

Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2026

Text: John 10:1-10 (Gospel)

Other Texts: Acts 2:42-47 (First Reading); 1 Peter 2:19-25 (Epistle)

“Jesus—the Door”

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

“Truly, truly, I say to you.”¹ It is with these words that the Lord Jesus begin today’s Gospel. And that double *truly*, literally, a double “Amen,” is not merely rhetoric. It is a call for us to listen closely, to hear with our physical ears that we might then hear with the ears of faith. For Christ is speaking of things of great importance, of eternal weight and value.

While we are very familiar with Jesus as “the Good Shepherd,” and certainly He does mention the shepherd of the sheep, yet here He uses another term for Himself. “I am the door.”² Here there is no discussion, no space for negotiation, no room for compromise or deal making. He is not a door, whether among many or few, but He is *the door*. He alone is Lord; He alone is Savior. Any other teaching, whether it be as blatant as any religion other than Christianity, or as sly as relying (partially!) on our own moral effort and positive life changes, good works, or on spiritual and mystical experiences, all such reject His lordship and salvation. Any religious striving on our part to climb the ladder towards God, whatever that ladder may be, *none of these* are entering through the door, but trying to climb in over the wall. Those who teach these are thieves and robbers. Whatever their motivations, truly they come “only to steal and kill and destroy.”³

This is not popular, for we live in a world that prefers many doors and to say that Jesus is the only door is the height of intolerance. Sadly, sometimes it’s not popular with us either. Not that we would deny Jesus, but because we too often want a Jesus and salvation that is on our terms. A Jesus who doesn’t condemn sin, who offers a saving faith that doesn’t require repentance and new life as defined by His Law. A Jesus who is so impressed by some of our works that He then ignores, makes exceptions for, our shortcomings and those places in our lives that aren’t so impressive. But truly such a Jesus doesn’t exist. If one was “to feel” *these* doors, we would find them to be hot, for behind them is the lake of burning sulfur.

Yet, equally true, the Jesus who does exist is exactly the one we, and all sinners, truly need. We shall all be called to account before the Holy God, before the righteous Judge who sees our every action, and inaction, who hears our every word, including what we have failed to say, and to whom our hearts and minds are like an open book. Deep down, our conscience recognizes that the idea of multiple doors is absurd. We know that it is not multiple options that we need, but *certainty*. And Jesus gives us that certainty that we need. “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.” Not might be. Not could be. But *will be*.

¹ John 10:1. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² John 10:9.

³ John 10:10.

This is because Jesus is not a Savior in some general sense, but in the most concrete way. He is the crucified One. The One who does not nod or wink at our sins, giving them a pass, for if even earthly justice is appalled at such an idea, how much more will divine justice demand accountability. No, Jesus is the door to salvation for He is the one who fulfills divine justice and all righteousness by His perfect life and innocent suffering and death in our place that by repentance of our sins and faith in Him we can walk through Him as through a door.

Jesus as the door is not abstract, a mere metaphor. We find this door, come to it, where He is found, in His Word and Sacraments. While inner revelation, the Holy Spirit working directly on our hearts, something taught by many thieves and robbers, might seem to us more desirable, it actually robs us of our certainty. For how do we recognize the Shepherd's voice from that of erring and false teachers? How do we recognize the Shepherd's voice from that of our sinful nature which is open to *spirituality*, just not the Holy Spirit? How are we certain that the voice is not that of the devil, speaking to our souls, working through the distractions and ways of the corrupted world and the thoughts and desires of our own fallen nature? We cannot climb to Him by mysticism and experiences, but instead enter by faith. Faith which is created, sustained, strengthened and preserved *by the Word* as it is preached, heard, and read, as it comes to us with His promises in Baptism and the Holy Communion.

