesus Christ.

He is able to save. He won't let you down. He won't fail you. He won't run away and leave you. There's a story, how true the story is.

It's a very slight story about a bishop traveling on a train. Whether bishops ever travel on trains, I don't know. He must have been going to some sort of a do.

And he had all his robes and stuff on, and sitting on the train was a very young girl. She had just joined the Salvation Army. She was from the East End of London. And she says to the bishop, is you saved, mister?

[18 : 18] And the bishop, who was a believer, thankfully, replied, do you mean, have I been saved? Or am I being saved? Or shall I be saved?

Because it's all three. That's the wonderful work of Jesus, the complete and perfect work of Jesus that he did for us on the cross. It means that we have been saved from sin. It means that we are being saved through his keeping power of his resurrection.

And it means that we shall be saved on that day of judgment to live with him forever, because he ever lives to save us. Jesus says, I am the gate.

Whoever enters through me will be saved. Have you entered in? Are you still on the outside? Entered into that salvation. But Jesus also says that in entering in through the gate of himself, there is something also wonderful.

Not only that our salvation, that we are rescued and saved from sin and hell, that we are safely kept. But also that only in Christ do we find the supply of all our needs.

[19 : 25] Only in Christ the gate is the supply of all our needs. Notice what Jesus says here. He who, verse 9, I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.

He will come in and go out and find pasture. What's Jesus mean by that? He doesn't mean that we can go in and out of our salvation. He's not saying that at all.

He's not saying that we can sort of lose our salvation and we can gain our salvation. Depending on what day of the week, depending on how we feel, depending on how strong our faith is, depending on whether we've sinned or not, will depend on whether we are in or out.

No, he doesn't mean that at all. Because as we've seen, clearly Jesus has made it plain that when we are in Christ, we are saved eternally and forever. And let me assure you again, dear friends, this morning, that if you are a Christian, if you've put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you've entered through him the gate, then there is no way in heaven or hell that you shall ever, ever, ever be lost.

Now, it may be that you've had a rough week. It may be that you've had a time where you've sinned in a particular way and you regret it deeply and you're so angry with yourself because of it. And there on your shoulder may be that little voice saying, you know, you're probably not really a Christian after all.

[20 : 42] Don't believe that voice because it is not the Holy Spirit, it is the devil. He wants us to doubt the goodness and the faithfulness of God. Your faith and mine goes up and down.

Our feelings of security in Christ go up and down. Sometimes by our own health, sometimes by our own moods. But if we are in Christ, he is the one upon whom our salvation depends.

He is the one who alone saves us. You didn't save yourself, did you? No, Peter. You can't keep yourself saved, can you? No, Peter. So it's Christ who keeps and Christ who supplies all our needs.

He's not talking about that. So what is he talking about? He's talking about meeting our needs, meeting the needs of his sheep. The sheep couldn't stay within that little enclosure, that pen as it were, all day.

They had to leave, they had to go out and find pasture and Jesus assures us that as we go out and find pasture, he provides for us and he continues to protect us and he continues to keep us under his care.

[21 : 47] I've never been on an all-inclusive holiday. That isn't a hint that I need a rise or anything like that. Please don't think that. But if you've been on an all-inclusive holiday, I'm told by many members of my congregation that you get given a wristband, you get given a wristband to wear at all times.

And if you're in the hotel grounds by the pool or you're in the restaurant or wherever, you just flash the wristband and you can have whatever drinks you want, whatever ice cream you want, whatever food you want. It's all-inclusive. So it is with us in Christ.

It's all-inclusive. Jesus gives to us everything that we could possibly need at all times. In Ephesians and chapter 1, Paul writes to the Christians, he says this, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Every spiritual blessing in Christ. When we enter into Christ and all the riches of heaven, all the treasures of God's deity, his godliness, his power, his grace, his love, all those things are ours.

You have a lovely hymn that we sing. We're not singing this morning. The king of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never. I nothing lack if I am his and he is mine forever.

[23 : 11] Christ supplies all our needs. But more than that, wonderfully, Jesus speaks here about supplying a super abundance of life.

Notice what he says. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. That's the false. And the sad truth is again, dear friends, we must acknowledge and recognize there is false just as there is true.

There are lies that are being told us again and again about what gives life, what satisfies, what leads to God, what is the way of life and salvation.

but if any of those things are apart from Christ then they are thieves. They only rob us. They don't give to us. They take away from us. They do not provide for us.

Jesus says, I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. To the full, in one sense, is a bit of a weak word here that the NIV uses abundance because it's a much more fuller word than that.

[24 : 14] It's a marvelous word. The word that we have for abundance, that's the word that's used in other translations, may have life to the abundance. In the Latin, it's from two words in the Latin meaning overflowing waves.

If you've been down on the beach most of the summer you'll see lots of overflowing waves because it's been stormy and windy. Great waves. That's the way that God provides for us in Jesus.

Now that doesn't mean when Jesus says, I've come that they may have life and have it to the full, that suddenly when you become a Christian there are no problems in life or no needs in life. No, that isn't what he's saying.

It's not the guarantee that we won't be ill or that we won't go through troubles or trials or sorrows or sicknesses. That isn't the promise of Jesus because that's what Jesus himself wasn't spared those things.

He wasn't spared troubles. He wasn't spared trials, sorrows, pain, suffering. Rather the abundance of life that the Bible speaks of is above all a life of contentedness, a life of abundant peace and joy.

[25 : 24] It's something wonderfully from within. Here's Paul as he writes about his own life and his own struggles. He says this, I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty, Philippians chapter 4.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him.

That's Christ who gives me strength. When Jesus says that they might have life and have it in its fullness, it sums up in that little phrase the abundant joys of what it means to be a Christian.

The joys of knowing that our sins have been provided for and there is no guilt and there is no shame and there is no weight upon us from the past. It's the abundance of joy knowing that God is with us day by day in close fellowship.

He is our friend, not our enemy. He is the one who loves us with an everlasting love. It means having the certainty that as we go through life we are heading to a goal. We have hope, not just that we will die and that's the end of us and we'll be in the grave, but that we shall have life everlasting with God and so much more besides.

[26 : 38] That we have a sovereign God who rules over all the affairs of our lives, that works in all things for our good and for his glory. We have one who is able to give to us and provide for us when everything looks bleak and lost.

And there's examples of that all the way through the life of Jesus. Think of the feeding of the 5,000. There's some lovely, lovely phrases in there. But the most wonderful thing particularly in John's account of it is this, that at the end when just these five loaves and these two fish, 5,000 people are fed and you say, well that's amazing, that's incredible that there was enough food for them, that they all had enough to eat.

We're told they were satisfied. But we're told that at the end the disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of leftovers. You see, God doesn't just, he doesn't just, he's not a meager miser who just gives us enough to get us through the day.

He's the one who overflowingly gives us more than we could possibly need or want or desire. You see, this is where the inside and the outside makes the difference.

Those who are in Christ know this and enjoy all the riches and the treasures and the delights of knowing God. Those on the outside, what is the cry, as it were, of those on the outside of Christ, outside of the church?

[27 : 56] I want more. Isn't it? I want more money. I want more pleasures. I want more vehicles. I want more happiness.

What do they find? What is the tragedy? What is the sorrow that those who seek and ask for more and more and more are never satisfied with more cars and more money and more pleasures and more happiness which is so fleeting?

But those of us on the inside, we have this abundant feast. We have this incredible table laid with all good things to satisfy our souls, to give to us joy and peace.

I have been invited to a wedding only once. No, not once or twice. And when you go to a wedding, you go to the reception, don't you? And at the reception, everything's been paid for by somebody else, but you get to enjoy it.

Isn't that great? But those who haven't been invited, those who are on the outside looking in at the reception in the hotel or wherever it is, they don't get to enjoy any of that, but we do.

