

Sun., April 14: Sixth Sunday of Lent, Palm/Passion Sunday

Message: Thresholds #7: Gate of Sacrifice

Scripture: John 10:1-18

Memory Verse: John 3:16 [From Echo]

Blurb: This Sunday is Palm Sunday! We will wave palm branches in worship as a way for us to join the parade that greeted Jesus when He came into Jerusalem. It will be fun for the whole family! Yet there are dark clouds overhead: there's a "storm" of betrayal and condemnation looming. Jesus, whom we greet with praise, will be crucified by Friday. Our service will also have this mixed message. We'll hear how Jesus is the Gate to life and peace for us, His sheep, but we'll also hear how Jesus earns this for us by laying down His life for His sheep. Come join the parade this Sunday, but also notice the threatening clouds overhead.

Call to Worship: *Cover the Earth* -Andrew

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse:

"God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him won't perish but will have eternal life." -John 3:16

Worship Music: - Sanctify

Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)

Waving of the palms.

Only King Forever

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Offering: *Lift Up Your Heads* - Sanctify

Serve Moment:

Video: Soap delivery!

Easter Offering: Feed My Starving Children Forest Lake Mobile Pack at Hosanna Lutheran Church, April 25-27.

Love Moment:

Easter Prayer Vigil. - Amanda

Grow Moment:

Red Rock Camp Sign-up - Cassi

Kid's Moment: -Andrew

Prayers: -Andrew

Message Bumper

Message: Thresholds #7: Gate of Sacrifice

PP#1: Thresholds: The Story of the Bible, the Story of Salvation
Gate of Sacrifice

“I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture.” -John 10:9

Thresholds: The Story of the Bible, the Story of Salvation. Gate of Sacrifice. John 10:9, “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture.”

PP#2: *Collage of door images from previous slideshow: Garden of Eden, Ark, Passover, Temple.*

Images of thresholds throughout the Old Testament tell the story of God’s plan of salvation. Each one shows God working salvation for people, like how God frees the people from slavery in Egypt, redeems them through the Passover Lamb, and takes them to the Promised Land. Time and again we see God is a saving God, a redeeming God; it is what God does: His very character. As we place these thresholds one after another we see a promise that God is preparing for a major act to redeem people once and for all, to restore us to a close relationship with Him.

Then, in the New Testament, the images of thresholds and doors continue showing up, showing that Jesus is actually the Messiah through whom God will redeem all people.

When Jesus was preaching, He described two gates. The wide gate, that opens to the wide road of personal desires and self indulgence, does not lead to life. The narrow gate opens to a narrow, steep path of discipleship. It is the path of denial of our own selfishness, and brings life abundant and eternal. Salvation is following the right path.

Then, last week, we heard Jesus knocking on the doors of our hearts, asking to come in, but not just in, but rather asking to be the very center of our hearts. Salvation is inviting Jesus in.

And today, we hear Jesus talking about another threshold, which He calls the gate to the sheep pen or the sheepfold. Like before, this is a description of salvation. But this time, Jesus makes a shocking connection, and then uses this image to describe just how it is that He is our Savior.

PP#3: *Map of ancient Israel with only Nazareth, Capernaum, and Jerusalem identified.*

Turn to John 10. By now, Jesus has come to the south in Israel. He grew up in Nazareth, in the northern part of Israel called Galilee. When He started His public ministry, He moved to the village of Capernaum on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. That was His home base for three years. But now He has come south into Judah around the capital city of Jerusalem. His followers are nervous, because Jesus is not at all safe down there, like He was up in Galilee.

PP#4: *Image of Jesus teaching His disciples with Jerusalem in the background, and sheep, too.*

Jesus continues to tell them that He has come down on purpose, because He must fulfill His role as Messiah by dying in Jerusalem. But they just aren’t getting it. They want Him safe, to keep preaching and teaching and doing miracles, trying to win people’s hearts. Jesus, however, is now less

interested in winning their hearts and is more focused on solving the problem of sin in peoples' hearts.

