

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 24 - 28, 2022

EPIPHANY

JESUS REVEALED

SERMON SERIES

Jan 9 - Feb 27

MONDAY

John 10: 7 & 9

I am the Gate (Portal)

The life of the greatest “change agent” in history, the life and ministry of Jesus, is written in just 160 pages in my bible, and the story is repeated 4 times! We also know it is not the complete story, as John suggests as he ends his short Gospel (John 21:25). However, even in John’s short narrative he goes out of his way to identify the seven occasions in Jesus’ teaching when Jesus used the phrase “I AM” with seven symbols or figures of speech, each of which helped His disciples understand an aspect of God’s interaction with them as humans, and maybe also us today.

In John 10 we read the third and fourth times that Jesus used the “I AM”, speaking about being the “Gate” or the “Door” (the same word in the original) and then expanding to the topic of being the “Good Shepherd.” Now what might that gate have looked like? We should be careful of imposing 21st century pictures on 1st century realities. In all probability gates would not have looked anything like what we would call a “gate” today.

We know that in parts of Israel a cave was used to protect animals at night. But where there were no caves, a stone wall would be erected, high enough to prevent animals from climbing over, with just one gap

in the wall to serve as the sole entrance. Sometimes there may have been a makeshift “door” using branches or sticks, but certainly not what we would call “burglar-proof” today. This is why, as we shall see, the shepherd had to be actively and personally involved in securing the pen.

When Jesus chose to use this well-known picture from everyday life, He was clearly showing how any relationship with God the Father has to come about through the Son. Jesus is the entry point or PORTAL, and if we try to use anything else (good works, our ancestry, etc), we will end up still being what Jesus called “goats” (Matthew 25) because we are trying to earn through our own merit what can only be accomplished through Christ.

QUESTIONS

Is Jesus really your “gate”? Does Jesus supersede self, pride, judgement, ambition, safety so that you can build a personal relationship with your God?

PRAYERS

**International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Turkey
(Emre Uflazoglu)**

Let’s join Emre in praising the Lord for how the IFES student leaders in Turkey whom he had been mentoring stepped up to lead a long-planned conference when Emre became ill with COVID! It was a wonderful growing experience for all.

TUESDAY

John 10:1-3

I am the Gate (Purpose)

Although John is going to return to the next “I AM” statement about Jesus as the Good Shepherd in John 10:11 and 14, he touches on the subject while talking about Jesus as the “Gate” simply because the use of the gate distinguishes the good shepherd from evil shepherds or robbers who would try to get among the sheep using access other than the gate. Jesus has the right of access, so the watchman at the gate gladly opens it for Him. But before Jesus applies the imagery of being the Gate to Himself, He makes sure that His listeners understood the **PURPOSE** of the gate.

The beauty of so much of Jesus’ teaching was that He used familiar images to illustrate what He was saying so that the ordinary people could understand. When Jesus used parables, He admitted that these would only be fully understood by those who were spiritually awakened, but even there the images of seed, weeds, stony ground, fields, gates, etc., would be well-known to all hearing His teaching.

An observation from John 10:1 is that three elements are necessary to ensure that we as “sheep” are well cared for both physically and mentally: a gate, a shepherd, and a sheep pen. When we enter into a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, He opens the gate

through the shedding of His blood on the cross and welcomes us into His secure Kingdom (the sheep pen), where He rules as our shepherd and our King. Jesus is both our “gate” and our shepherd assuring us that He is fulfilling His purpose to separate and protect us from evil.

Of course, we know that we are not yet in the final “sheep pen” of heaven where there is no evil or harm, so the imagery Jesus is using here is simply to remind us that, even here, when we have entered through the Gate we can live with the constant assurance that we have a shepherd watching over and protecting us at all times. It is so good for us to remember that when things are tough, as they have been for so many in the past few years, we have a shepherd at the gate of our lives.

QUESTIONS

As you consider the challenges of today, remind yourself that our Lord’s purpose was to be shepherd at the gate, protecting and keeping us from the world’s harm.

PRAYERS

**International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Turkey
(Emre Uflazoglu)**

Pray for the continued growth of Emre’s “family dinners” with students every Thursday evening. In one year, the group has expanded from 5 to 12, and discussions have gone deeper. Several participants are now believers!

WEDNESDAY

John 10:3-5

I am the Gate (Protection)

The next truth that Jesus presents is that as the good shepherd enters, the sheep listen to his voice because they are “his own sheep,” so he leads them out through the gate (verse 3). In the Middle East, even today, the shepherd doesn’t drive the sheep, but rather leads them. They recognize his voice and follow him gladly, going out of the gate into the dangerous world, knowing that they have his PROTECTION and guidance. If any individual sheep tries to stray, the shepherd will often pick that one up and carry it.

Consider the beautiful thought in verse 3 that the shepherd “*calls his own sheep by name.*” In a world where one senses that so much is becoming more and more impersonal, isn’t it a mind-boggling thought that the God of the Universe calls us by name? Christianity is unique in this perspective, stressing a deep relationship between our God and ourselves, which came about because of what we have just celebrated again during the Christmas season: the coming of the very Son of God to be our “Gate” to a relationship with the Father.

