

May 3, 2020: 4th Sunday after Easter; Holy Communion
(Church@Home)
Sermon by the Rev. J. T. Kim

LIVING AN ABUNDANT LIFE IN THE STRANGEST TIMES

(1 Peter 2:19-25)

*Jesus: The Shepherd and Guardian of
Your Souls*

¹⁹For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

²² 'He committed no sin,

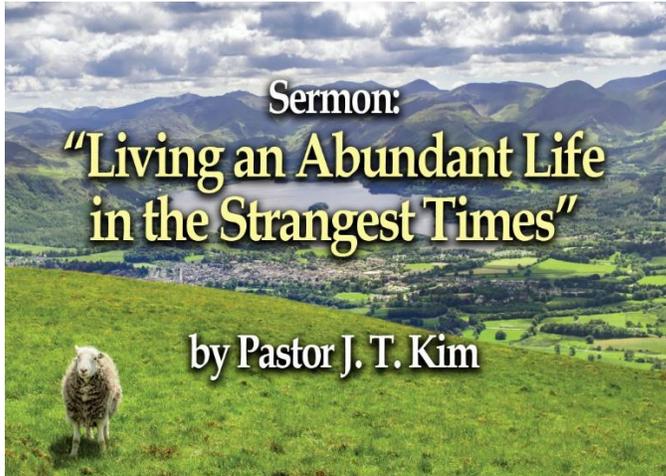
and no deceit was found in his mouth.’
²³When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

(John 10:1-10)

Jesus the Good Shepherd

¹Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own

sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.



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National Emergency Declared March 13, 2020



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- On March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a National Emergency concerning the COVID-19 Outbreak.

State of California's
"Stay-At-Home" Order
March 19, 2020



- Then, the California Governor Gavin Newsom ordered state-wide "Stay-at-Home," followed by the Riverside County Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser's Order to "Stay-at-Home," originally until April 30th, but now extended to June 19th.

County of Riverside Public Health Officer
Extends "Stay-at-Home" Order
Through June 19, 2020



- Since the nation-wide “lockdown” order that requires keeping the “Social Distancing” and wearing “face coverings,” we have been experiencing a new normal lifestyle.



- Last week, one of my pastor friends sent me some funny church signs.
- This is one of them:



- It says:

- **3 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:**

- **1 THIS TOO SHALL PASS**

- **2 YOU ARE LOVED**

- **3 IT'S MONDAY... OR MAYBE SATURDAY**

- Of course, we know that this weird reality is going to be temporary.

- However, until we have the vaccine and antiviral medications, no one knows how long it is going to take for us to go back to normal life.

- Yes, we are living in the strangest times.

- I am subscribing to the local newspaper, **The Press-Enterprise**, in order to support our local journalism.

- From the mid-March through April, every day, the newspaper was filled with the news about the Coronavirus Pandemic Outbreak.

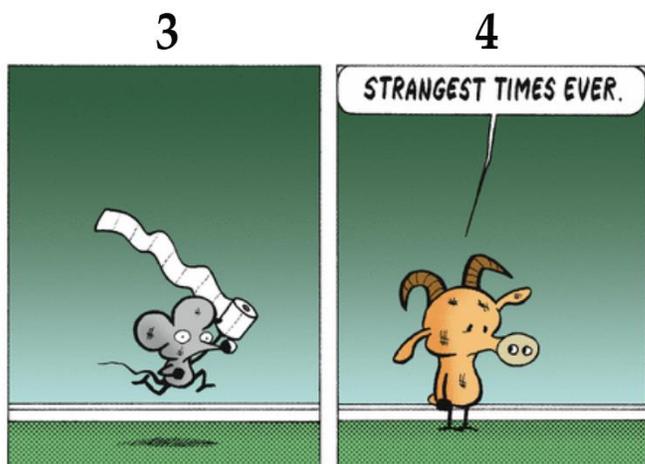
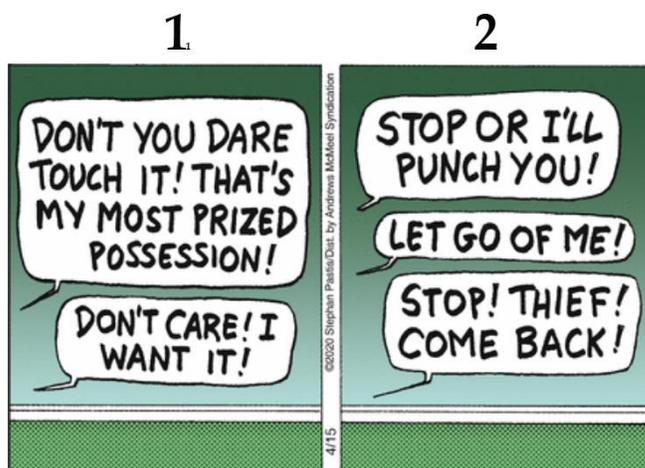
- Except for comic strips.

