

Stewardship

Cary Presbyterian Church

Scripture

John 10:7 So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

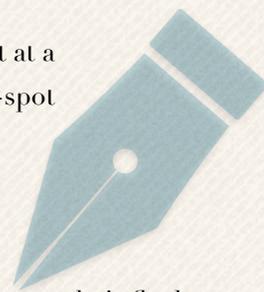
Devotion

“I came that they might have life, and it abundantly.” This Summer I will be writing occasional devotions on the topic of stewardship and, more precisely, on the question of the abundant life which Jesus came to make possible for us. What does it mean that we enjoy an abundance which God so generously provides? How are we to celebrate and enjoy that abundance? What responsibilities also belong to those who live in God’s abundance?

Today’s passage is one of the seven “I am” statements that Jesus makes in the gospel of John. In this case he is the gate for the sheep. It is a peculiar thing for Jesus to say, or at least it *seems* like a peculiar thing unless you are familiar with the scene he is describing.

In 1993 I traveled through Syria and down through Jordan stopping at biblically significant

places along the way. One night at a town that was really just a wide-spot in the road I witnessed a scene that opened up this passage for me.



Two shepherds and their flocks arrived in the field next to my little hotel. As the darkness gathered the sheep were gathered into a small area enclosed by a low stone wall. There was no door or gate on the only entrance to the area and I became curious about how the sheep would be kept in. As I watched from my room’s balcony, one of the shepherds retrieved his blanket from his things, lay down across the entrance and fell asleep. He was the gate. Sheep could neither come nor go without his knowing about it. “Genius!” I thought.

Jesus says something like, “I am the one who watches over the sheep - literally putting my body between them and those who come to do harm.” He does that so that we “sheep” can have life, and it abundantly. I, for one, and grateful for the one who is my shepherd and my gate!

Prayer

Lord, you are the gate. Help us to both come and go under your watchful and loving care. May we always have what we need, and may we learn from you how to be generous with others too. Amen.