



Hear the Word

from Pastor Sara H.S. Yoos

Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 7, 2017

John 10:1-10

Translation of "gate" can be *gate* and *door*¹

Almost always translated "gate" because it fits the pastoral imagery of this story with the sheep and pen

Anyone here is a shepherd... or spends much time around sheep... been through a door??

If ok with you, let's change that word "gate" to "door".

...But even that's not a whole lot better.

Because all I see when I picture Jesus as a door, is some giant, heavy door – with a big lock.

Time I was 3 and accidentally locked myself in my room. *And I had no idea how to unlock the door.*

If Jesus is a door, does that mean he is separating us from one another?

Is he bringing some people in and keeping some people out?
Do you need a special key or certain knowledge to get through?
Is Jesus just the *ticket to get to what's beyond*?

As a mission developer both here in South Bellevue and up in Bothell, those are the assumptions about Jesus I hear over and over again from people in the community who have either left the church or have never set foot in one.

Jesus as a door has really turned a lot of people away from churches.

Because it suggests that some people belong while others don't
and that you need to earn your way to get in.

While Lutheran theology tells us differently, many of our churches have been sending that same message too.

1 Karoline Lewis, *Commentary on John 10:1-10* (WorkingPreacher.org, May 11 2014) https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1993

Transfiguration Lutheran Church in South Bronx, whose doors serve as a metaphor...

After the neighborhood around the church started changing and crime escalated, the *doors that once swung open in hospitality were fitted with larger locks to keep danger on the outside, and the dwindling members retreated behind them.*²

When Heidi Neumark arrived as their new pastor, the first thing she noticed was the coat of fresh paint on the door. She wondered why they left the can in her office, until she came back the next day to find the door covered in graffiti.

And so began this pattern – paint – graffiti – repaint until re-painting the door became part of her regular pastoral duties.

We are the kind of sheep that *really love the safety and security* of being inside the sheep-pen.

I do this by being a home-body sheep. I love those rainy days I can use as an excuse to come home, shut the door, and bury my head in a good book or a movie.

When the sun came out this week, I decided to do some yard work instead. And it was *amazing* to reconnect with the neighbors I hadn't seen all winter!

Retreating to our sheep-pen is okay... once in a while, but staying behind closed doors *out of fear* or because *we become too comfortable* leads to disconnection.

Staying behind closed doors makes us easier targets for the thieves and the bandits who come to steal, kill, and destroy.

I don't know about you, but I'm tired of staying in the sheep-pen.

-staying isolated and alone.

-sheep-pens separating the haves and the have-nots.

- thieves and the bandits who come in escalating fear, disrupting peace, and sowing injustice.

-hiding behind closed doors.

It was when Pastor Heidi finally went out the church doors and spent time walking the streets that things started to change. She started meeting her neighbors.

- And one day, she gathered groups of teenagers and children together for art classes. They read Bible stories together and then drew those stories right on the door.
- At first, the members complained that it was messy and distracting. But the graffiti stopped, and all of a sudden the community started paying attention to the church again.
- If you travel to Transfiguration Lutheran Church in the South Bronx now, the first thing you'll notice are the doors. Which are spray painted with a bright, colorful mural.

Now, whenever I hear Jesus saying "I am the door" I picture those doors. Covered in splashes of paint. Probably a little messy. But warm and inviting.

2 Heidi B. Neumark, *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 7.

I picture a door that keeps me safe.

A door that is open wide.

A door that leads to forgiveness, freedom, grace, and new life.

After the resurrection, you remember the disciples stayed in the upper room behind closed doors.

They were afraid of what might happen if they ventured out on their own.

But when Jesus told them “I am the door”, he didn’t mean a locked door.

So Jesus came to the disciples, told them to stop being afraid, and sent them out into the world through a door opened wide.

When I was 3 and locked inside my bedroom, I never thought I’d make it out.

But when the door finally opened, and I saw my dad waiting on the other side, everything changed.

The fear was gone.

The doubt didn’t matter.

A parent with open arms is waiting through that open door.

Love is through that open door.

Hope is through that open door.

Life is through that open door.

You will know that you are loved and cared for when you walk through that open door.

So have courage and step through.

The door is open for us – **Jesus has risen for us!** so that we might have life, and have it abundantly.