- Those comics were out of touch with the real world, never reflect or mention about the Pandemic lifestyle or Social Distancing.

- Still, most comics are being published as if we are still living in a normal life.

- I guess those comics must be made way before the Pandemic Outbreak.

- Around mid-April, one of the comics began to reflect our new “Stay-at-Home” reality.
- It’s “**Pearls Before Swine.**”
- Here is the comic published on April 15, 2020:



- Yes, we are living in the strangest times ever!

- About a month ago, I tried to buy some toilet papers at grocery stores, but obviously, all were sold out and out of stock!
- So, I ordered some toilet papers online through Amazon.
- When I tried to click to check-out, it said, it would be delivered to me in a month.
- So, I thought OK, then I clicked it and done!
- Of course, sometime later, I was able to buy some toilet papers at Walmart early in the morning.
- Anyhow, last week, a package from the Toilet Paper Seller through Amazon finally arrived via FedEx.

- But the package size looked a little smaller than expected.
- When I opened it, I was shocked to see these toilet papers – it is a mini size!



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- I just assumed that this product would be a common, regular toilet paper size like this.
- (Well, of course, even with this mini size toilet paper, it's better than nothing!)
- It's my fault that I never paid attention to any of the customer reviews.

- I realized later that most of the feedbacks gave only 1 star saying, “Do Not Buy!”

- So, when you order online, please be careful!
- Even though the whole world is going through this global Pandemic crisis, sadly, there are always people who are trying to cheat other people by price-gouging or swindling.
- Yes, we are living in the strangest times!

- Many of us are feeling stressful, tired, impatient, frustrated, anxious, isolated, and disconnected.



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- You might be going through the same.
- No schools, no church services, no in-person gatherings seemed bearable during the first one or two weeks.
- But, now, going through another month, or two, or beyond, it seems to be another test for your endurance and patience.
- Plus, one of the scariest things you anticipate would be your financial hardship due to the layoffs and business closures and, accordingly, no income or reduced income.

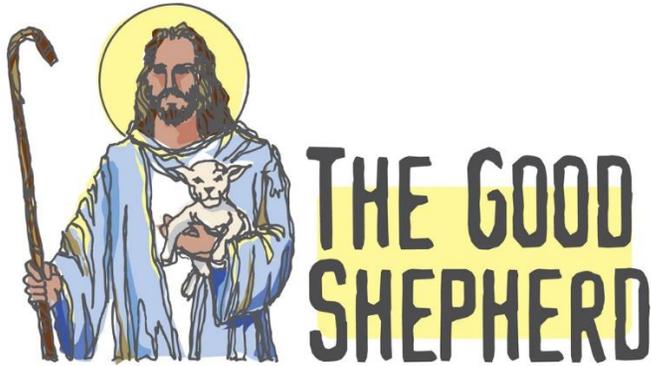
- Even though you may apply for some loan and grants and unemployment benefits, nothing is clear or guaranteed.
- Moreover, you might have to experience all kind of added and extra challenges, problems, and conflicts in your relationships and mental health.
- Not to mention your emotional instability, fears of uncertainty and loneliness, and many more possible drawbacks.

- From this massive mess, how would you take care of yourself?
- If you are not able to handle your own situation, how would you be able to help your own family or your loved ones?
- Who is guiding you in the midst of this insane life?

- Who is helping you in these strangest times?

- Some self-help books or other resources might be helpful to you.
- Some experts' advices can be useful to you.
- Some close friends' encouragements can be helpful to you in some sense.

- However, you know whom you can turn to.
- Listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd.



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- Jesus is your Good Shepherd.

- In the Gospel of John text this morning, Jesus emphasizes one of the most important conditions in a trusting relationship.

- **³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.**

- Yes, the Shepherd calls his own sheep by name.
- And the sheep know his voice.
- No matter what circumstances you are in, Jesus, the Good Shepherd knows **YOU by name.**
- Whether you are living a normal life, working and enjoying life, or you are in quarantine with limitations and restrictions,
- Whether you are worshiping in the sanctuary or at home,
- Jesus knows who you are and loves you with no reservations.

- It doesn't matter how many people out there in the whole world, but Jesus knows you more than you do.

- Jesus loves you more than you love yourself!

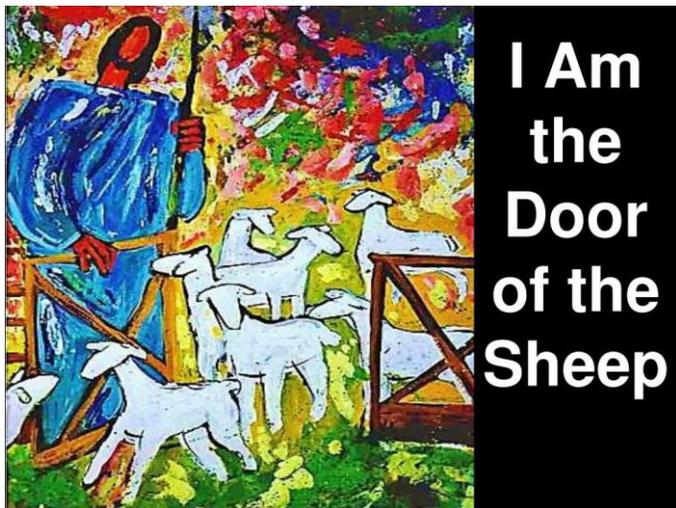
- Question is do you know the voice of Jesus and follow him?

- V. 9 would be the key verse in the Gospel passage.
- **I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.**
- At first, Jesus says **“I am the Good Shepherd.”**
- We totally understand what he means by that.
- Now, he says, **“I am the gate.”**
- Is this **“I am the gate”** statement the same or similar to his message of **“I am**

the way, and the truth, and the life”?
(John 14:6)

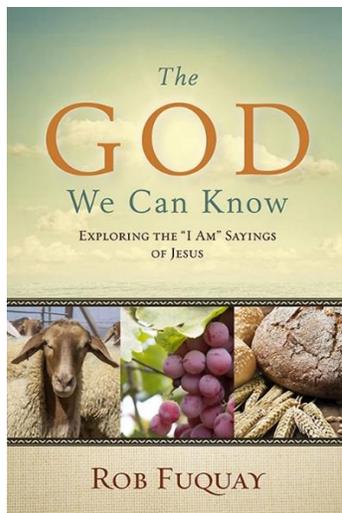
- Maybe.
- But V. 9 tells us more than that.

- In the Gospel of John passage, the Greek word **“thyra”** (θύρα) is translated into **“gate.”**
- However, more accurate English translation would be: **“door.”**
- Some other Bible versions have translated the word as **“door.”**



- Jesus says: **“I am the door of the sheep.”**

- Just before the pandemic situation, our Adult Sunday School finished the book entitled, **The God We Can Know: Exploring the “I AM” Sayings of Jesus**, written by Rob Fuquay.



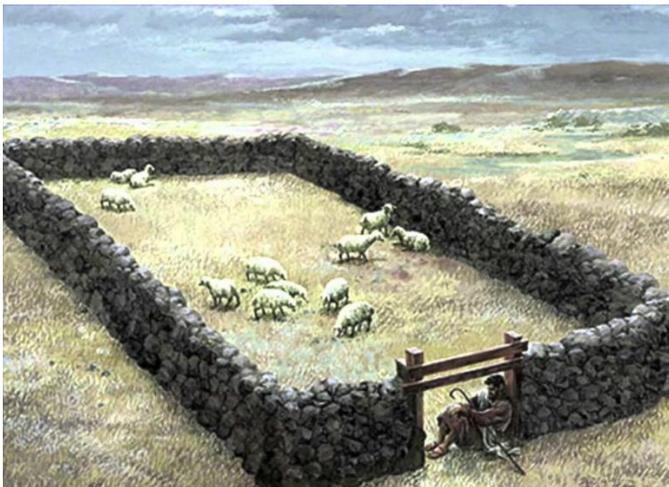
“... Shepherds used folds to keep the sheep at night. These enclosures provided walls, but the door was just a bare entrance. No gate. It was an opening in the wall for sheep to go in and out freely.

“How could sheep stay protected without a door? The shepherd would lie down at night in the doorway. The shepherd would be the door...”

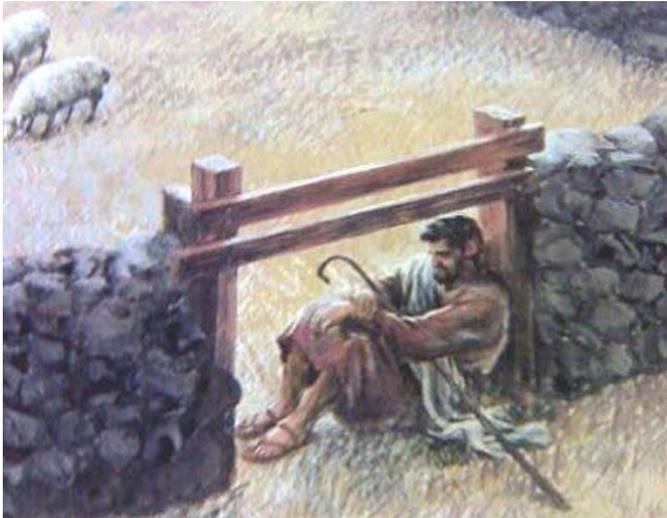
- This book explains what Jesus means when he says, “I am the door.”
- **“... Shepherds used folds to keep the sheep at night. These enclosures provided walls, but the door was just a bare entrance. No gate. It was an**

opening in the wall for sheep to go in and out freely.

- **“How could sheep stay protected without a door? The shepherd would lie down at night in the doorway. The shepherd would be the door...”** (p. 62)
- This is what people would have pictured when Jesus said, **“I am the door for the sheep.”**
- Here is a picture that can help you to understand better.



- Here is a closer look:



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- Pay attention to the second part of v. 9:
- **Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.**
- If you are in Christ, you are already saved!
- Unlike the people who are hesitating at the gate of salvation, struggling, “should I go in or now,”
- You have already passed through the gate and are already inside the sheepfold of Jesus!

- Apostle Paul, in Romans 8:1, proclaims:
- **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**
- Becoming a Christian is the first step – it's easy and free and a blessing!

- But, now, beyond the salvation is more important:
- You continue: Following Christ and Growing in Christ.
- And eventually bearing fruits – by fulfilling your purpose for your life.

- The last part of V. 9:
- **... and will come in and go out and find pasture.**
- The sheep's purpose might be feeding themselves.

- Then when it's time, they can be useful to the humanity mainly by providing finest quality of genuine wool.
- So, as long as you listen to the Shepherd's voice, even you go out and find pasture!
- Whether you come in or go out, you are always protected, guided, and comfortably secured by the Good Shepherd.

