

5-14-23 (Mother's Day)

Sermon: Don't Forget the Gate

Scripture: John 10:1-10, CTW Psalm 23

Hymns: Chosen by PK and Ileana

Theme: Jesus does not want to have a distant and professional relationship with us. Jesus wants to be personally engaged in our lives from day to day, day in and day out. In our text today Jesus develops that thought using the familiar pastoral model to show us three things about the relationship.

I. What Do We Look For in a Relationship with Jesus?

Following Jesus is an everyday, day-in and day-out, relationship... and it's good!

A. Is it an Occasional/Professional Relationship?

Over the years I have been privileged to know and serve a lot of people. I hope my relationships have always been personal in nature... my hope is to be both friend and pastor.

However, by virtue of what I do, it is also professional. So one of the most challenging aspects of being a pastor is when my relationship with someone is pretty much defined as professional in nature.

Baptism relationship. Teaching relationship. Wedding relationship. Crisis relationship. Christmas relationship. Easter relationship. Funeral relationship. All encounters are defined as occasional events.

Another way to understand the difference between a personal relationship and a professional relationship is like that of a pet owner. You have a dog. You love your dog. You live with your

dog. You feed your dog. You sit in your recliner with your dog on your lap. You have a personal relationship with your dog.

Your pet's veterinarian on the other hand only sees your dog professionally and occasionally...

I think it is safe to say, "Jesus does not want to only have a professional relationship with us." Jesus wants to be personally engaged in our lives from day to day, day in and day out.

In our text today Jesus develops that thought using the pastoral model of a shepherd and his sheep.

II. Our relationship with Jesus is initially intended to be a saving relationship.

"...the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out." **John 10:1-5**

A. There are two different kinds of sheepfolds mentioned in our text today. The first is a communal fold in a town where all the shepherds brought their sheep back at night after a day of grazing in the countryside. The sheep were all held in that communal fold.

The shepherds knew their sheep and sheep knew their shepherds, in the morning each shepherd gave his whistle or call or whatever and each flock followed their respective shepherds from the fold.

In the second portion of our text Jesus spoke of another kind of sheepfold typically used during summer months... the open-country fold. The open-country fold was a crude enclosure. In the open country the shepherd would lead his flock through an opening into the enclosure.

The shepherd would then lie down and sleep across the opening to protect his sheep inside the fold from whatever might be threatening from outside the fold.

In the open-country sheepfold concept, Jesus is both the Shepherd of the Sheep and the Gate itself.

Understanding that the shepherd as also the gate becomes clear in **John 10:9** where Jesus said: "Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved..."

The teaching that the way of salvation is found only in Jesus is reinforced in **Acts 4:12** where the Apostle Peter, speaking of Jesus, taught, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

When Jesus was giving his teaching on the Shepherd and the Sheep he was speaking to an audience that had a vivid mental picture of what he was saying. They got it. It is even likely that as he was teaching he looked out over a valley and saw, here and there, flocks of grazing sheep.

While a sheep in the United States or England has a very bleak outlook in terms of life-expectancy because of their food value, a sheep in the Middle East may live a long and pampered sheep's life. They named their sheep. The shepherd and his family may think of their flock almost as family.

There was something of a relationship between the shepherd and his flock. The sheep recognized their shepherd. They recognized the shepherd's voice. They recognized their name when he called them. And one of the primary concerns of the shepherd was and is to keep his sheep safe.

The sheep recognize his voice and the shepherd calls his own sheep by name.

B. The question then is a simple one: Are you in a saving relationship with Jesus? Have you come in through the gate confessing faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior?

In addition to that concept of a shepherd, our relationship with Jesus is also intended to give us all a deep feeling of security.

III. It is a securing relationship.

“Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and find good pastures.” **John 10:9**

A. Jesus says that His sheep need not be afraid.

Fear of the darkness and fear of the Prince of Darkness and fear of being cast into outer darkness is sobering stuff... frightening stuff!

