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Peace, Sun Prairie
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Easter 4 - Good Shepherd Sunday

John 10:7-10

ENTER THROUGH THE DOOR

On this “Good Door” Sunday, we’ll be focusing on Jesus’ words from John, chapter 10.

What? What did you say? This isn’t “Good Door” Sunday? What is it then?

Good Shepherd Sunday? Oh yes, that’s right. It’s Good Shepherd Sunday. But interestingly, in the Gospel Lesson for today, Jesus doesn’t call Himself the Good Shepherd. He calls Himself the Door for the sheep. That’s a picture we don’t often hear much about. But it certainly is worth our contemplation. Today, then, let’s take to heart Jesus’ invitation to enter through the Door.

In John 10, Jesus says, *Amen, Amen, I tell you: I am the door for the sheep.* “I am.” This is one of Jesus’ “I am” statements. Perhaps you’ve heard some of His other “I am” statements: “I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the resurrection and the life.” Here He says, “I am the door for the sheep.”

These two profound words hearken back 1500 years earlier when God was going to send Moses to Pharaoh of Egypt and demand that Pharaoh let the Israelite slaves go. Moses asked, “What if they ask your name? Who should I say sent me?” God replied, “I am that I am. You tell them ‘I Am’ has sent you.” Jesus is the same I Am who had spoken to Moses. The Bible says, *Jesus Christ: the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Therefore with a most solemn vow – *Amen, amen, I tell you* - Jesus says, *I am the door for the sheep.* Exclusively, the door. There is no other door. There never was another door. There will never be another door. But the door for what? Listen again to Jesus’ words: *I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

In Bible times, it was common for shepherds at night to keep their sheep in a corral of sorts called a fold for their protection. Jesus is the door, meaning, He is exclusively the only way of salvation. The way we enter that door is by listening to His word and believing it. Jesus said, *All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved.*

Christian writer Colton Corter posted an article entitled [4 Reflections after Listening to 18 Hours of Sermons in America’s Biggest Churches](#). Two of his four observations were these:

- 1) The gospel (of Jesus dying on the cross to atone for our sins) is at best assumed; most of the time it is entirely absent.
- 2) Repentance rarely comes across as something urgent and necessary; instead it’s either optional or not worth mentioning at all.

Not a very favorable analysis of American preaching. The saddest part is, from Colton Corter’s article it would seem the main thing missing in the sermons he listened to was Christ Himself.

Is it because our American expectation toward ease bears no patience for Jesus, feels no burning need for salvation, that at best we’re looking merely for some self-improvement or pop psychology just to tweak things in our lives a little? Do we fail to see that we are not called to improve, but to die to self, to take up our cross daily and follow Christ?

Christ is the door to salvation. There is no other door. There is no other salvation than the one Christ opens to us. In this message there is no mere advice or platitudes, nothing clever or trendy, no fog machines or purple stage lighting. There is only sin and Christ. Sin is what we are, in all our doing and thinking and feeling, day in and day out, 24/7, for our entire lives. Everything about us is sin. Grace is what Christ is who is greater than all our being. Christ draws our attention away from our lives to His sinless life – how He earned our way to heaven by His great labor and perfection. He draws our attention away from our anxieties and issues to His sufferings and death on the cross by which He atoned to God for our guilt and reconciled us to our heavenly Father. He draws our attention away from our goals and aspirations to His resurrection from the dead by which He has rescued us from death and the devil and has secured for us everlasting life with our Father in heaven. Christ is the door. Christ is our salvation. Christ has done everything. Enter through the door. In other words, place your trust in Christ. Look to Christ for your relief and put your hope in nothing else.

But wait, doesn't Jesus promise what so many preachers today call an abundant life? There are books by famous preachers out there with titles such as "Your Best Life Now." Doesn't Jesus even say here in John 10: *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly?*

Yes, Jesus is the door to abundant life, but not in keeping with the impression such preachers might give you. For here on earth Jesus has promised us not success, but disappointment, failure, suffering and the cross. He must if He loves us. For He must break and crush our self will (which can only be sinful) and deny us what we want, if He is going to replace it with His holy and good will in us. And that can only come through great suffering. We even pray for this when we pray, "Your will be done on earth as in heaven."

But the abundant life is that even when we are in a dark place and it may feel as if there is no mercy or care from God, behind the curtain of desperation is a gracious, kind, loving Father whose intentions are not to condemn us but to save us. The abundant life is enduring suffering and grief with a clear conscience and without the uncertainty that guilt causes, of wondering where we stand with God, because in Christ we are forgiven. The abundant life is that all such sin-squelching suffering will result in a greater righteousness as we cling all the more tightly to Christ's forgiveness. God is not punishing us or abandoning us. In fact, as believers we can take suffering as a sure indication of God's personal care. We have that strange double take: on the one hand we hate our suffering; yet on the other hand we cherish it as God's loving way of drawing us close to Him.

The abundant life is that Christ rescues us out of this valley of the shadow of death and crowns us as His heavenly royalty in an everlasting Kingdom of light and permanence. In the same way that He came bodily out of the grave, He will raise up our bodies from the grave to live with Him eternally.

Christ is the door. There is no other door to the abundant life. There is no other door to salvation. Therefore let us enter through this door and this door only. That means, let us trust in Christ and Christ alone. Let us listen to His words and cling to His promises to save us now and for the life to come.