

## April 30, 2023: Fourth Sunday of Easter

### **Main Idea: Familiarity and visions of love are the cornerstones of Jesus' promises for us as his followers.**

This passage is one of the stranger allegories used by Jesus—at this point in John, we are used to hearing Jesus use “I am” statements. I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, etc. And for the most part, these images make sense. But what are we supposed to do with Jesus saying he is a gate for the sheep? This is a very particular comparison where the rest are pretty universal. This is a very tangible metaphor where the rest are more abstract. Even Jesus' followers in this story are confused—what is he trying to say, exactly?

What's immediately clear in this passage is that Jesus is likening his listeners to the sheep in his mixed metaphor. And in doing so, he lifts up two major relational themes: first is familiarity and second is intent. In other words, Jesus is promising his followers two, central things. He promises safety and security in the very knowing of him—the same kind of safety and security that flocks of sheep know they have when they hear the voice of their shepherd. On top of that, he promises that, unlike thieves or bandits who would use other peoples' sheep as means to an end, he considers sheep to be an end, in and of themselves. He only ever wants good things and thriving for his followers—“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly,” he says.

A gate is a physical boundary that makes it clear to anyone walking by that these sheep belong to someone. They have been claimed and are being cared for and no one should try to mess with them. Jesus is a gate for us. Jesus is the boundary that lets the world know all of these things and more. Jesus is what unites us and what keeps us from growing too distant from one another. Jesus is explicit and intentional in our lives, and creates spaces where we can find safety, enjoy rest and do good work. A gate doesn't always keep unwanted things or people out of the pasture. But it is the foundational element of an environment and a community in which sheep can thrive.

### **Scripture Summary**

Jesus speaks to his followers and likens himself to the gate of a sheep pen. This metaphor lets them know what God promises them in Jesus—namely, safety and abundant life.





# GOD'S WORD for Today

April 30, 2023  
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## First Reading: Acts 2:42-47

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## Psalm: Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

<sup>3</sup>he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

## Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:19-25

<sup>19</sup>For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. <sup>21</sup>For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup>When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

## Gospel: John 10:1-10

**10** "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. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." <sup>6</sup>Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup>So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."