

# ***Life...To The Full***

John 10:1-10

May 7, 2017

## First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

In this tenth chapter of John’s Gospel there are two of Jesus’ “I am” statements. Jesus declared, “I am the gate for the sheep.” He followed that up by saying, “I am the good shepherd.” Jesus also offered a significant contrast in this passage. There is what the thief does. Then there is what Jesus does.

Okay...so as I said, we have a couple of things going on here. Jesus is our shepherd...the good shepherd. Obviously, this means we are the sheep in this arrangement. The Bible says we are the sheep of God’s pasture. “The Lord is my shepherd....” I am the Lord’s sheep. Because I am a sheep in the fold of God, I have everything I need. This is what is clearly stated in the ever-popular twenty-third Psalm.

One of the things we are afforded because we are the sheep in the pasture of God is protection. God protects us. We need fear no evil. The twenty-third Psalm talks about the rod and the staff of God. How does Jesus protect us? Well, this is where this gate thing comes into play. I want to look more at this. Jesus said, “I am the gate.” “Gate” is mentioned a few times in our text. There is a lot of talk about entering the sheep fold by the gate.

So there is no mystery about a gate...or what a gate does. A gate allows for entry into whatever a fence or a wall is protecting. The wall can be scaled or the fence climbed. But it is just easier to go in through the gate. Back in the day—Jesus’ day—sheep were kept in a pen or a fold. A thief or sheep rustler could get at the sheep by climbing the fence. But the bad

guy might eventually have to use the gate...don’t ya think...unless he wanted to toss stolen sheep over the fence.

Now what the shepherd would do was he might hire someone to guard the gate. Thing was the person hired could run at the first sign of danger. So a shepherd who cared to keep his job would station himself at the gate. A really good shepherd might actually lay in front of the gate. So any bad person who wanted to get at the sheep would have to step over the shepherd.

Jesus said, “I am the gate.” Jesus did not say he guarded the gate. He said, “I am the gate.” What does this mean for us? A couple of things.

First...well, let me ask. How many of us would stand between our loved ones and any danger?

Now, look. I’m not what you would call a violent man. I have never been in a physical confrontation in my life...not one. I have never hit anyone in anger. Call me blessed in that regard. Also, I am not an overly tough person. Don’t let this appearance fool you. Still...if any person sought to harm anyone in my family...and I was present...I would stand between that person and my family member. In other words, they would have to go through me first. Know what I mean?

That’s what Jesus meant when he called himself the gate. He does not stand guard at the gate. He is the gate. If any thief or bad person wants to get at the sheep, they will have to go through Jesus first. Jesus is our protector. Trust that. Any harm that wants to come our way has to get through Jesus.

And there is a second thing here. Note that Jesus said he is the gate and whoever enters through him will be saved.

Here's the deal on this. Do you want to get behind Jesus? I mean, do you want to get to that place where Jesus stands between you and harm? Do you want to get into the sheep pen...where it is all safe...where life is abundant? Well...we cannot get in by climbing any fence or scaling a wall. The only way into that safe place is through Jesus. The only way.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his hearers, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life; and only a few find it." What he meant there was there are many roads that lead to bad stuff...that lead to destruction. People have chosen many paths in life that have led to no good. But there is only one way...one road that leads to life that is abundant and secure and safe. That road goes right through Jesus.

Jesus is our road. Jesus is our gate. Enter through him. It is there we will find safety. It is there we will be protected. We will be saved and experience life to the full.

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