However, Jesus does not want for us to live our lives terrified of the going to hell much less the darkness. Jesus said, “Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and find good pastures.” **John 10:9**

In our relationship with Jesus we are both: saved and secure!

Jesus says of his sheep, “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me. For my Father has given them to me and he is more powerful than anyone else.” **John 10:28**

In **I John 5:11-13** we are assured: “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe so that you may know that you have eternal life.” If you have trusted Christ as your Savior you can be assured that you have eternal life.

B. The question here then is: Are you secure in your relationship with Jesus? John said “I have written these things to you who believe so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Our relationship with Jesus is intended to be a satisfying relationship, in all ways, meeting all our heartfelt desires which are consistent with His will and providential plan for our lives.

IV. Because of all this, it is to be a satisfying relationship.

“My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” **John 10:10.**

Jerry Seinfeld says, “Life is truly a ride. We’re all strapped in and no one can stop it. As you make each passage from youth to adulthood to maturity, sometimes you put your arms up and scream, sometimes you just hang onto the bar in front of you. But the ride is the thing. I think the most you can hope for at the end of life is that your hair’s messed up, you’re out of breath and you didn’t throw up.”

A. Life is something of a ride with all kinds of experiences...I don’t know about you but I see a lot of people who are working really hard at trying to find meaning and satisfaction in life. They are doing it in all kinds of ways and apparently no one can get enough of whatever it is they think they need.

I think one of the best commercials ever produced is the Wendy’s “Where’s the beef?” commercial. Remember that one? In the original clip there are three elderly ladies standing at a burger joint counter. Before them is an enormous hamburger bun. One of the ladies lifts the top of the bun to reveal a tiny beef patty which prompts one of the ladies to ask, “Where’s the beef?”

The three ladies at the counter were looking at a very satisfying looking bun. The sandwich had promise. It looked good on the outside but when they lifted the top of the bun they saw that inside... the burger was not satisfying at all. Such is life!

B. The world is full of people who outwardly look to have everything life can offer but inside they are not satisfied... they continue to ask, "Where's the beef?"

When we began this morning we spoke of how when we enter into a personal relationship with Jesus we become one of his sheep, so to speak.

He knows us. He knows our name. We are his. As his sheep we are secure in his care... nothing can separate us from his love.

And then Jesus says the outcome of being saved and loved is to then live out a satisfying life... an abundant life.

C. Does the term "Abundant Life" mean more stuff or more life?

Life more abundant means we have **more life!**

Life more abundant means we have a **more meaningful life!**

The dictionary defines abundance as "ample quantity, profusion, affluence and wealth." Abundance means more. Abundance means more money. Abundance means a better job, bigger house, etc.

Abundance also means health, a smooth sailing through life. After all "I am a child of the King and the King is rich so I should be rich too. God has power so I should have power too."

Life more abundant means we have a more quality filled.

Rewarding life... a meaningful life **now** and a forever life **then**.

When we follow Christ we are not just punching a time clock on a dull life. It means a "called out life". The bible says, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

I Corinthians 10:31

The bible says we are "the light of the world." The bible says we are "Christ's ambassadors." We are "children of God." So the question naturally becomes: Are you saved, secure and in a satisfying relationship with Jesus the Christ?

V. Concluding Thoughts: Words of Comfort to Live By!

A. Psalm 23 is a summation of what it means to live an abundant life now and an eternal life then, in the care of Jesus, The Good Shepherd.

Listen again to these timeless words that most accurately express the concept of a relationship with God:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. (Sheep will not drink from waters that are all stirred up and rushing by).

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (He has chosen our paths like a good shepherd should).

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (We all thing about death, but those in Christ should never fear it).

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. (We all face enemies and demons, but those in Christ never do that alone).

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Jesus says in my Father's house are many rooms, and I go there to prepare a place for you...)

Odds are this was a Psalm which your mother taught you years ago, and it still should give you the comfort which David expresses so eloquently.

Following Jesus is an everyday, day-in and day-out, saving, secure and satisfying relationship both now and forever... **and it's good!** Amen? Let Us Pray...