

Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 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. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:1–11, NRSV)

Grace and peace to you from God our father and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Good Shepherd Sunday that's where we are right now and we have in this lesson from the gospel of John Jesus kind of mixes his metaphors but when was Jesus ever known to play the by the rules right and besides I mean what's wonderful about Jesus is he is so many things in John John is a gospel rich with metaphor so in this lesson we hear that Jesus is the gate for the sheep that's what we hear primarily for the first 10 verses and then we hear that he is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep just a few things to talk about with the gate for the sheep. It's interesting I heard a wonderful illustration of what this means for us and I heard it again from one of my favorite guys to listen to on his podcasts pastor will Weedon, he has a podcast called the “the word of the Lord endures forever” and he was talking about how when he was in seminary and he and his other wet behind the ears fellow seminarians were in the class with Dr. Norman Nagel and Dr. Nagel wrote on the chalkboard “and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and yet he wrote it in Greek the original language of the New Testament but then he looked at it and he thought about it and he got the eraser and erased it and then he wrote in Greek the word became flesh and dwelt among us and he did he wrote that underneath the chalkboard then he also he looked at it and looked at his students shook his head - “no that doesn't quite do it”... he erased it off the wall then he got down on all fours, on his hands and knees, and he wrote it on the floor, “the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and of course he did this to impress upon the young seminarians in this very incredible object lesson that when Jesus the word of God became flesh he came and became God deep in the flesh and it's just a powerful lesson.

It's a powerful lesson that illustrates that we could not get into God's Kingdom by our own steam by our own efforts and these words that he's saying are words that probably really upset the scribes and the Pharisees because they think keeping the law is what gets us into the Kingdom of heaven. Keeping the law, making sure other people keep the law, that's the way it's done. That is what they thought, but Jesus says “very truly I tell you anyone who does not enter

the sheepfold by the gate but **climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit**. So now is that kind of the “word becoming flesh, dwelling among us” and right down to the floor right down to the other thing doctor Nagel said to pastor Weedon’s class was “right down to the place where your seat is sitting on.” I mean Jesus is happy to get down to the nitty gritty, down and dirty, stoop down just as low as we are in order to lift us up in order to save us. So the point being that the one who enters by the gate is the Shepherd of the sheep the gatekeeper opens the gate for him and the sheep hear his voice. So eventually he gets to that point in the 11th verse of this reading for chapter 10 that I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (that's verse ten) and then I am the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (verse 11). So that's what all this preamble is kind of leading too. But the point is, yes Jesus is both the gate and the Good Shepherd he's also the way the truth and the life so you get where I'm getting at? Jesus uses all this rich symbolism too to indicate to us that he is our pathway to the Kingdom of heaven and that God knew that we needed a savior who would do all of the difficult, impossible work of atoning for our sins and so that's what it means when he says he's both gate and Shepherd. He stooped down, really deep down in order to save you and me from our sins, and so that frees us to do what Peter was talking about.

And this is what Peter was talking about when he said in that first letter, the second chapter of his first letter, “it is a credit to you if, by being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. if you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong what credit is that but if you endure when you do right and suffer for it you have God's approval for to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example so that you should follow in his steps he committed no sin and notice he was found in his mouth when he was abused he did not return abuse when he suffered he did not threaten but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that free from sins we might live for righteousness by his wounds you have been healed for you were going astray like sheep but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls by his words you are healed again picking up that theme from Isaiah 53 it's a powerful theme and it reminds us just what Christ death and resurrection means to us and empowered by that love empowered by the faith that comes from knowing that Christ died for our sins,

Empowered by that faith of knowing that Christ died for our sins and rose again the community develops as Luke explains to us in the book of acts beginning with the 42nd verse of chapter 2 the baptize devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers what we see developing here is Luke explains it is what are called the marks of the church all who believed were together and had all things in common so charity they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds through all as any had need day by day as they spent much time together in the temple they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts and so living as Christ did living from a heart that generates generosity the church you and I that's what we're called to we're also called to a life that's not necessarily one certainly of luxury but of sharing what we have with others and I feel so blessed

to be called to serve both these wonderful generous communities both Saint John and Trinity who in our way are being faithful to God's call upon us and as we do as we continue through this Easter season - for Christ is risen he is risen indeed alleluia - we come to the comfort of knowing that Jesus - yes is indeed - he is both the gate and the Shepherd also the Lamb of God and he is our savior. As I close, let me remind us all once again at the closing sentence of Peters 2nd reading from Peter today we were all going to stray like sheep but now we have returned to the Shepherd and the Guardian of our souls our savior Jesus who is risen he is risen indeed alleluia, AMEN.