

Lectionary Readings: Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Sermon Title: *Doors Sunday?*

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of [our] heart[s] be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

Salutation: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:2)

Text: The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit comes to stir our hearts for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, also known as Good Shepherd Sunday, is from the Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 10th chapter.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, as you heard in the words of our Gospel Reading, it almost doesn't sound like Good Shepherd Sunday! It sounds more like "*Doors Sunday.*" Four times in only ten verses, Jesus uses the word "*Door.*" Four times! *Door. Door. Door! Door!* (Read verses: 1, 2, 7, and 9.)

So, if you just went by what Jesus says in the Gospel today, you might actually think it was Door Sunday. Now of course "*Doors Sunday*" isn't as catchy "*Good Shepherd Sunday.*"

I. Why am I making such a big deal out of this door thing? In Jesus' day the sheep were kept in a stone-walled, open-air pen with only one entrance. And only the shepherd had access through the gate/door to the sheep. Anyone finding another way in is up to no good. Since that person isn't a shepherd, he can't use the door. So, Jesus says the guy who doesn't use the door and gets into the sheep pen a different way is a thief or robber (v 1).

But, the One Who uses the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. So, in this discussion that Jesus has with the Jews, He uses a common Old Testament theme to illustrate Who He is. You see, they would certainly remember Psalm 23: "*The LORD is my Shepherd*" (v 1), as:

- The Shepherd Who loves and cares about the sheep.
- The Shepherd given to protect the sheep.
- The Shepherd Who'll even give up His life for the sheep.

And when the Pharisees didn't get it, He said to them again: "*I tell you the truth, I am the Door for the sheep. . . . I am the Door. If anyone comes in through Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture*" (vv 7, 9).

Yes, Jesus *is* the Door. You see, through the door of His holy life and bloody sacrifice on the cross, He opens the door for eternal life for you and me. Therefore, it's only through Him and Him alone that, we have heaven.

And, anyone who comes through the door, that is, who believes in Jesus, will be saved. For he or she who believe in Jesus will come and go and be nourished. The nourishment of the Good Shepherd is:

- A door dripping with water in Holy Baptism.
- And blood in His most Holy Meal through Whom you find good pasture.

For they are the very truths of the Gospel that give spiritual life and peace to your souls.

But outside of Him is the way the thieves and robbers play. What I mean by that is how the devil and the other false teachers of this world tempt us, to believe that our salvation and life and success are all really based on us picking ourselves up and improving our lives on our own. After all, Jesus has done His part, now it's up to us to do ours.

Really? Do this, do that, change this, change that, pray, work, and maybe God will count you worthy to be saved. And in all this "*you doing*" stuff, you make yourself the door. So, you're actually the one who, by what you do and don't do, determines if you're in the sheep pen or not. In other words, you're the door through which you get into heaven.

II. It sounds funny when I put it that way, doesn't it? Sounds weird. Now:

- You would never believe such false teaching.
- You wouldn't even listen to it.
- No, you don't listen to the hireling – the one who's in it only for the money.
- No, you will never follow anyone's voice other than that of your Shepherd.

And why not? Because you are the sheep. Now the Lord uses *that* word six times today in our Gospel Reading: *Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep.* (Read verses: 2, 3-2x, 4, 7, and 8.) The thought comes to mind, maybe it should be "*Sheep Sunday*"!

But seriously, you aren't just anyone's sheep. You're Jesus' sheep. You've heard His voice. You see, each of you is a sheep:

As each one of you is Jesus' sheep, you are each uniquely loved, particularly cared for, and led out to pasture by Him, even as He has called you by name. Even shepherds used to name their sheep, giving them pet names, special names for each one.

Now you might think all sheep look the same – that they're all white(ish), fuzzy, and go "*baaaaaah.*" But to the Lord, each one is unique:

- He gave you your name.
- He gave me my name.

And where do you think our Good Shepherd gave us our names?

- He names His sheep at the baptismal font.
- In the water and His name, we were tagged as His sheep.

Yes, your Lord Jesus is the Door for the sheep:

- He's the way into the sheep pen.
- He's the way out to green pasture.

And He's not just any door or anyone's door:

- He's your Door.
- He's your way into not just life on this earth, but life eternal.

So, as you are the sheep. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He lays down His life for you. That's the *Good News* of this day. Jesus says that hireling shepherds were anything but good or noble. When the wolves or thieves would show up, the shepherds had a choice between their lives and the sheep.

The hireling looks at it this way: "*Do I want to live and see my family, or do I want to protect these stupid sheep? I'm gonna go with my family.*" So as the hirelings bolted, the sheep were slaughtered.

III. You see, the hireling, the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The thief, the false teacher would draw you away. He would try to steal you. Therefore, to get you to trust in yourself and what you can do to lock down your green pastures by something that starts and ends with you and your work. But the only thing that you'll find behind that door is death.

But your Shepherd, *your Good Shepherd*:

- He gave up His life for you.
- He took upon Himself all the times that you live for yourself and not others.
- He died for all the times you try to make yourself the door.
- He rose again on the third day.

And so:

- You have life in His name.
- You have life in His Word, and water-and-Spirit Baptism.

And my dear friends in Christ, that life that goes on and on and on as long as He goes on and on and on – for eternity.

Yes indeed, you are His (own) sheep. And because you belong to Him:

- He goes before you, protects, guides you.
- He meets your enemies head-on and defeats them for you, as you face the trials and tribulations in your lives.

Certainly, during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, you can attest to the frustrations that come along with it. For example:

- We would like to see our churches filled. Especially now, during the season of Easter, giving thanks for Christ's victory over death and COVID-19.
- We want our normal lives back again.
- We want the economy to start humming along again.

But:

- What if the old normal isn't what God wants?
- What if the old normal isn't focused on the things of God but on the sinful flesh?
- What if God doesn't want us to return to the old normal of killing roughly 3,000 babies a day in abortion?
- What if God doesn't want us to return to the normal of being forced to use our public schools to indoctrinate our children in the LGBTQ+ agenda?
- What if God doesn't want us to return to the normal of sliding away from worship attendance and a commitment to the Church?

Remember the words of Jesus: "*A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came so that they will have life and have it overflowing in them*" (v 10).

So, how much better to ask God to work all things to the benefit of those who love Him. Even using the scourge of a pandemic to bring about repentance and faith – in this world, yes, but more importantly in you and me.

And so, then, as the baptized, in repentance and faith you follow Him, for you know His voice. Therefore:

- Don't listen to other voices that would tell you that you can make things better with God by doing, saying, and feeling the right things.
- Don't listen to the voices that say there are other ways into the sheep pen than through Jesus and Jesus alone.

Why not? Because you're Jesus' sheep:

- He isn't just a shepherd.
- He's your *Good Shepherd* Who lays down His life for you on the cross.
- He's the righteous sacrifice that makes you acceptable to God.

Conclusion: So, dear friends in Christ, what'll it be? Doors Sunday? Sheep Sunday? Nah, better than all of that is *Good Shepherd Sunday*. The Sunday when we celebrate that: JESUS IS OUR SHEPHERD, THE DOOR THROUGH WHOM WE HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY FORGIVEN, AS HE SUFFERED FOR YOU.

In the name of ✠ Jesus, Who forgives all your sins. Amen.

To God alone the Glory!