

Why All the Doors?

4th Sun. of Easter – 04/30/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 10:1-10 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 7, [Jesus says,] **“Truly, truly, I say to you, I Am the door of the sheep.”**

v. 9, **“I Am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved...”**.

Introduction

✘ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ Door, doors and more doors! Doors have been kind of at the forefront of things here at Mt. Calvary; least if you're on the board of Trustees, or a person who needs access to the church in the middle of the week – and especially for those like Tracy and myself who think of this building a bit like our second home.

→ Over the years, as the old doors have rattled in the wind, and we've dealt with one or another of the 10 outside doors not working or not locking properly, I've asked myself many times, “Why all the doors?” I mean after all, you can only go in or out of one door at a time. So why so many?

✘ And a casual observer of today's Gospel Reading from John, chapter 10, might ask the same thing. In just the ten verses before us this morning there really is a remarkable amount of repetition.

→ Four times, Jesus uses the word “door”, not counting the additional time that He uses the word “doorkeeper” (though the translation in our bulletin says “gatekeeper” in verse three). Twice Jesus connects Himself to Yahweh as the great “I AM” (vv.7&9). And twice He grabs our attention by saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you...” (vv.1&7).

✘ Whenever we are reading the Bible and we come across repetition like this, it's God's way, both in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament, of grabbing our attention. It's the same as if He were to say, “Perk up” or “Listen carefully – What I am saying here is VERY important for ALL of you to hear!”

→ So when Jesus uses as much repetition as He has here in this Reading – folks, it means that what He's got for us today is at the top of the list of important things for us to know as His sheep! Our very salvation friends, depends upon it.

I. The Shepherd is The Door!

✘ As we come to this text, Jesus is in the midst of an interaction with a group of Pharisees who have just tried to discount Jesus as a false teacher, calling Him “a sinner” (9:25) and discounting the fact that He had just given sight to a man who was born blind.

→ And so Jesus responds to these Pharisees who believe that they are the true “shepherds” of God's people; that the only way to be made right in God's eyes was to follow all of their rules and obey them in everything.

✘ In order to point out how truly off-base these Jewish leaders really are, Jesus grabs their attention with repetition. He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you...” (v.1). In the Greek it literally is, “Amen, Amen...” or “So it is, so it is...”.

→ And now that He has their attention Jesus wastes no time in showing how important it is to pay attention to all of the doors. I mean, doors exist for a reason, whether we're talking about our church building here or the sheep pen in Jesus' illustration.

- A sheep pen in that region is generally a square stone enclosure with only one door! More than one flock of sheep would often be kept in the sheep pen overnight. Its sole purpose though is for protection; protection from wild animals like wolves, and protection from robbers and thieves who want the sheep only for their own selfish gain.
- ✘ The fact that there is only one door to the sheep pen means that it only takes one shepherd to guard and protect the sheep. And now Jesus speaks very pointedly to these Pharisees and Jewish leaders, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber” (v.1).
- You can’t get any clearer about what Jesus is saying. Those who currently believe themselves to be the leaders of God’s church – the Pharisees, Sadducees and Jewish council – Jesus says that they are deceptively “stealing” God’s sheep! They are not using the one and only, God-ordained “door” to access the hearts and minds and souls of God’s people – but instead they are doing it all wrong; stealing souls and spiritually harming souls through their aggressive and dishonest teachings and practices.
- ✘ And what about the door? Verse two says, “But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” Even more dramatically, Jesus grabs the Jews attention with His second “Truly, truly...” and says in verse seven, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep”; the door which the Jews have rejected and labeled as a heretic!
- Do you know why Jesus is the only door to God’s heavenly sheepfold? Well, consider all of the doors connected to Jesus.
- First, as the second person in the Holy Trinity, God the Son, Jesus went out of the door of His Father’s house. He left that heavenly home to be born in human flesh, in a lowly stable; to live perfectly without sin; to die and rise again for your sake and mine; for our salvation (v.9).
- Second, He had the door slammed in His face, on the cross; by His heavenly Father no less! It’s then that He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mat. 27:46). And Jesus pounded on that door until His knuckles; until His entire body was bloody, red and raw. But the Father did what He must do in the face of sin – which His Son had become, taking all of mankind’s sins upon Himself. The Father cannot allow sin to corrupt His perfection, so He closed the door to His Son and allowed Him to be crucified and punished for the entire world’s transgressions. It’s there, at that point on the cross, that Jesus endured all of the tortures of hell so that you and I would not be required to do so; so that we can now look forward to the blessings of heaven.
- Third, as if that was not enough, Jesus then went through the door of death as He said, “It is finished,’ ...bowed His head and gave up His spirit” (Jn. 19:30) and died.
- But that was not the end of all the doors for Jesus was it? All glory be to God, Jesus came out of the door of death on the third day, having conquered death and hell; having put Satan and sin in their place once and for all. He was raised in all of His Divine glory and might as our eternal Victor and Savior! Yes, by going through that door and coming out again, Jesus is now your door and my door – the one and only door to the heavenly pasture that Psalm 23:2 promises; where my Shepherd “makes me lie down in green pastures”.
- ✘ Verse three shows us of our Shepherd’s deep concern for each and every one of His beloved sheep. It says He calls His sheep “by name”. Folks, to Jesus we are so much more than just a number, lost in an endless sea of sheep. You are not an anonymous digit to Jesus. He gave His life for you... and you!
- At your baptism your Shepherd called you by name when He forever placed His Holy name upon you with the sign of His cross upon your forehead and upon your heart!

