

Week Four: I AM the Door

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

by: Misty Coyle

I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

John 10: 7-10 (MSG)

Jesus is the harvester of images, isn't he? I love how he takes an every-day image and tells a parable to show us the path with understanding. It's unfortunate that sometimes we can't get past the picture just as the disciples did in the tenth chapter of John. This passage has been interpreted differently whether Jesus said gate or door. But for the purpose of the image, it really makes no difference. Now knowing why Jesus used a sheepfold and sheep seems obvious because shepherding was a big job that no one really wanted during that time. A shepherd had to constantly stay with the herd because sheep are not very smart animals. They follow the other sheep or follow the voice of the shepherd. Sheep will keep their heads down and graze all day and have no idea where they go as they are eating. It has been seen sheep falling off a cliff because they followed each other off the cliff! Sheep cannot be all that dumb because when being herded to town one or more herds will take a break in a public pasture, the sheep will intermingle and to the average person the sheep are mixed up and cannot be separated. When a shepherd calls out, the sheep will recognize the voice of their master and follow, picking themselves out from the rest of the sheep while the other sheep do not recognize the voice and will continue grazing. So, the image Jesus is giving us, is when a shepherd is taking the herd to town and needs to take a break. He will find sticks, or use bushes, or rocks to keep the sheep together making himself the gate. The sheep cannot get out unless they pass the shepherd and the nothing can get to the sheep unless they pass the shepherd. Even if someone different calls to the sheep, they will not follow because they only recognize the voice of their shepherd.

As believers of Christ, we know his voice through the actions and words of those around us. As believers of Christ, we know to follow without giving notice to anything else around us (super hard for many of us to actually do). This is another image of protection and safety. How do we help others to see the gate as protection and not something to keep us locked in? How can we spread the good news and the love of God if we are locked in? But we are not locked in as Jesus said, "Anyone who goes through me will be cared for – will freely go in and out, and find pasture." He will care for us at all times with love, mercy, and grace. In times of hardship, listen for his voice to pull us out of the chaos. In times of great happiness, enjoy the comfort of the sheepfold's gate and give thanks.

I AM, the Gate and protector, we praise you and thank you for loving us so much you are willing to be a gate with mercy and grace. Thank you for giving us the gift of freedom to spread your truth and love. Amen! So be it!

Thursday, March 8, 2018

by: Phil Hornbostel

After Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed the good news to [Derbe] and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. There they strengthened

the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed. When they arrived, they called the church together, and related all that God had done with them, and how *he* had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.--Acts 14: 21-27.

When Jesus tells his disciples, "I am the door for the sheep", he is not only announcing that he holds the gate to his kingdom, but likewise that he provides the path for his disciples in the Church to go *out*, out into the world to share the Gospel message. Just as Paul and Barnabas shared the Gospel message for the first time in Asia Minor (today's Turkey), so we are given access through Jesus, to go out from the Church, to share the Gospel in our community, not only by our voices, but by our service in the community, and by our behavior on a daily basis. And when those who hear our message with excitement, ask what to do next, we can simply point to the Door, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and invite them to come in!

"Lord Jesus, I know that you are the Door to eternal life. In my life and in my world, please keep the Door open while I spread the good news to my community in thought, word, and deed, and then I ask that you hold that Door just a bit longer, to allow me and my friends in faith, to return to Your kingdom. Amen."

Friday, March 9, 2018

by: Juel Pierce

Jesus said, "I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:9-10)

This text reminds me of a poem by Robert Frost, "Mending Wall." In it, Frost says, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall/...Before I built a wall I'd ask to know/ What I was walling in or walling out,/ And to whom I was like to give offence,/ Something there is that doesn't love a wall..." In the poem, Frost and his neighbor mend the wall that hunters have knocked down, even though Frost doesn't know why they need the wall there. "My apple trees will never get across/ And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him./ He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"

I think mostly we love walls. They make us feel safe. They keep out those we don't want in, maybe strangers. They keep in those we don't want out, like our small children—but they always grow up and get out on their own! Left to our own devices, we probably would build high walls.

