

Sermon: "The Good Shepherd and the Life We Are Called to Live"

John 10:1–10 & 1 Peter 2:19–25

Dear friends,

Let me begin with a simple and rather delightful story.

A mother once taught her young son to say, *"I am the good shepherd."* When the child stood up to speak, he forgot his line. The mother, sitting in the front row, tried to prompt him—silently mouthing the words. But he still could not get it. Finally, she whispered out loud, *"My son, say: I am the good shepherd."* And the child, with great confidence, said: *"My mum is the good shepherd!"*

It may sound amusing, but there is something profoundly true in it. Because in many ways, we who follow Christ are called to reflect the Good Shepherd in the lives of others. People may not always hear us speak about Jesus, but they will see how we care, how we listen, how we love. In that sense, we become signs—small reflections—of the Good Shepherd in everyday life.

The first image Jesus gives us is that of the true shepherd. He says that the shepherd enters through the gate, and the sheep listen to his voice. He knows them by name, calls them, and leads them out. And when he has brought them out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they recognise his voice.

In the Middle Eastern context, this was a familiar and powerful image. Shepherds did not drive sheep from behind; they walked ahead, and the sheep followed. The relationship was built on trust and recognition. The sheep knew the shepherd's voice, and that voice meant safety, direction, and life.

There is something deeply moving in the idea that Jesus knows us by name. We are not just part of a crowd. We are known personally. There is a story of Bishop Stephen Neill, who would remember and pray for people by name. That kind of attention reflects something of Christ's own care. To be known by name is to be valued, remembered, and loved.

Jesus used this image in a particular context. In the previous chapter, John 9, a man born blind had been healed by Jesus, yet the religious leaders—the Pharisees—confused, questioned, and burdened him. They created noise rather than clarity, pressure rather than peace. So Jesus contrasts their voices with his own.

And this is where the message becomes very real for us. We too live among many voices—voices in society, in media, in conversations around us. Some speak against faith, some create fear, some divide communities, some disturb our inner peace. But Jesus calls us to listen to his voice—the voice that strengthens faith, brings peace, and leads us forward.

To follow Christ is to learn discernment: to recognise which voices lead to life and which do not.

The second image Jesus gives is equally powerful: *"I am the gate."*

He says, *"Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

In those days, the shepherd himself would often become the gate, lying across the entrance of the sheepfold at night. He was both protector and access. Nothing could enter or leave without passing through him.

So when Jesus says, *"I am the gate,"* he is saying that he is the way into life—true life, abundant life, life in its fullness.

This raises a simple but searching question:

Through what—or through whom—are we seeking life?

Let me share a powerful story. Abdul Raheem, a Muslim in Dhaka, Bangladesh, once violently attacked a Christian college mate simply because he was a Christian. The student was hospitalised. Weeks later, he returned to college, still bandaged. Abdul expected anger, confrontation, perhaps even revenge. But instead, the Christian smiled at him.

That moment unsettled Abdul deeply. It disturbed him—not in a negative way, but in a way that opened his heart. He began to ask questions. He started reading the Bible. And eventually, he came to faith in Christ.

What happened there? He encountered not just a belief, but a way of life—a life shaped by forgiveness, grace, and love. He saw what it means to pass through the gate of Christ into a different kind of life.

That is what Jesus offers: a life where healing, forgiveness, and grace become real and visible.

The third movement of today's message is our calling to become shepherd-like people.

Peter writes: *"You were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."* And then he adds something very important—that we are called to follow in Christ's steps, even when it involves suffering.

This is where the Gospel becomes challenging.

To follow the Good Shepherd does not mean an easy path. It means:

- bearing with patience
- responding with grace
- trusting God even when treated unjustly

Peter reminds us of Jesus himself:

"When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate... when he suffered, he made no threats."

This is the way of the Shepherd.

Today, we live in a world shaped by many difficult narratives—war, conflict, political tensions, fear, and at times even negativity toward faith and the Church. These voices can easily overwhelm us.

But the Good Shepherd leads us differently.

He leads us:

- not by fear, but by trust

- not by hatred, but by love
- not by division, but by reconciliation

And as we follow him, we are called to reflect that same care.

To be shepherd-like means:

- to care even when it is not appreciated
- to listen even when others do not listen to us
- to show patience even when we are hurt

Because we know that we ourselves are being led.

So today, we hold these truths together.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows us, calls us, and leads us.

Jesus is the Gate through whom we enter into life—abundant, meaningful, and full.

And we are called to follow him and reflect his care in the world.

Like that child in the story, people may one day say of us—perhaps unknowingly—that they have seen something of the Good Shepherd in our lives.

May we listen to his voice.

May we enter through him.

And may we follow **him faithfully**.

Amen.