

Sermon: The Gateway to Abundance
Text: John 10:1-10
Date: April 13, 2008 AM
Place: Jesup First UMC

I know nothing like this has ever happened to you, but I had a senior moment this week. After I left the hospital, I stopped at the mall in Savannah to pick up something for Charlotte. And on my way out, I came to the door, you know, the doors that swing open. And like everybody else, I was flying. I was in a hurry to get out and I hit the door, except the door didn't move. So I backed up and hit it again, but the door didn't move. And that's when I realized something ... it wasn't a door! I was pushing on the glass, trying to get out, but I wasn't pushing at the door!

Now, it would seem to me that if you're on the outside and you want to get in, the best way to do that is to go through the door. And if you're on the inside, wanting to get out, the best way to do that is to go through the door. But there are people ... people like me ...

In our text this morning, Jesus said: "*I am the gate*" or "*I am the door*." Have you ever noticed how many doors or gates there are all around you? If you want to get on an airplane, you've got to go through the gate. If you want to go into a ball game, you have to go through the gate. If you want to go inside or from one room to another, you have to go through the door. Jesus said: "*I am the gate*."

Now to fully understand what Jesus is saying here, you have to understand sheep farming. Shepherds have a full time job. They lived in the fields with their sheep. They led them from one pasture to another pasture during the day and then at night, they built sheepfolds. Now, these weren't fancy corrals like the cattle ranchers out west. They were simple, sometimes built out of bushes or branches or rocks, just enough to keep the sheep together and keep them from wandering off during the night.

Now, the shepherd had a close relationship with the flock. Usually, the flock was small and the shepherd knew each of the sheep. Sometimes, he gave them pet names and the sheep became so familiar the shepherd that they would respond to his voice and nobody else's.

Well, at night, after the sheep were safely inside the sheepfold, the shepherd became the gate. He would lie down in the opening to the fold so that nothing could go in or out without him knowing about it. This is the context for Jesus' statements in our scripture this morning. He said: "*I am the gate*."

Now, what does that mean? What does it mean that Jesus is the gate? What is He the gate to?

1. JESUS IS THE GATEWAY TO SALVATION!

Now, I know that sounds a little exclusive. I know that isn't the popular wisdom of the day. I know that isn't the message that you've been

hearing on the Oprah Winfrey Show. But the Bible says humanity is lost. Paul said: "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Isaiah said: "All we like sheep have gone astray." And the Bible also says that we have a Good Shepherd who searches diligently for lost sheep. In fact, His love for us is so great that He leaves the 99 sheep who are safe and secure and comes looking for His lost sheep. He is the gateway to salvation.

Verse 9 says, "I am the gate; whoever comes in by me will be saved." Later on in the gospel of John, Jesus will say: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me."

But there has to be a better way, doesn't there? I mean, can't we be saved by *being* good? There are some who honestly believe that you can be saved just by being good enough. But the bible says: "No one is good, except the Father." You see, God is the standard for goodness and without His help, without His work in our lives, you and I can't be good enough. We cannot be saved by being good?

Well, then, can't we be saved by *doing* good? Maybe if I feed the hungry or clothe the naked, maybe if I give enough money to the Church or teach enough Sunday School classes, then God will see my good works and say, "Come on in." Nope! Acts 4 says: "There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved."

Paul said: "By grace are you saved through faith." He is the gateway to salvation.

2. JESUS IS THE GATEWAY TO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

One of the descriptions the New Testament uses for the Church is "the flock." In Luke 12:32, Jesus said: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." The Church is the flock and Jesus is the gate, the only way into the Church. You see, the same Jesus whose death reconciles us to God, also brings reconciliation between people. 1 John 1 says: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another."

You know, I believe the Church is the most incredible thing in the world. Some people think the Church is a business, but the Bible says it's a family. Some people think the Church is an institution, but the Bible says it's a flock. Some people think the Church is an organization, but the Bible says it's an organism, a living, breathing gathering of people for worship, for fellowship, for discipleship, for ministry, and for evangelism.

It's better than the United Nations, because it is the place where people from every nation, tribe, and tongue are united as one family. Within God's sheepfold, we rub elbows with the short and the tall, the plump and the thin, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have nots, as

equals because we all come into the sheepfold the same way, through the gate. The ground is always level at the foot of the cross.

But Jesus gives us a warning in these verses. According to Jesus, there are some who try to enter the flock by another way. He said: *“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.”*

Jesus is the gateway to the family of God!

3. JESUS IS THE GATEWAY TO ABUNDANT LIFE.

Verse 9 says: *“I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”* Jesus is the gateway to abundant life.

Now, we need to be careful when we talk about abundant life, because some people have the wrong idea about abundant life. They think that just because they accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then they are going to driving around town in a new car; they’ll move into a new house tomorrow; or they’ll suddenly receive a check in the mail.

You see, it’s tempting to think about abundant life that way because that’s the way the world thinks about abundant life. But the Bible doesn’t necessarily promise us comfort; sometimes Christians endure hardships. The Bible doesn’t necessarily promise us wealth; sometimes Christians endure poverty. And the Bible doesn’t promise us a home in the finest part of time; sometimes Christians go through foreclosure.

You see, when Jesus talked about abundant life, He was referring to the things of God, spiritual things, like a deepening intimacy with God, the certainty of God’s presence, God’s power working within us and through us, joy unspeakable and full of glory, a peace that passes all understanding, forgiveness of our sins, and a love that cannot be measured.

You see, **knowing God is life.** Jesus said: *“This is life: to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* **And having God dwell within us is life.** The New Testament says we were dead in our trespasses and sin, until God’s Spirit came to dwell within us. **And having God meet our needs is life.** Jesus said: *“Those who enter through the gate ... will go in and out and find pasture.”* The pasture is the place where the Shepherd leads His sheep to meet their needs. He leads them beside the still waters ... He *“supplies all of their needs according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus our Lord.”* And having God protect us is life. The shepherd protects His sheep. He places them in the sheepfold to keep them safe; He stands guard as the gate so that predators don’t get in and the sheep don’t wander off. The Psalmist said: *“He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you will find refuge.”* That’s life.

Jesus is the gateway to abundant life.

One day a pastor took a tour of the holy land and he decided to get off of the tour for a while and take his own private tour. So, as he was traveling along, he came upon a shepherd tending his sheep. So he asked the man, "*What are you doing?*" And the shepherd said: "*I'm building a shelter for my sheep to spend the night.*" And the pastor said: "*Okay, but where is the gate?*" And the shepherd said: "*I am the gate. No sheep goes out and no danger gets in unless it comes past me.*"

And Jesus said: "**I am the gate.**" I am the gateway to salvation; I am the gateway to the family of God; and I am the gateway to abundant life. The only question is: Have you entered in through the gate?