But Jesus here reminds us he is the gate. He lets those who are not thieves come in and out. Those who need shelter and safety can come in. Those who need the pasture can go out—and come back in. Jesus makes good neighbors of us.

Jesus is the gate, not us. Jesus is always letting people in who we are suspicious about. “Are you sure, Jesus?” we ask. “They don’t look like us. They don’t like the same kind of cake and ice cream we do. They sing songs we don’t know. They speak languages we don’t understand.”

But Jesus knows them, and invites them to come in and to go out to the pasture. He invites them in with us—or maybe he invites us in with them. And it turns out that those people we might be suspicious of are part of the abundant life Jesus brings us.

Thank you, Jesus, for being the gate in the walls we build. Thank you for the abundance of your love and grace, given to all, even to us! Amen.

Saturday, March 10, 2018

by: Jeff Langdon

These verses are part of John's account of an encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees who object or question Jesus's healings. Immediately before these verses, Jesus has healed a blind man and accused the Pharisees and others of being spiritually blind. He continues then to use imagery that describes the people of God as sheep and He himself as the Good Shepherd. The John's description of the hostility of the Pharisees towards the man born blind demonstrates that the Jesus considers the Pharisees as false shepherds. Jesus then uses these verses to illustrate his role as The Door... to better clarify what he was trying to tell them.

Numerous accounts are found in the literature that reference the life of the shepherd and sheep in Palestine. Many reference the idea of a community sheep pen and shepherds going to the pen to get their sheep. The sheep were all mixed together for the night and the shepherds would come in the morning and begin calling their sheep. First one, then another, then 4 to 5 animals would run towards their shepherd. In a few minutes the shepherd would count his sheep and they would follow him towards luscious green pastures. The sheep know their shepherd's voice and follow the shepherd.

Our Good Shepherd is pictured as walking before his sheep. He goes to the pen and calls His sheep. He is always leading them green pastures of spiritual refreshment. He knows where to take us and makes us lie down and rest, He does not drive his sheep but He leads them. The sheep follow His voice because they are accustomed to Him. They are in the habit of following Him.

But to the Pharisees, this must not have made sense, because Jesus needs to clarify. He says “I AM the Door”.

The sheep are in the pen or closure. The pen described was three sided with no door. In place of a door is an open space. At night after the sheep were gathered into the pen a shepherd would himself lay across the opening of the entrance to the pen. The shepherd was the door himself. Sheep could not leave and no one or nothing could come into the harm the sheep. There was no way in or out except thru him.

Jesus is saying that "I and I alone am the Door of the Sheep. There is no other door. There is no other way." Jesus will again make the claim in John 14:6 - "I am the Way the Truth and the Life. No one comes to God except thru Me."

Jesus is making the claim that if He is not the Door, there is no other way into God's presence. If there is no Christ, there is no way to God. As the Good Shepherd, he is the One who cares for the sheep and provides for their salvation at the cost of His own life.

What I think is totally amazing is that as I read God's Word it is clear to me that there is no discrimination in this Door... Jesus is not a bouncer, looking for an identification card, a passport, a membership card, or a picture ID. You do not have to present your qualifications or resume for entrance into the presence of God. No one is refused.

God welcomes us with words of love and acceptance. "Come right on in. I have been waiting for you, and I am so glad you came." In fact, not only is my God waiting for me, but Jesus has made it clear that God runs to greet me.

Lord, Thank you for being my Shepherd, the one who loves me so much, the one who walks before me, and the one who gives me rest. Help me remember whose I am and that I can rest secured in your loving protection. And at my end, run to me, welcome me and take me into your presence. Amen!

Sunday, March 11, 2018

by: Pastor Roger Lenander

²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Mark 10:24-26 (NRSV)

One interpretation of the "Eye of the Needle" was that it was a narrow gateway into Jerusalem. Since camels were heavily loaded with goods and riders, they would need to be unloaded in order to pass through. The analogy is that a rich man would have to similarly unload his material possessions in order to enter heaven.

