**“Door to Abundant Life”**

Acts 2:42-47

1 Peter 2:19-25

John 10:1-10

 Easter 4

Hear the Good Shepherd Psalm, number 23: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

Christ **is risen!** He is **risen, indeed!** **Alleluia!**

Being at home, you miss the bulletin **covers**, the backside of which (for this week) I want to read to you:

“A group of shepherds from a small town in the country of Turkey were in charge of the town’s **one big flock of sheep**. While they were eating breakfast, a **strange thing happened**: **one** of the sheep of this huge flock took off and **jumped off a cliff**. **Amazingly**, what followed was that, one by one, **the remaining 1,500 sheep followed by jumping off the same cliff**. There were 450 sheep that perished. The rest survived the fall, but only because the bodies of the initial 450 sheep **provided a softer landing for the remaining 1,050 sheep on which to fall**.”

So here’s a story about the **stupid dead** … and the **stupid still-alive who would be dead if not for the numbing cushion of the dead bodies of the stupid dead upon which to land in the stupidity of the jump**.

Sheep follow leaders, and sometimes to their demise or into the depths of the stench of death. And **that’s** **human nature** **… we like sheep, not the brightest, and often desperate for the guidance of most any other** … mostly lazy enough to be caught-up in the “masses” of what’s the “big” flock, giving no **Good thought** as to where that **flocking mass** might be **headed**.

God knew that **propensity**, Him (in the Son, Jesus) having a gut-wrenching compassion on the whole world because of it: all, even self-assumed **individual-individuals** just, really, “sheep without any **Good** shep**herd**”. So, He positioned Himself to **fill that slot**, **applying-for-it by the sacrificial walk-of-suffering necessary through the door of a cross … as God … and as perfectly-exercised flesh, yet God**.

And last week we listened to Jesus again say how “**necessary**” **that was** for the crucifixion (the Passion) to have happened to Him. Yet **IT is the “door” that He knew only He could savingly walk-through so that we could**. **That** is the texts for today.

**Text**

And He used that word for it because we all have **doors** that we have to deal with, so we should know what that means. For us, lately, many of those have been more **confining** in “lock-down” then before (some **meant** to **keep out** germs and virus’, rather than leave gaps to let them in). Our seniors are quarantined behind doors that they’re not to leave **out of** or gain visitors **in from**. School doors don’t access educational opportunities like they did. Some restaurant doors are just now becoming welcoming a little bit. Stores almost guard their doors (taking head counts of people wanting to come in so as to control the shopping population inside). Locks are on almost every door these days. Our church now has an extra security system hooked up that’s above and beyond our key-pad entry system. And doors (in general) are more for **safe protection** than they ever are **access** … the first thing you think about when you say “door” is more **protection** these days than **access**.

And it’s **doors** and **shepherds** that Jesus invites us to consider today … seemingly abstract, almost, in analogy, yet **concrete and real as are real doors** (with what they’re **meant for**) and **shepherds** (**with what they are**).

I maintain that **every word in Scripture is given to be literal first**. In other words, whatever **other thing** it is in analogy or symbolism with depth of meanings beyond the obvious (maybe eight-fold or so and beyond), Jesus describes a **real-life door** and a **real-life shepherd** **(Good)** that describe the **essence of Gospel** in **access** and **leadership** **(loving care and abundant life)**. Webster’s dictionary is correct to define what both of these **really are** from what they **always were in Holy Scripture**. Every example of each got its **original definition** by **God’s definition of it**. Now we’ve, mostly, limited or negativized each’s meaning, so may inflict that minimalized and negative scope and idea backwards. But what these things were meant to be was the fulness of God’s intention for them. Anything different (or short) is just the corruption of sin and blindness (dumbness or numbness) of our minds and imaginations.

Jesus said this:

“He who does not enter the **sheepfold by the door** but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But **He who enters by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep**. To **HIM**, the **Gatekeeper opens**. The **sheep** **hear His voice**, and **He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out**. When He has brought out all His own, **He goes before them**, and **the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice**. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for **they** **do not know the voice of strangers**.”

Webster defines “door” as “a **means of access or participation: opportunity**”, **first being a “barrier by which an entry is closed and opened”** (“a **piece of furniture**”, the dictionary adds). The “door” Jesus speaks of is the “furniture” of a **cross upon which He had to be joined-to** **(barrier to us but walked-through by Him)**. Divine Perfection had to be killed upon that wood; that was “necessary” to make it “opportunity”. What had been **closed** to sinful flesh got **opened** by the pure sacrificial love of the Goodness of God.

For **us** knowing that furnishing-wood-of-the-cross as the (since then) **door that provides its meaning to every door** (**IT** **dealt with** and **now open**), we’re **gifted what it offers** in “**opportunity**”, “**access**”, and “**participation**”. Look at the doors of your house and everywhere that **doors do what they’re supposed to do**. They **open** and **unlock**, and all because of the key that is of the bloodshed of Jesus for all the wages of sin. **IT (the crucifixion), passed through**,lets us pass through by what happened on that cross, **IT** **the** **door** **saving us** because of **His acceptable body sacrificed upon it**, **HE and IT**, then, the **divine passage-of-access given for us nailed and hanging where sacred and sinless blood met the punishment and lock-out of every rebellion of ours**. **Jesus and a cross met with the connection of nails** to satisfy what He in verse 7 of John 10 says: “Truly, truly, I say to you, **I AM the door of the sheep**.”

**Application**

And **Him as** “**ShepHERD”** is the benefit of the **Lordship of Jesus** that **subjectively** **(for any one of us) allows Him His due reign** because of His **objective** **earning of that spot by His work as Savior**.

1st Peter so nicely **explains that benefit** (“**abundant life**”, both “**door**” **facts and benefits** and **following the Good** “**Shepherd**” **benefits**):

“For to **this** you have been called, because Christ also suffered **for you**, leaving **you** an **example**, so that **you might follow in His steps**. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled (or was sick or struggling / tested) He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but **continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly (His Father in Heaven)**. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that **we might die to sin and live to righteousness**. By His wounds you have been **HEALED**. For you **were** straying like sheep, but **have now returned** to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

You know, I love the **“stalking pursuer” that we have** as we let our Savior **Shepherd** us. That last line of the 23rd Psalm has that wonderful word in it (my favorite in all of the Old Testament):

“Surely Goodness and Mercy (God in Christ Jesus, our Good Shepherd) **follows** (or, literally, **hunts down** and **pursues**, **chases**, and w**on’t let escape, but rescues** if we don’t, in some way, fully resist) all the days of our life, we **dwelling in the house of the Lord forever**, **Him giving us rest in green pastures**, **Him leading us beside still waters**, **Him restoring our souls always**, **Him leading us in paths of righteousness for His own name’s sake**, **Him comforting us even unto death**, **Him giving us** **abundant life**.”

**With that in mind**, may the peace of God that surpasses all human understanding **keep** your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

He **is risen!** He is risen, **indeed!** **Alleluia!** In +His name, Jesus. Amen.