→ Why does He call you? Is it so that He can give you a stern lecture about sin; so that He can give you a spanking for straying to pursue your own selfish desires? Isaiah 53:6 even says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way”. But then it quickly continues, “and Yahweh has laid on Him (that’s Jesus) the iniquity of us all.”

→ Jesus calls you and me and all of His beloved sheep in our Baptism in order to lead us out of the door that binds sinful souls to Satan, hell, death and sin. 1 Peter 2:25 says, “For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” The verb in the original Greek of that verse is a “passive” verb that means all of the work of returning has been done to us, and for us! Jesus has called us out of death and hell and He has returned us to Himself for life and salvation. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

⊗ And all of this is not so that we will be His slaves; not so that He can Lord it over us with oppressive laws as the Jewish leaders did by dictating over the people of Israel at the time of this text.

→ No, our Good Shepherd doesn’t come to get things out of us. He comes to give; to give His life, as verse 10 says, so that we “may have life and have it abundantly.” In John 14:19 Jesus said, “Because I live, you also will live.”

II. We the Sheep

⊗ So, now that Jesus has given us this incredible, undeserved gift of life under His loving and protective and abundant care as our Shepherd, what about us? What does life look like in the sheepfold of Jesus; in the one Holy Christian Church?

→ Well, verse four says, “When He has brought out all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.” Did you notice? The sheep are not tied to a leash; not being whipped into submission. No, we “follow” Jesus with eagerness and joy. The only thing we want is to be in His presence and to hear His comforting and loving voice! It says that we “know” His voice; the one that promises and assures us all, “I died for you! I rose for you! Your sins are now forgiven and gone. Follow Me for “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” – the one and only Door – “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” That’s Jesus’ *recorded Word* in John 14:6 of His Holy Scripture.

→ And we hear Jesus’ *spoken Word*; His own voice as the Divine Service begins and Jesus’ under-shepherd, the humble pastor, becomes Jesus’ voice, “As a called and ordained servant of the Word, ... and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

→ Oh, the Good Shepherd is so generous and free with His love that He gives us His *visible Word* as well. He feeds us with the feast of His abundant grace in Holy Communion when He says, “Take eat, this is My Body which is given for you. ... Drink of it all of you, this is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” This voice of our Shepherd is His promise; His foretaste of the feast to come that Psalm 23:5 speaks of, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

⊗ Yes we “follow” the Shepherd wherever He leads, which includes in and out of the doors that He has gone on our behalf. These are the “still waters” of Psalm 23:2; the waters of our baptism.

→ For in baptism, Jesus takes our old sin-filled souls down and through the door of sin, death and hell – drowning that sinful man/woman every day, and once and for all! And in the same waters of grace He leads us back up and through the door where He makes us a new man/woman; blessed with the gift of new life; a life no longer bound or dominated by our fleshly

desires to live just for ourselves, but to listen to and follow Jesus in a life that serves Him in sharing His Word of truth and serving all people with His never-ending and unconditional love.

Conclusion

✘ This then is Jesus' lesson on "The Good Shepherd" who is the only Door; His lesson also of His sheep. This is the story of our lives as Christian sheep; following Jesus through the various doors – yes, that means the doors of trial and tribulation, even grief and pain, knowing all the while that our Shepherd is with us; strengthening us, comforting us, even holding us in His arms. And also leading us through the doors of great joy and relief; of healing and restoration as He showers us with His grace and gives us, as Revelation 21:6 promises, the eternal joy and privilege of drinking "from the spring of the water of life without payment."

➔ Yes, this is your life today dear Christian; life with the Good Shepherd who alone is the Door to abundant (v.10) and eternal life, because Jesus Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!* Amen.