But there’s a challenge in that same verse 3, since the “*sheep listens to his voice.*” As the adage goes, there’s a difference between hearing and listening! When we have entered into a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility to keep that alive by

“listening” to what God has to say, which implies obedience. The Lord is willing to “lead us out,” but our part is to follow, just as the sheep do today. If we don’t, the first step is for the shepherd to pick us up and carry us.

But tradition tells us that if any sheep repeatedly refused to follow, the shepherd would sometimes break its leg so that it HAD to go with him. By the time the leg had healed, the sheep was so used to the smell and voice of the shepherd that it wouldn’t stray again. Let’s be sure that God doesn’t have to find some less pleasant way to make us understand the importance of doing things His way!

QUESTIONS

Do you hear His voice as your shepherd? Do you willingly follow?

PRAYERS

**International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Turkey
(Emre Uflazoglu)**

Let’s ask the Lord to bless these new believers. They are eager to grow and are preparing (even if a bit apprehensive) to share their faith with friends and fellow students.

THURSDAY

John 10

I am the Gate (Proximity)

It is a significant truth in John that Jesus doesn't just USE the gate, but He is the gate! John tells us that Jesus was using a "figure of speech" here (verse 6), so we immediately recognize that "sheep" are people who already have a relationship with the shepherd, and that means they have come to faith in Christ through the ONLY access point, which is a personal relationship with Him as Lord and Savior. In a beautiful sense, then, He opens the Gate to eternal life as the ONLY one able to do that.

But Jesus also becomes the means by which His sheep are protected from harm and danger because anyone who wishes to attack or steal (like Satan) has to reckon first with Him. There is some evidence that when shepherds in Bible times had secured all their sheep inside the "sheepfold" or pen, they would lie across the entrances to sleep. In this way, not only could no sheep escape without waking them, but anyone wanting to enter to harm or steal would have to step over the sleeping shepherd and probably wake him. So we see the **PROXIMITY** of the shepherd to the sheep. Our God is One who tells us that He is near us, who will never leave or forsake us, and who is willing to put His own life on the line (which He did) in order to save us.

So God provides access to the sheep pen in the sense that we are now given eternal life. In verse 10 Jesus says, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* Do note that such *“abundant”* life (KJV) is for the present as well, and not just some future hope. If we are not experiencing a fullness of joy in our relationship with God now, there is probably something wrong with our walk with the Lord. That’s not to say we are permanently happy, because we live in a fallen world, but there should always be a deep sense of joy that *“our times are in His hands.”*

QUESTIONS

What joy do you feel knowing that Jesus, your personal Savior, loves you and cares enough to “lie” across the gate of your life?

PRAYERS

**International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Turkey
(Emre Uflazoglu)**

Pray for effective follow-up of the 21 students (out of 105) who participated in the special Christmas celebration that Emre planned and expressed interest in learning more about who Jesus is and what His coming means.

FRIDAY

John 10:9

I am the Gate (Proclamation)

The epiphany of God that we are given in John 10 is so intensely personal and special. He is not a remote deity, as portrayed by so many religions. Rather He is the one who knows His sheep by name, who provides them access into the fold, and who then protects them when they are resting. When the time comes for them to face the world, He is there to lead them out through the gate.

The Psalmist reminds us that whether that is “*beside quiet waters*” or “*through the valley of the shadow of death*,” He is “*with us*” for both comfort and protection (Psalm 23:2-4). He is indeed Emmanuel—God with us every day of our lives (not just in December)! He is also with us as we serve Him in the world and carry out His purposes to extend the Kingdom and show the way for others to enter via the Gate.

John 10:9 has Jesus reminding us that, because He is the Gate, we can “*come in and go out, and find pasture*.” Note the implications of this statement. First of all, we go in to the sheep pen because we are entitled to do so. Jesus has provided this access and made it possible for us, weak and sinful though we are, to participate in being part of His sheep pen.

Secondly, when we go out, we do so in Jesus' name and with His protection to PROCLAIM how others may share our relationship with the Shepherd, who also happens to be the Gate, who also happens to be One with the Owner of the sheep pen, the Almighty God, our Father.

Thirdly, note that we will find pasture. Part of the shepherd's responsibility is to ensure that his sheep are fed, watered and cared for. We are told that one of the responsibilities of the shepherd each evening, as he counted his sheep back into the sheep pen, was to look over each one for any wounds or signs of ill-health with the aim of treating them and nursing them back to health.

QUESTIONS

Do you have that kind of image of our Father in heaven, a good Father who cares enough to be concerned for our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being?

PRAYERS

**International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Turkey
(Emre Uflazoglu)**

Continue to intercede for Emre's wife, Feven, that she'll obtain a visa that enables her, a Dutch citizen, to remain in Turkey, serving the Lord alongside her husband in Antalya Evangelical Church.



Glenkirk Church | 1700 Palopinto Ave, Glendora, CA 91741 | 626.914.4833
GlenkirkChurch.org |  **@GlenkirkChurch** |  **Facebook: GlenkirkChurch**