



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

April 30, 2023
4th Sunday of Easter; Good Shepherd Sunday
First Lesson: [1 Samuel 17:34-37](#)
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 23
Second Lesson: [Hebrews 13:20-21](#)
Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 10:1-10](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

The Redeemer Lives: To be my Good Shepherd To be The Gate to Heaven

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

In Christ, our risen and ruling Lord, dear fellow redeemed:

There are words at times that kind of sting. They kind of hit you and make you feel not so good. When I was growing up and I did stuff that was stupid from time to time, my dad would look at me and say in a booming voice, "What's the matter with you?! You got rocks for brains?!" I can't say I enjoyed that all the time, but I knew the point he was trying to make. Some insults and things rebuking us are really clear and easy to understand (like "You got rocks for brains?"). But sometimes when we are being rebuked, corrected and someone is reaching out to us, we just don't get it right away. That's the case with Jesus and the Pharisees here today.

Jesus gives this whole long description of what life was like for the sheep in the pen and the shepherd coming in and the importance of the gate and the gatekeeper and all of those things. I would think the Pharisees are going "Okay, what does this have to do with anything? You're just talking about shepherds. Shepherds are the bottom of the rung of society. Why are you talking to us about shepherds?" But really, He is slapping them across the face when He says "I am the gate. Anyone that doesn't enter by the gate is a thief or a robber." I wonder if their necks got red in the second paragraph of what I read to you when He looked straight at them and says "I am the gate. If you don't enter through me, you are here to rob and destroy." I wonder if they go it. I have to believe they did.

If you look at the context in which Jesus gives us this statement **"...I am the gate..."** later in [John 10](#) He goes on to **"I am the good shepherd"** right after where I stopped reading. He says "Not only am I the gate, I am the good shepherd and anyone that

wants to be an under-shepherd is going to enter through the gate, which is me." That's the point He is making in what we're looking at today.

But right before this in [Chapter 9](#), Jesus had healed someone that was born blind. He did it and the Pharisees and the leaders of the Jewish people had come to this man and questioned him all about it. They asked him what he thought about Jesus, who had healed him. He said, "I think He's from God because He did this." They said "Who are you to lecture us? You were born in sin. That's why you were born blind." Then they kicked him out of the temple and said he couldn't come back. Jesus comes to them and says "You think you have sight? You guys are the ones that are blind. You are the blind trying to lead the people that don't know, and you're leading them away from the truth." Then He starts with "I am the gate." He uses this picture of sheep and shepherd. I have never been a shepherd or real sheep. My flock is a little different. But the picture is pretty easy to understand.

There is a sheep pen and the walls were high enough to keep out predators to protect the sheep. Every night all the different shepherds in that area would bring their sheep in. Then the gatekeeper closed the gate and they would be safe through the night. In the morning the shepherd would come back in, stand in the middle of all the sheep of all the different shepherds and call out. His sheep would know his voice and follow him. He would lead them out to pasture, feed them, protect them, and take care of them during the day. The sheep knew the shepherd's voice. They wouldn't follow one of the other shepherds because that wasn't their shepherd. They would follow the one who came in through the gate. If someone came in over the wall, they were there to rob and destroy. It's a pretty easy picture to understand.

The Pharisees heard this and didn't think much of it. So Jesus looks right at them and says "I am the gate. Anyone that comes in except through me and tries to shepherd God's people, except through me, by connecting them to me, by saying 'I am the Messiah,' by proclaiming how I am the fulfillment of the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, they are thieves and robbers and they are only there kill and destroy." They had to understand that He was talking about them.

It had to hurt. It had to sting because they were the good, Godly people of the day. They were the ones that everyone would look at and say "These are the people that are closer to God. Look at all they are doing." And Jesus comes along and says "You guys got nothing right because you don't focus on me. You're trying to enter in through your own works. You are trying to enter in through your own teachings. You're trying to lead the sheep with everything except by pointing them to me."

This is where God's people were failed by their leaders. They didn't point them to Jesus. In many places today, I suppose the same thing still happens. There are plenty of under-shepherds of the Good Shepherd today that don't enter through the gate. They

talk about a lot of things of the here and now but don't talk about the most important thing, the things of eternity. Many people fail to shepherd God's people the way God would want them to.

The thing in this reading that really strikes me isn't God's rebuke to the Pharisees. I would hope we understand we aren't the Pharisees even though at times we might fall into some of their traps. Sometimes we can become kind of arrogant and think we're better than others because we have this purity of God's Word and we forget that it's just by the grace of God that we have it. It's nothing about us. The part of this text that frightens me is where Jesus says "My sheep listen to my voice. They'll never follow a different voice." Do you ever follow someone's voice besides Jesus' voice? Do you ever follow your own voice about what is right and what is wrong instead of what God says is right and wrong? Do you ever follow society's voice about what your priorities in life should be and not Jesus's voice? That gets a little scary, doesn't it?

There isn't a single one of us here that at times have ignored the voice of our Good Shepherd, Jesus, and we haven't gone through the gate. We've gone through our own thoughts, our own attitudes, and our own approaches to life. Sometimes we maybe stand shoulder to shoulder with the Pharisees and don't listen to Jesus' voice and that it's all about Him. We think somehow it's about us and we're doing all of this for God and He should love us more than He loves someone else because "Look at all that I am doing for Him. Of course He loves me more." No, He loves us because Jesus lived and died for Him, not because of me. Yet we can mess that up. Or we can mess it up by being more shaped by the culture around us, by society around us, or by our fears about society around us than we are by the Word of God, because that's our Shepherd's voice. The Shepherd speaks to us through His Word.

Sometimes we think we know it all, but we get shaped in our approaches and our attitudes towards what is really important by the world around us. The world around us elevates things above God; themselves, their spouse, their children. Sometimes we do the same thing. We ignore the Shepherd's voice and we listen to the world's voice. Any time we are doing this, we sin. When God looks at me and says "My sheep always listen to my voice" and I know that I don't, I find that a little scary.

If you are scared, I'd really encourage you to go home and read the rest of [John 10](#) because right after this, He talks about how He is the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. Jesus is not only the Gate. He is also the Good Shepherd. He knows that we are sheep that are going to stray. He knows that we aren't going to be perfect and holy. That's why He was perfect and holy in our place. He knows that He had to pay for the sins that we commit. So all those times when we have listened to someone else, some other voice, our own or society's voice or whatever the case may be, Christ was perfect in our place. Christ took away that sin. And God gave us the gift of faith. As we are His elect, we will listen to His voice. We'll come back

to that voice even if at times we have strayed. This is the confidence that we have. It's all about Jesus. It's not about us. It's not about how good we listen to His voice, how well we listen to His voice, how often we listen to His voice. It's that we are connected to Him.

Then, as His sheep, we spend a lot of time trying to keep other people connected to Him because, in a sense, every one of us is an under-shepherd who is our brothers' keeper. Every one of us works not only to connect our own children to Jesus but one another to Jesus and keep them connected to Jesus. We are the shepherds that are to enter through the Gate and keep pointing people to Jesus. That's what He has called us to do. That is what He has privileged us to do. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.