

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026: Benefice Holy Communion  
Ampleforth

*“I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”.*

Today is known as “Good Shepherd Sunday.” The Fourth Sunday of Easter every year is a day when we remind ourselves that Jesus is our shepherd. But in the gospel reading assigned for today, [John 10:1-10](#), Jesus doesn’t actually say that. He says it right *after* today’s reading. What he says in today’s reading is that he is the *gate* for the sheep. “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.”

This is one of the famous “I am” sayings of Jesus. There are seven in John’s Gospel: “I am the bread of life ... I am the living water ... I am the light of the world ... I am the way, and the truth, and the life ... I am the true vine ... I am the resurrection and the life ... I am the good shepherd ...” And today’s, which I think is the least well-known and must unique: “I am the gate.” What does it mean that Jesus is the gate, or in other translations, the door, for us, his sheep?

At the end of the day, the shepherds would gather all their sheep in an enclosed area - called a sheepfold - that had only one way in, and one way out. And then the shepherd would simply lay across that entrance, in order to protect their sheep from predators during the night. If a predator were to try and enter the sheepfold, the shepherd would awake and fight it off. And the sheep slept securely. Because their shepherd was now their gate.

So, in today’s gospel reading, Jesus tells us that we are his sheep, and he is our shepherd. And he promises to be our

gate, or our door, at the end of the day. He lays across the entrance to his sheepfold - not to keep us out, but to protect us from all that would snatch us away.

He lays across the door, as he lays down his life for us, as he lays on a cross for us, as he lays in a tomb for us: so that we may have life and have it abundantly. Jesus is our shepherd, and our gate, and that is a good thing.

When life is more like a *journey*, we need a shepherd who will lead us into the unknown, who will be our guide on this adventure. But when life is more like a *battle*, we need a shepherd who will fight for us, and protect us from danger. And Jesus promises to be both. He is our shepherd, and he is our gate. He leads us on this journey through life, and he protects us when life becomes a battle.

We need both of these, at different times in life. And in today's gospel reading, we focus on the latter - we focus on Jesus being the shepherd who *protects* us, who promises to be our gate.

But who exactly are our predators? What does Jesus protect us from? Surely, we can all agree that we need protecting; from illness, from danger, from those who steal from us, hurt us, speak ill of us or our loved ones, from evil and corruption. There are many things that we need protection from. But perhaps what we need protection from, more than anything else, is ourselves. We are our own worst enemies, it has been said. Scripture reminds us, we, like sheep, have all gone astray. We have all sinned.

This is usually because we are engaged in a futile attempt to go our own way, due to stubbornness and pride, when all along Jesus is standing at the gate, summoning us back to the comfort and safety of his flock.

Jesus, we are reminded today, is both our shepherd, and our gate. He leads us on life's adventure. And he protects us from life's dangers, and, above all, He protects us from ourselves, from our sin and our self-destruction, what we call hell.

So, whether today life feels more like a journey, or a contest, Jesus promises to be there for us. To lead us, to guide us, to protect us, and to give us life, abundantly. So may all us who are God's sheep find comfort in these words today, and may we hear in these words an invitation to come to the sheepfold to find protection, and to find the pasture that only the Son of God, our good shepherd, and our gate, can offer us, life in abundance.

Thanks be to God. Amen