I met a couple who lived in a large beautiful home. It was furnished exquisitely. They said they had built the place so that they could entertain in style. Yet, they never hosted family gatherings for fear of the house becoming dirty from dusty shoes and children who could break something in their play. Instead, other family members would host the gatherings in their homes that were smaller with furniture that showed wear. Yet, no one noticed or cared as the hosts welcomed all in joy and love. When Jesus invites us into God's eternal home I pray that it will show signs of the wear and tear that welcoming and joy brings. Jesus went to his knees for all of us and prayed for God to prepare for our coming. Jesus, Crucified and Risen, welcomes all to enter into the door of God's salvation.

Jesus, we give you thanks and praise. Because of your death all are welcomed to enter into the joy of your salvation. Amen.

Monday, March 12, 2018

by: Brenda Bass

I am using a different version of this passage where the word "gate" is used instead of door. I think I prefer this image of gate to the image of door. In my mind a door is solid and I cannot see what is behind it. A gate presents an image of being able to see what is behind and what is before – and a choice can be made.

Jesus tried several times in this passage to get the message across to the listening audience, which included Pharisees. Jesus tells them, and us, that not everyone who pretends to lead the sheep and exert authority over others is necessarily good or right. Jesus then says, "I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture....I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

In my mind I see the picture of us as followers of Jesus, going out into the world every morning – remembering that we are baptized, passing through the gate that is Jesus to be about the work and ministry put before us every day, and then coming back through the gate that is Jesus at the end of the day, receiving a blessing and knowing that we enter a safe pasture to rest, renew and be rejuvenated for the next day.

We can make that choice every day to pass through the gate – to acknowledge that we are followers of Jesus, that we hear Jesus' voice and choose to follow the way of God, knowing that we are saved, protected and commissioned for every good work!

Thank you, Jesus, for being the gate. For sheltering us and providing us ministry and service to perform in your name. Amen.

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

by: Jim Pierce

Jesus said, “I am the gate for the sheep. . . . I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find good pasture. . . .” John 10: 7—10

Shepherds, good and bad, thieves and bandits, strangers, wolves, gates—John 10 includes a jumble of images Jesus uses to contrast who he is with those who would steal and destroy. At the center of this jumble, surrounded by these competing forces, we find us, the sheep.

We want only to eat and sleep in safety. But being sheep we find ourselves easy prey for thieves, bandits and wolves, targets of strangers who would lure us off to who knows what! What can a poor sheep do? Not much, it appears. Think of all the things of this world that steal you away, all those things you find you cannot flee. I can think of quite a few in my life. I encounter some of them every day. Others come and go, usually showing up when I least expect them. Nothing I do makes them quit trying or makes me better able to resist them.

Jesus says, “Exactly. That’s my point. There is nothing you can do.” But that does not mean there is nothing that can be done. Jesus is the shepherd—we will reflect more on that next week—and Jesus is the gate and sheepfold. As strong gate and walls, Jesus surrounds and defends us against strangers, thieves, bandits and wolves. But this gate doesn’t just stay closed to seal us in and seal the world out. That’s not a gate at all. It’s a wall! Jesus the gate closes to defend. Jesus the gate also opens so we might go out, finding good pasture in which to eat, and come in, finding safety in which to sleep.

But a gate, even though it opens and closes, stays in one place doesn’t it? That’s true in all the pastures and barnyards and back yards I can think of. How does that help us when the gate is there, and I’m way over here on the outside? In saying, “I am the gate,” Jesus invites us to think differently. This gate, the Jesus gate, is not bound by space, not stuck in one place like the gate into my neighbor’s yard. This gate, this sheepfold, is always on the go, wherever I go, wherever you go, to be our defense.

Jesus, gate to the sheepfold, open that I might go out and find good pasture, close before I even know I need it to keep me safe. Thank you for being my sure defense. Amen