

Title: "Jesus, The Gate"

Text: John 10:1-10

Turn with me back to John chapter 10 today.

- Last week Monica Romig joined in our series of sermons on the "I Am sayings" of Jesus by preaching the passage in John 10 where Jesus says, "I AM the Good Shepherd."
- Today we want to turn back to that same passage in John 10,
 - because it actually begins with Jesus mixing his metaphors and proclaiming that he was also the "Gate for the sheep."

Listen today to John 10:1-11 for this second I AM saying within this one biblical image of a shepherd and his sheep.

"I am the gate for the sheep," Jesus says in verse 7,
-and then he says it again in verse 9, "I am the gate;
whoever enters through me will be saved."

Now admittedly, a gate is not nearly as attractive an image as that of a Good Shepherd.

- After all, a shepherd is a person and a gate is an inanimate object.
 - So we can easily envision Jesus as a shepherd caring tenderly for his sheep.
 - But it's a bit harder to envision Jesus with hinges, and a latch, and in need of a coat of paint.

Maybe that's why of all Jesus "I AM" metaphors in John's Gospel,

-I am the Gate probably gets the least amount of press.

You may have prayed at one time or another,

- "O Jesus, Light of the world, send me a little light today.
 - or: "O Jesus, Bread of Life, come feed me."
 - or, "O Jesus, come be my Good Shepherd today and lead me...."
- But have you ever prayed, "O Jesus, Gate for the sheep, let me in? I doubt it.
- And we certainly don't sing, "Jesus, Name above all names, Beautiful Savior, glorious gate."

But for today, I do want us to reflect on this image for a moment because Jesus stresses the image here twice, "I AM the gate for the sheep."
-And then he concludes the section saying, "And I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

Now the first thing I want you to notice today is that these two statements go together.
-The statement about Jesus being the gate,
-and the one about the sheep having abundant life.

And the connection is not really complicated:
-The gate of the sheep's pen is simply that which separates the pen from the pasture.

On the one side of the gate we find the pen itself,
-that enclosed area where the sheep were kept safe for the night.

And on the other side of the gate we find the pasture,
-that wonderful place where the sheep were taken daily to receive the food, water, and exercise they needed.

And the humble gate is the pathway to both.
-It is the passage way through which the sheep come in to the safety of the pen for the night,
-and go out to the supply of the pasture during the day.

And that, for a sheep, is the ABUNDANT LIFE!
-A safe pen and a verdant pasture.
-Security at night, and food and drink by day.
-What more could a nice sheep want, right?
-It is the abundant life.

The only thing is, that to experience that refuge and safety when evening falls,
-the sheep must go in by the gate at the proper time.

If a sheep has wandered off and ends up left out in the pasture somewhere,
-he will not reap the benefit of the pen.
-Instead, he'll end up alone at night out in the dark.

And on the other hand, to experience the supply and provision of the pasture,
-the sheep must listen for the shepherd's voice in the morning and follow him out through the gate.

Because, if you think about it, the pen is nowhere to be during the day.
-After all those sheep have been crowded in there all night,
-there is no grass at all there to eat, it's all trampled.
-What there is in the pen is a quantity of manure that you can just imagine to yourself.

So by morning those sheep need to get out of that pen
-and into the open pasture when the gate is opened.

You see what I mean?
-The abundant life for sheep is regulated by the gate of the sheep pen.
-It is the gate by which they come in at the right time to find safety,
and the gate by which go out at the right time and find pasture.

This is the picture of the abundant life which Jesus is painting for us.
-It is a picture of safety, and supply.
-A life of protection in the pen, and provision in the pasture.

And Jesus says, "I am the gate."
-I am the way to the safety of the pen, and to the supply of the pasture.

Now when it comes to you and me, the message of the metaphor is not hard to understand.
-The abundant life which Jesus promised us is a life of protection and provision.
-A life free from fear, and full of satisfaction/provision.
-And Jesus is the gateway to both.

The only question is, why don't we experience more of this kind of life than most of us usually do?

- And I believe the answer is that many of us feel like lost sheep most of the time.
- Sheep who are not in the right place at the right time.

For a whole variety of reasons, and often unwittingly,

- we often feel like we are caught out in the pasture at night, alone and afraid,
- or like we are stuck in the pen during the day, up to our knees in the manure of other sheep.

The abundant life is always somehow out of reach.

- It's always on the other side of the fence.
- We're stuck out here while all the other sheep are in there, -or we're in here while they're all out in the pasture having a great time.

-And when we go to look for the gate to change our position, -we either can't find it or can't open it.

Does that describe how you sometimes feel?

- The abundant life is always just out of reach?
- Other Christians may be experiencing it, but not you?

Well, my friends, Jesus tells us one other thing in this brief passage that I want you to note.

- He says that there is a thief and a robber out there who comes to steal and kill and destroy the sheep.

He's a thief who wants nothing more than to rob the sheep of the abundant life they have been freely given.