So Jesus tries to explain it all again, this time using an analogy. He uses something common from everyday life and culture that they all understand, in order to try to teach them how He is to be the Savior. He says, "Think about sheep in a sheep pen. You know how sheep stealers hop the fence to snatch sheep? Well, it's different for the shepherd, isn't it. The shepherd comes right to the gate and calls his sheep out. Now, use this to think about God's people. God's people should follow the shepherd, the one who truly cares about the best interest of the sheep. He has spent time with them, proven that they can trust Him. They have come to know his voice, and can confidently follow it. The thief, that's a strange voice. And it certainly doesn't have the best interest of the sheep in mind!"

PP#5: John 10:1-18 (CEB)

"1 I assure you that whoever doesn't enter into the sheep pen through the gate but climbs over the wall is a thief and an outlaw. 2 The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. 5 They won't follow a stranger but will run away because they don't know the stranger's voice."

So, let's see how Jesus says this. John 10, starting with verse 1. "I assure you that whoever doesn't enter into the sheep pen through the gate but climbs over the wall is a thief and an outlaw. 2 The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. 5 They won't follow a stranger but will run away because they don't know the stranger's voice."

Jesus is just describing a common scene in that society, but there is loads of spiritual application. This is a great image for how things are supposed to be. God's people, like sheep, follow their Shepherd, hear His voice, know His voice, follow His leading. He leads them in and out, He provides for them, protects them, and all is good.

Do me a favor and remember verse two. "The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep." Innocent enough statement, right? But keep an eye on that one.

PP#6: John 10:1-18 (CEB)

6 Those who heard Jesus use this analogy didn't understand what He was saying. 7 So Jesus spoke again, "I assure you that I am the gate of the sheep. 8 All who came before me were thieves and outlaws, but the sheep didn't listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief enters only to steal, kill, and destroy. I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest."

Okay, great image, Jesus. But some of the folks there weren't making the connection. And so Jesus, probably with a little irritated huff and a slight shaking of His head, becomes direct. He lays out who's who. Now, pause a moment. I'm sure most of us have been envisioning Jesus as our Good Shepherd, right? I'm sure some of them were, too. Rabbis were often called shepherds. But here's the shocking revelation. Jesus identifies Himself as something else, first. Watch this. Verse 6,

“Those who heard Jesus use this analogy didn’t understand what He was saying. So Jesus spoke again, ‘I assure you that I am [. . .] *the gate of the sheep*. All who came before me were thieves and outlaws, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. *I am the gate*. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief enters only to steal, kill, and destroy. I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest.’”

Jesus’ surprising twist is also the next threshold in the story of salvation! “I am the gate!” Some versions say, “I am the door.” Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior. And He is the threshold to safety, to community, to wholeness, to full life. Church, this is a life verse for me. It’s one you’ve heard me say over and over again. Through Jesus is life, full and abundant. I think this is one of the most powerful ways to talk about Jesus, and the Gospel, to people today. People are seeking deep, full, abundant life. Our culture uses words like, “flourishing,” “thriving,” “being fully alive,” “living the adventure.” People today are hungering for abundant life. A couple hundred years ago, people were worried about fleeing hell. The Gospel spoke to them. Today people are worried about living fully. The Gospel speaks to us! Use this language to talk about Jesus! “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. . . . I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest.” That’s powerful!

PP#7: Image from <http://clgonline.org/wp-content/uploads/fold-stone.jpg>

Now, I need to you let go of our modern image of sheep pen. The Werner farm, the one my father grew up on, had a pasture with a wooden fence around it. There was a gate, with a latch, that closed the sheep in or let the sheep out. But this is not what a sheep pen was like back where Jesus was.

It was a stone wall, high enough to keep the sheep in and predators out. The gate was more of a gap in the wall, really. Translations that have Jesus say “I am the door,” are using imagery from a modern fence. Now, there may have been a barrier there to block the gateway, but most often *a person* just stood there. To “open the gate” meant to step aside and let sheep or shepherds through.

Now—this is important—when Jesus says He is the gate, He’s saying He’s the threshold, the way in and out. He’s not a door or a gate that swings. Doesn’t sound like it makes much difference, right? But hang on to this as we move forward into the next verses.

PP#8: John 10:1-18 (CEB)

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 When the hired hand sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away. That’s because he isn’t the shepherd; the sheep aren’t really his. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. 13 He’s only a hired hand and the sheep don’t matter to him.”

Now, Jesus switches images. Before He was the gateway, right? Here we go. Verse 11, “I am the good shepherd.” Ah, there it is, now. That’s what we were expecting. Jesus got there. But He started by saying He was the gateway for an important reason. Look at the next sentence. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. When the hired hand sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away. That’s because he isn’t the shepherd; the sheep aren’t really his. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. He’s only a hired hand and the sheep don’t matter to him.”

When Jesus says that as the Good Shepherd that He lays down His life for the sheep, He’s not just using a figure of speech that He dies for them. He’s using a metaphor.

PP#9: Top image from: <https://redeeminggod.com/sheep-not-of-this-sheepfold/>

You see, the shepherd would get the sheep into the pen, and then, especially at night, he would make his bed *across the gateway*. He would literally lie down across the threshold. Jesus here is trying to explain how He is the Savior. He is saying that He gives up His life for the sheep. He's the Good Shepherd who cares so deeply, is personally invested, in the sheep, that He's also the threshold to abundant life. How? By He, Himself laying down His life for the sheep. He will die on the cross, and He will be laid in a tomb, and being laid in a tomb is the way that Jesus becomes the gate, creates the threshold to full life, as *He lays down His life for the sheep*.

Do you see Jesus' image here? I don't know about you, but when I realized this, when I first grasped this, it gave me chills up my neck! This is powerful! This is good stuff! This'll preach!

Jesus keeps going! He's the Good Shepherd, and the relationship He has with His sheep is that deep, self-sacrificing love. The sheep, unlike with a hired hand, are His! We belong to Him. And He restores that personal, intimate relationship that we people have been missing, and craving!, since we lost paradise. Remember Adam and Eve used to walk with God and talk with Him in the cool of the day? The sheep know Jesus' voice. He knows us, and we can know Him. And Jesus includes us in that same, intimate and personal relationship that He has as God's child.

PP#10: John 10:1-18 (CEB)

14 "I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and they know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. I give up my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that don't belong to this sheep pen. I must lead them too. They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock, with one shepherd.

Verse 14, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and they know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. [See, the sheep are elevated to the relationship as God's child!] I give up my life for the sheep. [Jesus sacrifices Himself so we can have the life that Jesus has. Wow!] I have other sheep that don't belong to this sheep pen. I must lead them too. They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock, with one shepherd."

Here Jesus is talking about the Gentiles, the non-Jews. Jesus didn't come just to save the Chosen People of Israel. He is the savior of all God's people, Jew and Gentile. We are all one flock. Before, the Chosen People were the Jews. Now, because of Jesus, the Chosen People include all people. This has been God's plan all along. You and I, we are invited into the fold. We, too, can cross through the threshold created by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Now, remember, Jesus is down in Judah, in southern Israel. He's close to Jerusalem, and is getting ready to make His grand, public entrance into the city. He's teaching about His sacrifice as the Savior. Well, He does go in to the Temple for Hanukkah, but that's not His official public entrance. Then He's out in the countryside, but comes back to the suburbs and raises Lazarus from the dead. A couple of days later, He makes His official entrance into Jerusalem, with a procession amid all the fanfare and palm branch waving that we are celebrating today.

PP#11: John 10:1-18 (CEB)

17 "This is why the Father loves me: I give up my life so that I can take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I give it up because I want to. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it up again. I received this commandment from my Father."

But for Jesus, He was smiling and happy on the outside, but inside His heart was very heavy. He knew why He came. And He came voluntarily. Jesus forecasts this while talking about the sheep. Verse 17, perhaps He's envisioning the procession of palms into Jerusalem as He's saying this. "This is why the Father loves me: I give up my life so that I can take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I give it up because I want to. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it up again. I received this commandment from my Father."

I am not a victim. This is a choice I'm making. I am choosing to lay down my life for the sheep. I am in control, not those who think they are deciding my fate. They may order the crucifixion, but I choose it when I choose to go into the city. Death waits for me there, and I'm going in on purpose. I'm going in to lay down my life for the sheep. I will be raised again, "I have the right to take it up again," Jesus said. "And by this I will take their death upon myself and give them my life, and then I will destroy the grave when I am raised again on Easter."

PP#12: *Image of Jesus' triumphal entry, with people waving palms, as He is about to go through the city gate.*

So, Jesus slowly descends the slope from Bethany, crosses the valley just outside the city, and begins the ascent into the city. And do you know what's in front of Him? Imagine, the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by walls. How does He get in? He goes in through the Eastern, or Golden Gate of the city walls, the gate closest to the Temple. This is the threshold of salvation! Jesus chooses to cross the threshold, to fulfill all prophesy, to satisfy all the covenant, to pay the price for sin, and to become our Savior.

Do you remember what Jesus said back in verse two? I told you to remember. "The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep." Chills again! In the triumphal entry, with the waving of palm branches like we did today, Jesus acts out this proof that He is indeed the Great Shepherd! Jesus, riding a donkey, approaches the archway of the city gate. The guards let Him pass through. Can you see it? "The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice."

Jesus is acting out His own imagery. If He was a thief, a criminal, why did the guards let Him in? No, He was the Shepherd, eagerly received. He lays down His life, in the tomb, like we will hear about this Friday, and so creates the threshold to abundant life. And His sheep, who choose to follow Him, become His disciples, listen to His voice, follow Him. He calls them by name, and leads them out to full life.

PP#13: The Gate of Sacrifice

Place Yourself There with Jesus

Hosanna! [*"Hosanna" very large, centered, and with palm branches.*]

Today, I'm not going to give you the standard three life application points from this passage. Instead, take hold of our palm branch again, and today I want you to place yourself there, with Jesus. First, imagine sitting with Jesus as He is giving this explanation of how He is the Savior, using the image of a sheepfold. Listen to your heart yearn to be a sheep that knows His voice, that He calls by name, that belongs to Him. Do you feel that longing for abundant life that He describes? Be there with Him. Will you follow Him? Will you take Him as your Good Shepherd?

But then, also be there with Him as He is entering Jerusalem. Wave your palm branch as you join the procession. Hosanna! God saves! The Shepherd enters through the gate!

And at the moment He passes through the gate in the city walls, look closely, and you can see His face, just for a second, grimace with pain. He knows that He is the gate, and that He becomes the gate by laying down His life. The pain of the upcoming Friday briefly flashes across His face. The people shouting “Hosanna!” all too quickly shout, “Crucify Him!”

And, I want you to place yourself there, when Jesus lays down His life. Come back Friday at 7 p.m. and we’ll go to the cross with Jesus. Come be there as He is laid down in a tomb.

The Gate of Sacrifice. Place yourself there with Jesus. Hosanna!

Closing Song: *To Mock Your Reign, Oh Dearest Lord* -Sanctify

Memory Verse:

“God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him won’t perish but will have eternal life.” -John 3:16

Announcements: -David

Holy Week: Wednesday Echo, Good Friday, Prayer Vigil, Easter Sunrise, Easter Breakfast, Easter Escape Tomb, Easter Worship.

Declutter items in the Fellow Hall - Take some home!

Benediction: -David