

"Life Abundant"

John 10:1-10

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¹"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. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Prayer.

I want you to think about doors for a moment; front doors, the first door you might see on a house, church, business, or office building. A door tells you a great deal about the character of the establishment, what goes on inside. (with thanks for the imagery to Dr. William Willimon, [Pulpit Resources](#), April 17, 2005)

I recall the doors to our classrooms in elementary school. Solid oak. Institutional, with a single pane of wire mesh glass fitted in each one. Heavy duty hardware, with the swing down stopper at the base to prop them open between periods. When the bell rang to start a class, the teacher lifted the stopper with their toe and all the doors in the hallway were closed. These doors meant business. If you were going through those doors, they told you to be prepared to work.

Banks used to have fortress styled doors, sending the unspoken message that anyone who invests their money in this bank can be assured that it will be safely locked away. Modern banks are designed differently, with inviting, see-through, heavy duty glass doors. Inside the customer can see flowers and plants to give it

a more comfy familiar homey feel to it.

At one previous church I served, the Main Street sidewalks ended at our front doors. The front doors were about twelve feet tall, each weighing about 500 pounds, at the top of unlevel cut stone stairs, lined with rusty handrails, opening inward, making them unusable in today's world. A small laminated sign on one door read, "Please use back entrance." Talk about an unspoken message.

A door tells you a great deal about the character of a place, and what goes on inside. When I go calling in the hospital, there is no greater obstacle than a closed room door. I make the time, the effort, park in the garage, check with information, come to the room, only to be greeted with a closed door. It makes me wonder what's going on behind it? Some terrible or agonizing procedure? Is my loved one receiving privacy, respect, and dignity? Or are they just sleeping? I usually read everything in public purview taped or attached to the door, searching for some type of clue as to what might be going on. If there is no one to assist me, I generally meekly tap on the door while opening slowly, focusing my eyes elsewhere less I would cause embarrassment. "Hello"

What is the purpose of a door? A door allows the free passage for someone entering or exiting a dwelling. People come in or go out through doors. If a person enters by any other way, well, we're likely to call 911. Unless they locked themselves out of their house, there aren't too many reasons for a homeowner to crawl in through an open window. If they are leaving through a means other than a door, it appears to be a secret get-away; like an enchanted lover climbing down the trellis, less conservative parents learn of the illicit affair and put a stop to the activity. In either case, entering or exiting by means other than the door is sure to raise suspicion.

In today's gospel, Jesus says that he is the door. Yes, I know that in some translations it reads "gate." Simply as a matter of preference, I choose to read "door," like it is recorded in the Revised Standard and King James versions. "I am a door," Jesus proclaims. What an interesting figure of speech.

He doesn't say "I am the only door," nor does he say he is "the only way, truth, or life." Of course, Jesus doesn't look like a door, so it certainly must be a metaphor. In fact, Jesus uses the prepositional phrase "I am" many, many times in the Gospels, to describe His relationship with His disciples, His relationship with us. Indeed, the Gospel of John is a garden of highly figuratively, metaphorical, symbolic words used to portray the life, ministry, and actions of Jesus.

The door guides the going out and the coming in. "Jesus is the door that leads to God. The door is not the house, not the dwelling place, not the goal; a door is a passageway into the house, a means of getting to a destination," Willimon (Dr. William Willimon, Pulpit Resources, April 17, 2005) correctly observes. "Thus, when Jesus says, 'I am the door,' it is similar to Jesus calling himself 'the way.' He is the way to God, the way to abundant life, the path to true freedom. Jesus is the means whereby we get to God."

In our tradition, in our experience, the pathway to God is through the doorway we know as Jesus Christ. It is as simple as that. The missional role of the Church is to lead people to the door, to Jesus, and to give them the encouragement to pass through.

This is all well and good, and it appeals to our Western American, white Caucasian faith questing, purpose driven form of Christianity. But the door swings two ways. Jesus is also the means by which God comes out of the Divine Realm, and breaks into our world. Jesus is the conduit through which God transcends the divide. Through Christ, the Holy Spirit of God blows into our lives, filling us with guidance and direction, enlarging our capacity for love and grace, enabling us to grow deep and wide in our faith. Through the door we know as Jesus Christ, God reaches into our world, and through revelation, God opens our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our minds to experience anew the presence and the charisms of the Spirit. By means of God's revelations we have the Scriptures opened to us and the Sacraments are given new life.

When we think of Jesus as the door which leads us to God, and God to us, we are simply confessing that "we cannot imagine any means of being with God, the true and living God, except by the way of Jesus. That is, we cannot imagine being in the presence of God that was not in the loving, compassionate, suffering, self-sacrificial way that was the way of Jesus.

"There were saviors who attempted to save by raising an army, by starting a revolution, by overthrowing the government, by the worldly wisdom of coercion, or violence, and military might. Jesus does what he does through words, through preaching and teaching, through action, through self-sacrificial love, by dying. This is the way, the door, the only door (in our experience) that leads to God." (Dr. William Willimon, Pulpit Resources, April 17, 2005)

If we are trying to move through the door, then it is only right to use Him as a model for our actions, a role for our behavior, the example for our living. Instead of facing a challenge in life and rearing back our head in agony asking the unanswerable questions "Why me?" or "What should I do?" or with shallow

promises to return to God "if everything works out" perhaps we should face those difficult times, those places of crisis and danger already knowing Jesus, already in a relationship with Christ, already one of His disciples.

Beloved Zion, how did you get here this morning? How did you come to be gathered in this sanctuary? You had to come through the door. You grabbed the handle, you opened it, oh so boldly, and you came right in through the door of Jesus Christ.

You will pass through many doors this week. As you walk through each door, may it serve as a reminder to you that Jesus is the door. Jesus is our door; through which we are invited to come into the fullness of God and His kingdom. Jesus is our door; through which God steps, in His effort to come into our lives. Pay attention to the doors you come to this week. Say a prayer when you enter or exit, knowing what has been revealed to you this day in the Gospel of John, that Jesus is our door, the passageway to life abundant.

The Word of the Lord, as it has come to me this day. Thanks be to God. Amen.