- He wants to separate us from the rest of the flock.
- He wants to make us feel all alone out in the dark.
- He wants to make us feel knee deep in manure, and then convince us that it's our fault and we deserve it.

And the way this thief plays with our mind can be very convincing.

- a. First he will try and convince us that there's no way we are really part of Jesus' flock because of WHO WE ARE.
 - We are either too selfish or too insecure.
 - We are too strong, or too weak.
 - We are too lazy, or too much of a work-a-holic.

-We are too smart to be a Christian, or not smart enough.

It doesn't matter who we are, the robber will tell us we are not quite right.

-There is something wrong with who we are.

-Jesus could never have a sheep in his flock like you/me.

-Sorry, the others can go in and out by the gate, but not you.

-You just stay out in the field by yourself where you belong.

b. Or secondly, if it is not who we are that's the problem, it is where we are in life that is the problem.

The family we are stuck with,

-the city we live in, the house we live in,

-the spouse we married, the children we have.

-the kind of lifestyle we want, but can't afford.

Nothing is ever quite right where we are in life at the moment.

-The abundant life is out there somewhere, but not here.

-Others may experience it, but not me.

-Maybe if I had married someone else.

-Maybe if I had a different job, or made a little more money.

-Maybe if I lived in a different town in a different state.

-Maybe if I went to a different church!

The robber loves to get us thinking, "If only things were different....if only I were somewhere else living a different life.

c. Or thirdly, if it's not who we are or where we are that's the problem, it's **WHAT WE HAVE DONE** he will throw at us.

"A sheep in Jesus' flock would never have acted like that," he'll say.

-God can't forgive you of that.

-He might have if you only did it once, but you've already asked forgiveness in that area too many times.

What kind of Christian are you, anyway?

- I bet nobody else in your church has the kind of struggles you always seem to be having.
- What would they all think of you if they found out you were like that?
- You see, you're not a sheep. You're really a goat.
 - You belong out in the dark at night and knee deep in manure during the day.

But you know what? That isn't the voice of the shepherd.
-It is the voice of the thief and the robber who comes to steal your joy, and destroy your life, and kill you.

- But Jesus wants us all to know something: HE IS THE GATE.
- He is the one who determines who goes in and out with the flock, not the robber.
 - It is Jesus' VOICE we are to listen for and follow.
 - He is the one who leads us to green pastures and still waters and restores our soul.
 - He has come to give us life.

- So when you are feeling lost and alone?
- when you are feeling knee deep in manure?
 - when you are feeling insecure about who you are and where you are and what you have done/ or haven't done?

- Jesus is the gate, and He says, "I AM."
- And I want to remind us all that the words, "I Am" are always present tense.
 - Jesus "I AM-ness" means that He is ready to open up the gate for us whenever and wherever we are.

- And all through the Gospels we see that for Jesus: who we are is not a problem.
- It doesn't matter if we are a law abiding Pharisee, or a hated tax collector, or a Samaritan woman, or a leper, or a Roman centurion.
 - Jesus knows full well who we are, and he invites all of us to come in through his gate to find safety and salvation and abundant life.

He gave his life for all of us.

- And He didn't wait for us to get our act together and become someone more perfect and holy than we are.
- He loves us now and died for us the WAY WE ARE,
 - not the way we think we are supposed to be.

"I AM the gateway to the life you long for," he says. "Enter in. Enter in. Enter in."

And as the great I AM, where we are is not an issue for Jesus either.

- Because He is present to us no matter where we are.
 - We don't have to change address or spouse or job or church.
 - Jesus is ready to meet us no matter what situation we are in.

Eugene Peterson once said that there is no place on earth without the potential for unearthing holiness.

- That means, there is no place and no situation you might find yourself in that Jesus can't show up in the midst of and use to transform us.

And what we have done or haven't done is also not an issue for Jesus.

- He died for our sin already.
- And so he is not shocked by our sinfulness, nor surprised by it.
- He knows all about it and He has already dealt with it.
- The sin issue is over for Jesus.
- What he wants now is to give you a new life.
 - "I AM the gate to that life," he says. "Come to me. Enter in through me.

I will cleanse and wash you in my blood, and lead you to green pastures.

You see, He wants to pick us up out of the manure,

- and take you over his shoulder, and lead us to some still waters where He can clean us up,
- and then plop us down in some green pastures to rest and be refreshed.

He says, 'I came that you might have life and have it to the full.'

-And He is the gateway to that abundant life.

-Don't let the thief and the robber steal the life out from under you.

-Don't let him separate you from the flock and convince you that you don't belong.

-Don't listen to that voice.

Listen to the voice of the shepherd, the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep.

-Listen to the voice of the one who is the Gateway to eternal life.

-He invites us to come in and find pasture, and find rest for our souls.

He's inviting you today. And my friends, you're welcome to come in through the gate.

Let's pray.