

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Apr 22nd 2013**

“I am the gate.” And to emphasize it even more Jesus says it a second time – “I am the gate.” So what was so important that Jesus had to say it twice? Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees after they refused to allow a man he just healed from blindness to enter a synagogue. Jesus admonishes them as not being true shepherds of the flock. Instead, it is he who is the true shepherd. So, to explain he uses a “figure of speech” or parable involving a shepherd and his sheep. In Jesus’ time, shepherds spent day and night tending to the needs of their sheep. They assured their access to food and water, and just as importantly, they protected them from the dangers of predators and thieves. Sheep were valuable commodities and the shepherds treated them so. In protecting them, shepherds would place their flock into a sheepfold at night. A sheepfold was a circular enclosure constructed of a low stone wall possibly with thorns on top to not only keep the sheep within, but to keep danger out. The only legitimate way for the sheep to enter or exit was through “the gate,” a small opening in the sheepfold where the shepherd would sit or lie and sleep.

In referring to himself as “the gate,” Jesus not only shows his commitment to protecting and caring for us, but more importantly Jesus is saying that he is our access to a rich and verdant life. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus shows us the way to heaven through his words and actions. But, we have to be willing to listen for and to his voice. As hectic as life may sometimes get, we need to remember to set aside time to pray and to truly listen to Jesus and his message. As Jesus said, he is “the gate.” He is our salvation and our way to God. If we listen to him, we are not only protected from harm, but we are given access to verdant pastures and an abundant life – life everlasting.

So, as we go about our daily lives, let us remember the importance of listening to our Divine Shepherd. Be open to his message and be comforted by a voice that is familiar, genuine, honest, and gives us life!

Michael Kavan