

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

**Texts: Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 95: 1-3, 6-7a; John 10:14-15b; Romans 6:9; John 10:14; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10**

**Sunday, April 26, 2026/A**

Theme: I am the door!

**Greetings:** Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied down to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. +

**Before the Gospel reading:** The Word of the Lord that we'd like to base our thoughts upon for this Sunday is from the Holy Gospel according to St. John 10:1-10, which we have heard earlier. At this point, I'd ask you to be seated.

**Introduction:** Dear friends of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, today is known as **Good Shepherd Sunday**. The Fourth Sunday of Easter every year is a day when we remind ourselves that Jesus is our shepherd. But in the reading for today, **John 10:1-10**, Jesus doesn't actually say that. What he says in today's Gospel is that he is **the door of the sheep**. "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

This is one of the famous "I am" sayings of Jesus. There are seven in John's Gospel: **"I am the bread of life....I am the living water....I am the light of the world....I am the way, and the truth, and the life...I am the true vine...I am the resurrection and the life... I am the good shepherd."** And today's, which I think is the least well-known and must *be* unique: "I am the door."

Many of these "I am" sayings of Jesus' have obvious meanings. But today's "I am" saying is not quite as obvious. **What does it mean that Jesus is the door, or in other translations, the gate, for us, his sheep?**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I suppose you might say that Jesus is the door because he is the way into heaven. He is the way in which we are brought into the kingdom of God. But doesn't that make him the **key**, rather than the door?

In other places in the Bible, Jesus is described as the **one standing at the door**. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," Jesus says in Revelation. "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." That makes more sense, right?

In still other places in the Bible, Jesus miraculously passes through locked doors in order to find his disciples. After the Resurrection, the disciples are locked behind doors out of fear. He [Jesus] miraculously comes through those locked doors to tell them not to be afraid, that he is raised from the dead, and that he will be with them to the end of the age. But here, in today's Gospel, Jesus is the door itself. How can this be?

The explanation that I find most compelling is based on a common practice among shepherds in Jesus' day. At the end of the day, the shepherds would gather all their sheep in an enclosed area called a **sheepfold**—that had only one way in, and one way out. And then the shepherd would simply lay across that entrance, in order to protect their sheep from **dangerous animals** during the night. If a dangerous animal

were to try and enter the sheepfold, the shepherd would awake and fight it off. And the sheep slept securely. Because their shepherd was now their gate.

So, in today's gospel, Jesus tells us that we are his sheep, and he is our shepherd. He promises to be our door, at the end of the day. He lays across the entrance to his sheepfold—not to keep us out, but to protect us from all that would snatch us away.

He lays across the door, as he lays down his life for us, as he lays on a cross for us, as he lays in a tomb for us: **so that we may have life and have it abundantly**. Jesus is our shepherd, and our door, and that is a good thing.

Dear congregants, no one else left heaven to come into this world to give his life as a ransom for sinners. No one else carried the sins of the world to the cross and spilled his blood there to pay for them. No one else was despised, beaten, and crucified in our place. No one else endured the wrath of God as our substitute. The blood of no one else can atone for the sins of the world. And most importantly, no one else proved the truth of his word by rising from the dead. There is only one way to God, one way to be saved—and Jesus is it! And by God's grace, you and I believe and confess this truth because Jesus has called us by name in Baptism, and we know his voice as we hear it in today's gospel reading: **he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.**

And our confession is that the only way anyone can get into heaven is through Jesus. All the good works in the world, all the bold and religious sincerity, all the prayers in the world cannot save anyone. Only Jesus can. **Jesus is the only Door that leads to salvation.**

You know, I once read in a book, *Life Is Messy*, that all the stories of the world can be grouped into two categories: stories that show us that life is a **journey**, and stories that show us that life is a **battle**. And when you think about it, much of our life can be grouped into these two categories. Sometimes our life is a journey, an adventure. We are born, we grow up, and we get educated or start college, we get a new job, we move to a new community, we fall in love, we marry, and then we have a baby. Life offers many such adventures! But at other times, life is a battle. A relationship ends, we lose a job, we get sick, and we die. We face any number of trials in life that takes us from the adventure of life, and make it hard just to get through the day. It seems to me that the war in my country, the DRC, and in the Middle East has turned many adventures into battles. We are all broken and wounded by our own sin. It's interesting to know that **life is a journey and a battle.**

