

I am the door of the Sheep

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Easter) is John 10:1-10. This text is Good Shepherd Sunday

In chapter nine a blind man receives both physical and spiritual sight: “Lord, I believe.” Proof that he heard the Good News and believed it is seen in his response: “He worshiped [Jesus]” (v 38). Instead of acknowledging this (double) miracle, the Pharisees, the Bible scholars and spiritual leaders of the day, show themselves to be the ones truly “blind” (cf. Mt 23:16). They epitomize the description of the false “shepherds of Israel” described by Ezekiel (ch 34) who “do not take care of the flock” (v 3). Ezekiel excoriates them because they “have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost”; they “have ruled them harshly and brutally” (v 4; also Jer 23:1–2; 50:6; Is 56:10–11).

Before all the door, sheep, and robber-talk, there is the attention-grabbing “Amen, amen, I say to you all” from Jesus. The objects of the *humin* are the Pharisees from 9:41, who think themselves to be able to see. Jesus is speaking the truth—double-amen truth. This double statement is found only in John (25 times). It is like a special heads-up. It says: “Pay attention to what I am about to say because it is very important.”

The “sheepfold” was a court surrounded by walls but open to the sky, and with only one entrance. The walls kept the sheep from wandering and protected them from wild animals.

The gate-keeper was a watchman who guarded the entrance to the sheep pen. He kept thieves and robbers out and away from the sheep. When it was time to go out to pasture the sheep recognized the voice of their own shepherd and responded only to him.

Shepherds in the Near East typically lead their flocks rather than drive them from behind; they draw the sheep by their word. Jesus saw that the Jews failed to understand, so He started again with a slightly different twist and a more direct application. Jesus compared himself to the gate that controlled access to the safety of the sheep pen. He alone provides access to eternal life.

“*All who came before me*” includes the Pharisees, Sadducees, temple authorities, and any unfaithful shepherds/leaders up to that very moment. Our world, too, has many false shepherds who by guile or force want to mislead us.

We have Jesus as our “door,” we can rest assured that he will lead us to everlasting rest in our eternal home. He gives us good shepherds in our pastors and teachers to continue to guide us in our faith life.

Prayer: My dear Shepherd, watch over me that I may never stray from you. Amen. (TLSB)