[29 : 02] And again, in Christ, we are those who have been invited in, been brought into the wedding banquet, the feast, which is all the goodness and the blessings and the joy of Christ.

To Christ Jesus, the door, he's the one that separates in and out. Those who are in are those who are saved, sins forgiven, peace with God, assurance on the day of judgment, which must surely come, dear friends, by which we will all be judged, that we shall be received and accepted because Christ took our sins at the cross.

Those that are inside are those who Jesus promises to supply their needs, to provide for them. They shall go in and go out and find pasture, but promises to provide a super abundance of life.

They shall have life to the full, but those on the outside will continue to be empty, continue to be longing for more, but never satisfied.

And so, dear friends, I've got to ask you finally this morning, again, what I've been asking you all the way through, are you inside Christ? Are you in him? Have you entered through the door?

[30 : 20] Are you safely in that place where you know that he is your good shepherd and your saviour and your friend? Jesus told a parable in Matthew 25, it's called the parable of the wise and foolish young girls.

And it's a warning about the necessity of being prepared for when Christ Jesus comes again. for Jesus tells us in that parable that after the wedding banquet had begun, the door was shut.

See, Jesus is the narrow way that leads to life abundant. But soon, he will shut the door. Will you be left outside?

Will you be inside? Here's Jesus' words in Luke chapter 13, 24 and 25 where he says this very thing. Make every effort to enter through the narrow door because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, Sir, open the door for us. But he will answer, I don't know you or where you come from.

[31 : 34] What a tragic picture that is. What a picture of such distress. What a picture of such sorrow and grief. Can you imagine? The door is open now, dear friends, for us to come in and enter into Christ and be saved.

But the day will come when that door is shut. It may be shut by death. It may be shut by Christ returning. It may be shut by yourself, your own physical health or mental health, being unable to respond to the gospel.

But now the door is open. Why wait until the door is shut? Because there is you, dear friends, standing and knocking on the door. Let me in. Let me in. And it will be too late.

Too late. Christ warns us because he longs for us to enter in, to enjoy the overflowing blessings of the life that he has provided for us.

I don't read much poetry, but I'm told that Dante wrote a very famous poem called The Inferno. In that poem, he speaks about the gateway into hell.

[32 : 48] And written across the door, the lintel of that gateway into hell, are these words. Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.

The Lord Jesus Christ says, I am the door. And written above the entrance of Christ, written above the doorway, is something very different. Enter into the joy of your Lord.

Matthew in chapter 11, verse 28, Jesus said, Come to me, all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Let's come to the Lord in prayer together.

Let's pray. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are the door, that you were the only one good enough to unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.

We thank you that you came into this world for that one purpose, that you might bring those who are on the outside in, those who are lost and in danger, into that place of safety and family and home and warmth and rest.

[34 : 10] We thank you that, Lord Jesus, your desire and longing is that each one of us here should enter in before the door is shut. We thank you that, for those of us who've entered in, it's been because by your grace you called us and drew us and we're so glad, we're so glad that we are in the Lord Jesus Christ, not because we are good or better than anyone else, but because you drew us and we thank you for the wonderful banquet and feast and joy and blessing that we keep on receiving day by day.

but Lord, we do pray for those on the outside that you would draw them in, that you would bring them in, that you would, in your mercy and grace, drag them in.

Help us as a church, help us as Christians to be those who call out to our friends, our families, those we meet with, come in to Christ and find out what good things he has in store for you.

But we know it must be your Holy Spirit. Remove the hardness from our hearts, the blind scales from our eyes, the stoppers from our ears. Move our legs and give us life, Lord, that we may enter in, in the simplicity of faith and repentance.

repentance. We pray, Lord, even in these days leading up to your return again when the door will be shut, we pray that many may be saved, many in Whitby, many, O Lord, in the UK, many throughout the world.

[35 : 49] As the gospel is proclaimed, bless those who take it. And make it powerful and effective. For we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.