But here is my point: When life is more like a **journey**, we need a shepherd who will lead us into the unknown, who will be our guide on this adventure. But when life is more like a **battle**, we need a shepherd who will fight for us. And we need a shepherd who will protect us from danger. Jesus promises to be both. He is our shepherd, and

he is our door. He leads us on this journey through life and he protects us when life becomes a battle.

We need both of these at different times in life. And in today's gospel, we focus on the latter—we focus on Jesus being the shepherd who protects us, who promises to be our door. Now, can we admit to ourselves that we are not able to defend ourselves from all of our enemies? That we, like sheep, need to be protected from many things? That we need a shepherd who is willing to serve as our door, so that we can find rest for our weary souls? If so, how thankful we are that Jesus himself offers to be our shepherd, and our door!

But it's worth asking, who exactly are our enemies? What does Jesus protect us from? We can all agree that we need protection from illness. We need protection from danger. We need protection from those who hurt us. We need protection from those who hate us and disdain us. We need protection from those who steal from us, and we need protection from evil and corruption. There are many things that we need protection from. But God's word teaches us that what we need protection from, more than anything else, is ourselves. We are our own worst enemies, it has been said. **All we, like sheep, have gone astray.** We have all sinned. There is no distinction.

And just because we are sheltering at home doesn't mean that we are free from sin! Far from it! Sin is lurking at the door, Scripture reminds us back in Genesis 4, and

its desire is for us. And sin is one of the most dangerous *enemies* of all, for a very simple reason: sin separates us from God. The shame of it, the guilt of it, or the denial of it, separates us from our Creator, from our God. And so, God sent Jesus to protect us from sin, to protect us from ourselves, by forgiving our sin and reconciling us to God. We need protection.

Dear Zion congregation, Jesus, as we are reminded today, is both our shepherd and our door. He leads us on life's adventure. He protects us from life's dangers. And, above all, he came to protect us from ourselves and from our sins. As we receive Him in the sacraments, he forgives sins, gives life, and salvation, for the Scripture says, "For God so loved you, that he gave his only begotten Son for you, that since you believe in Him, you shall not perish, but you shall have eternal life."

"I am the door," says Jesus, "If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.....I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Oh! What wonderful words these are to hear! Dear brothers and sisters, whether we are facing an adventure right or a battle. Whether your colleagues hate you at your workplace, whether you feel rejected, neglected, or abandoned, or whether life feels more like a journey at the moment, or a contest. Jesus promises to be there for you. To lead you, to guide you, to protect you, to give you life, abundantly.

Jesus is your door—the only Door—to God and to eternal life. Continue listening to his voice. Continue listening to his Word and know that whatever happens in our world and whatever happens to you, in him you have an open door to abundant life now and forever in heaven.

I want to leave you with this story: **Walking by a restaurant, a businessman noticed a poor boy eagerly looking in, his face pressed against the glass. "Are you hungry?" asked the man. The boy timidly replied, "Yes, sir. I'm hungry." Taking the boy inside, the man ordered a meal for the boy. But the boy kept looking toward the outside, showing no interest in the delicious food. The man tapped the boy on the shoulder, " Why don't you eat? You said you were hungry." The boy answered, "See that boy looking in through the window. That's my little brother. How can I eat with him standing there looking at me like that?" The businessman brought in the younger boy. What a feast they both had! Likewise, family members, friends still outside need an invitation to the shepherd.**

May all of God's sheep find comfort in these words today. And may we hear in these words an invitation to come to the sheepfold to find protection, and find life, and to find the pasture that only the Son of God, our good shepherd, and our door can offer us. In Jesus' name. Amen.+

+Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Amen.+

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