

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

26th April 2026

John 10:1 “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. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

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

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The Good Shepherd discourse or meditation is found only in John 10:1-21. It is the nearest thing to a parable in this Gospel. Today we hear the first part of this speech, which portrays Jesus as the point of entry, the shepherd and the door. In the first presentation, it is offered in the third person, while in the second, the writer uses the first person.

KIND OF WRITING

Our text is part of John’s Gospel, which means that the words placed on the lips of Jesus are the fruit of profound meditation and spiritual insight. The writer proceeds often in a spiral so to speak, stating a theme, bringing it forward, restating the theme with the new “freight” and so on. The writing is poetic, contemplative, apparently simple, powerful.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

In the nomadic world of the ancient Middle East, the shepherd had a different role in relation to his flock than would have been typical in our own country. The sheep were never left alone on a hillside and the shepherd, as is well-known, led rather than drove his sheep. Furthermore, it was his task to find water and pasture and to ensure safety. Because of these roles, the figure of the shepherd was used to express the duties of a ruler, as pastor of his people. The king, just like the shepherd, has to ensure safety and nourishment. In the wider Middle East, a further step was taken: just as God was called a king, likewise, even outside the bible, shepherd was used for (the) God(s).

Thought for the day

What is distinctive about our faith as Christians? We do not believe in a system of ideas or even in a higher ethics: we believe in a person, who gives life “a new horizon and a decisive direction” (Benedict XVI). John’s Gospel makes this clear with its great I am sentences, one of which we hear today: “I am the gate.”

Naturally, we think the gate to what? The gate to life to the full. The risk today is to set our expectations low, to be happy with less. But the Gospel calls not to be half alive, but to be fully alive. Let us enter by the gate himself, because the gate to life is always open.

KIERAN O’MAHONY OSA - www.tarsus.ie

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. In the Middle East, it was the task of the shepherd to find water and pasture and to ensure safety. In your life who have been the people who nourished you and gave you security? For whom have you done this?
2. Important to the shepherd’s ability to give security to the sheep is the fact that he was known and familiar to them. They recognised his voice. Does this resonate in any way with your experience?
3. We are familiar with the image of Jesus as the shepherd. The image of Jesus as the door (or gate) is not so familiar but is one that merits attention. Jesus presents himself as the door through which we pass and find life. What are the doors through which you have passed and found life: a situation, a place, a book, an experience, a person? For whom have you been a door to a richer life?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - Intercom

GENERAL COMMENTS

Shepherd is one of the biblical titles for a leader, a memory of the days when the Jews were sheep rearing nomads. The passage therefore invites us to celebrate people who have “shepherded” us by touching our lives, some through direct contact, others from reading about them or hearing their stories.

We remember, too, great world leaders, in modern times or in the past, and recognise that they were the presence of Jesus in the world, “shepherding” the human family.

The passage can also be an examination of conscience on how we are fulfilling our vocation as parent, teacher, guide, friend, or leader in the church community.

Actually, the shepherd theme (or “parable”, as it is called in verse 6) is only in verses 1 to 5. In verses 7 to 10 Jesus speaks of himself as “the gate”.

The special characteristic of good shepherds is brought out in the passage in the relationship of trust between them and the sheep. They are trusting and in turn they inspire trust in those whom they lead. This wonderful quality – so rare in our experience – is expressed in a series of images, each of which can touch us deeply.

The shepherds “enter the sheepfold through the gate”, they are not devious; they “call the sheep by name” – no haranguing; they “go ahead of the sheep” – no looking back to see if they are being followed. The sheep “know the voice” of the shepherd; their relationship is almost instinctive, of the heart.

The image of the gate is not as well known as that of the shepherd and is more difficult to enter into, but if we make the effort it can be very touching. Leaders who are like a gate are the opposite of possessive; they are content to be the humble instruments through which others can “go freely in and out”, making their own way to “life to the full”. A wonderful picture indeed of great parents, teachers, community leaders and friends.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels

JESUS, THE GATE

Among the images for Jesus, this is one that is almost forgotten and nevertheless has deep significance. *I am the door*. This is what Jesus is, an open door. Whoever follows him crosses a threshold that leads to a new world: a new way of understanding and living life.

The evangelist explains it with three details. First, “*Whoever enters through me will be saved*”. There are many options in life. Not all lead to success or guarantee a full life. Whoever has some understanding of Jesus and tries to follow him enters through the right door. They will not lose their lives; they will save them.

The evangelist then says something more. Whoever enters through Jesus can “*come and go*”. They are free to move around. They enter a space where they can be free, for they are guided only by the Spirit of Jesus. It is not the land of anarchy, or licentious freedom. They come and go, always passing through that door that is Jesus and follow his footsteps.

The evangelist adds another detail: whoever enters through that door that is Jesus will “*find pasture*”. They will not hunger or thirst. They will find solid and abundant nourishment to live on. Christ is the door through which we Christians must enter today if we wish to revive our identity. A Christianity made up of Christians who relate to a badly known, vaguely remembered Jesus, occasionally acknowledged in a theoretical way, a dumb Jesus with nothing to say to today’s world, a Jesus who does not touch our heart, is Christianity without a future.

Each one of us can, in the coming years, contribute to a church in which Jesus is experienced and lived in a more zealous and passionate way. We can create a church more like the one Jesus wanted.

JOSE A PAGOLA - Following in the Footsteps of Jesus

As Christ is shepherd to us, we are called to be shepherds to others. We do not help anyone by engaging in ‘saviourism’, whereby we swoop in and try to ‘make a difference’ without getting to know the people we wish to support or what is really needed. It is far more meaningful to develop close bonds over time, like a good shepherd. Pope Francis invites us to ‘go out of ourselves’, to go beyond our own boundaries and be present to people, to really get to know each other and build friendship, to lift each other up. The ‘abundant life’ is an ongoing process of walking together, working together, learning to trust one another - maybe stumbling or making mistakes, but always working to live in harmony. As followers of the Good Shepherd, we live so that all may ‘have life and have it abundantly’.

What does the expression ‘abundant life’ conjure up for you? When do you feel most alive, joyful, energised, in tune with the universe and with God? Reflect this week also on how you might live this ‘abundant life’ in community.

Jesus the Good Shepherd wants to speak to our hearts. How do we seek to hear Jesus’ voice? What obstacles in your life might prevent you from hearing it?

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper