

## May 3, 2020 Sermon

As I begin my sermon for this morning, I would to place our reading for today, John 10:1-10, within the larger narrative context of John's Gospel. John 10:1-10 is the beginning of Jesus' response to the miracle he just performed on the beggar man who was born blind. You remember the story of the blind beggar. One day, Jesus comes to town and notices a man born blind. Jesus stops and decides to heal him. It is probably one of the more memorable healing miracles in the Gospels because of how Jesus heals him. Jesus heals him by spitting on the ground and then rubs the mud on this blind beggar's eyes. After his healing, the man was brought before the city religious leaders and eventually thrown out of the synagogue because he wouldn't denounce Jesus. We get the wonderful and famous line in chapter 9, "All I know is, I was born blind and now I see." It's one of my favorite lines in all of scripture. I remind you of this context because our passage for this morning, John 10:1-10 is Jesus' response to that miracle story. With this passage put in its proper context, we can better understand what Jesus is talking about when he says that he is the gate and that he is the one who brings abundant life. The abundant life that Jesus promises to all of us in John 10:10 is the same abundant life that he just gave to the blind man in chapter 9. I want to take a few moments this morning and discuss what abundant life in Jesus Christ looks like. Specifically, I want to talk about how Jesus has come to show us a better way to live so that we all may live an abundant life. So, let us journey together through this passage, shall we?

Jesus came to show us a better way to live so that all may have an abundant life. Jesus' mission, according to John 10:10 is to bring an abundant life to everyone. Jesus also reminds us that he is the gate that opens wide for us to pass into that abundant life. Jesus showed us in the miracle of John 9, exactly what that abundant life will look like. As Rev. Karoline Lewis put it in her online commentary on this passage,

The man blind from birth is saved from isolation and marginalization. His healing saves him from everlasting darkness. Never again will he wonder where his next meal will be or who will answer his pleas as he sits begging outside the city. He will know the safety and security of community...For the disciples overhearing Jesus' words, that which is for the blind man is for every disciple, every believer. The basic needs of life, food, water, shelter, intimacy, Jesus affords, the tangible grace depicted in 1:18, at the bosom of the Father.

We are called by Jesus into a life of abundance and safety and security in Jesus' pasture, where God will provide us with all we need. Jesus is offering us that amazing grace that the blind man shouts about in chapter 9, "I was born blind, but now I see."

Notice this morning that Jesus does not call himself the gatekeeper, does he? Rather Jesus calls himself the gate. There is, rather obviously, a big difference between a gatekeeper and the gate itself. A gatekeeper opens and closes the gate. They decide who gets in and who gets out. They are like a club bouncer for the pasture and sheep. But Jesus isn't some sort of divine bouncer in this story, is he? He's the gate. He's the door. And what is the primary function of a gate or a door? They protect. The door allows people in while keeping out danger. It is the thing that allows people to enter into abundant life while keeping out those things that come to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus, in this passage, is that which keeps us safe.

Jesus opens his gate wide for people to come in, while keeping out those things that steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus ultimately protects us. We are welcome to come in and find peace and abundance of grace in the pastures. We sheep of Jesus are called to go out and invite others into the peaceful pastures. As Rev. Dr. David Lose writes,

"So might this be a time...to explode and expand our vision of abundant life. That abundant life isn't simply a promise about some distant eternal future,

but is a concrete invitation to discover life right now by extending it to those around us? That salvation isn't only the forgiveness of sin but also being commissioned by Jesus to help others experience abundant life in their settings? And that church isn't the place where we go to hear about abundant life, but the place that sends us out to experience and share it as we commit ourselves to the wellbeing of all God's children and, indeed, the world God loves so much?"

We have much work to do in order to create a place of abundant life for all people. In many ways small and large, our congregation is doing that already. By staying home on Sunday mornings, we are protecting our most vulnerable. By sharing our food with the food pantry, we are helping those who are struggling in this time to find peace through food. We have many ways to show the world God's abundant life. So, let us continue to show that abundant life through all we do. Amen.