We *are* certain of whose voice we hear because the Shepherd's voice, the one that leads us to, and through, the Door, *is His own Word that is both objective and external*. Any who claim spiritual authority above or apart from the external Word of Scriptures are "thieves and robbers." "Do more. Try harder. Be better, and then God will accept you" scream some, and grace is lost in works. Others babble, "Do whatever you think is best, what makes you happy and feel good. God would never condemn anyone to hell," that is, "'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."⁴

That is why no vision, no prophecy, no angelic messenger, no voice from heaven, no thought in the mind, nor feeling in the heart, shall ever trump the written word of God in the Bible. If they agree with it, fine. But should they disagree, no matter how minimal it might be, then it is not the Shepherd, but one seeking to steal you away from Him, kill you in body and soul, destroy you eternally in hell. No wonder Jesus begins saying, "Truly, truly I say to you"!

It is no surprise, as we heard in the First Reading from Acts, that the early Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."⁵ The Word, the Holy Communion, where the Shepherd is heard, where the Door is found and accessed, and the praying fellowship of those who have entered the Door by repentance, baptism and faith in Jesus. It is no surprise that is what we still do in worship today.

Christ Jesus, crucified and risen, *is* the door to salvation. "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."⁶ But even as we are not in heaven yet, so then He is the ongoing access to fellowship with God. Through Him we are justified, forgiven all our sins. Through Him we are sanctified, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, making us His temple that we would live heavenly lives while still here on earth. Yes, through Jesus we are

⁴ Jeremiah 6:14.

⁵ Acts 2:42.

⁶ Acts 4:12.

brought into *and kept in communion with God*. For the Shepherd is with us always, to the end of the age, never leaving nor forsaking us, and so we always are in the presence of the Father through faith in Jesus.

This is *true* spiritually, but again it is not just “spiritual” in some theoretical manner. For our Shepherd leads us into pasture in a visible and concrete manner. For He has called us into His body, the Church. In His Church His Word read, preached, chanted and sung—the green pastures for our soul. In His Church the still waters of our Baptism that first washed us continue to refresh our parched and weary spirits. In His Church the table of the Lord is where He feeds us His body and blood even in the midst of our enemies, for the forgiveness of sins given in this holy meal is the very food that sustains us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.⁷ We know the Shepherd’s voice, not because we are clever, but because He speaks and acts in the means of grace present and distributed by His undershepherds in His Church. All for the sake of His sheep, *for you!*

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”⁸ The world defines the abundant life with words like “happy, healthy, and wealthy.” Success, advancement, recognition. Lack of problems and leisure. Perhaps working, but only the work that pleases us. You know, because your sinful nature craves the same. But such things, while pleasant, even blessings when received in faith, are not the abundant life Christ gives, for they are temporary. When lived for, they will finally disappoint. They are not the abundant life for they cannot give life.

Jesus gives the true abundant life for He actually gives life, physical, spiritual, eternal. He gives the gift of a peaceful conscience—its condemnation not silenced by ignoring or defending sin, but by confessing it and being fully, freely forgiven it. He gives the gift of peace with God, of knowing that God is for us, not against us, is in fact our dear, loving Heavenly Father. He gives the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who guides and empowers the new man in us to kill anything which would rob our soul of the abundant life we have received. The Spirit who guides and empowers us to grow in holiness, that we would bring forth the abundant fruit of the Spirit, to glorify God and to serve our neighbor in love and mercy—true life in Christ.

It is true that this new life is not perfect yet. And this can be discouraging; it may even lead us to wonder if we are truly saved as we see the sin that still remains within us and the power it still seems to have. But do not fear! This rhythm of continuing to need repentance and forgiveness, hearing and trusting, struggling and fighting—it is not weakness. It is *life under the care of the Shepherd*. It is how the Shepherd maintains the abundant life in us. It is staying on the proper side of the Door after entering it!

Ah yes, *the Door*. Finally, Jesus is the door to heaven. He gives the gift of the hope of salvation. Of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever. Here now there may be, yes, there will be suffering. Our enemies remain active yet for a little longer. But the abundant life does not end, but continues, ascends to something greater: eternal life in the sinless, perfect, joy-filled presence of God in the beauties of the new heavens and earth. Truly, truly, life cannot get any more abundant than that!

⁷ Psalm 23 is the appointed Psalm for this Sunday.

⁸ John 10:10.

“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.” The Lord has spoken. It is true. Amen!