- Here is the first part of V. 10:
- **¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.**
- Be aware these thieves in your life in many different forms and cases.
- Their sole purpose is to steal and kill and destroy you.
- They don't care about the truth;

- They don't care about your welfare, your health, or your heart;
- Because of their own agenda, they always try to put you down, spread rumors and gossips about you, discredit you whatever reasons and however ways.
- They are trying to corner you to a miserable life.
- These things could happen:
 - if you try to outsmart your shepherd or become astray and not listen to the shepherd.
 - Or if you are too preoccupied with your own problems to follow your Shepherd.
 - Or if you become a thief who steals and kills and destroys your own soul by justifying your own evil ways.

- The second part of V. 10 is the conclusion that proclaims Jesus who gives you an abundant life:
- **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**

- An abundant life sounds like a life of prosperity, possessions, fame, positions, comforts, problem-free, and always plentiful in everything and in anything.
- Not really – An Abundant Life in Christ is not about having lots of money or power or earthly stuff.

- Abundant Life in Christ is a faithful life to God;
- It is a loving and life-giving life to other people;
- It is a meaningful life to yourself –

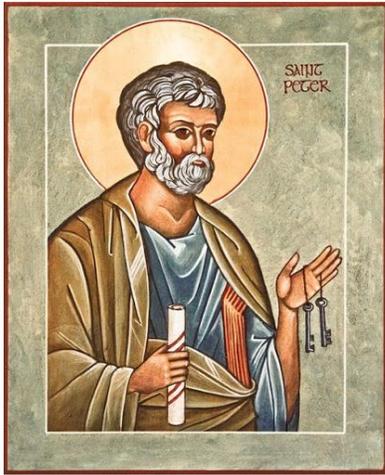
- Yes, it is a joyful, fruitful, and grateful life – maybe it’s not a perfect life – but, in Christ, you can turn your one-time-given-life-opportunity into a beautiful one.
- And you will be happier again!

- It’s always never too late.
- It doesn’t matter it’s the strangest time or not.

- When you remain in the Shepherd’s care, listen to Him, and to follow him, you can always enjoy the “**green pasture**” – when coming IN or going OUT.

- Thus, it is not your circumstance, situation, or trouble that keeps you from living an abundant life.
- No matter how crazy your life looks like -
- No matter how much pain and suffering you have to endure –
- No matter everything seems to be hopeless or devastating –
- No matter we are living in the weirdest and strangest times or not -
- You can still sustain and enjoy an abundant life in Christ.

- The immediate context for the 1 Peter passage was an encouraging letter for the servants who were going through harsh treatments from some ruthless masters.



PETER

(Born AD 1 -

Died between

AD 64-68)

Simon Peter;

Peter the Apostle;

Cephas;

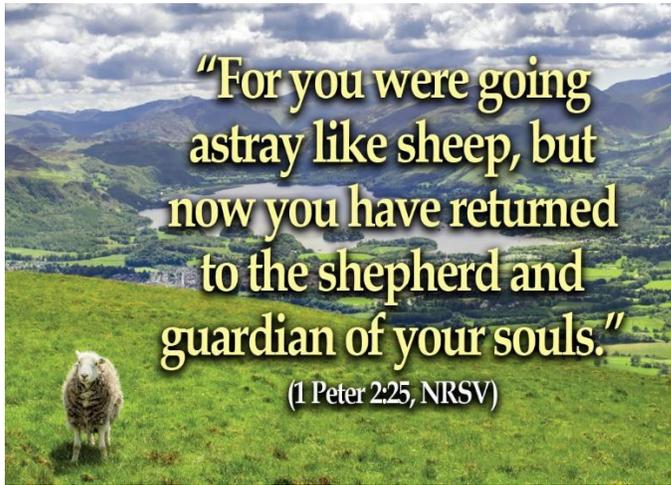
First Bishop of

Rome (Pope);

Saint Peter

- However, its background and intention were more than a mere attempt to restore relationships.
- As many of you are aware, Peter was the very first Bishop of Rome – meaning that Peter was the first Pope.
- At that time, Apostle Peter was trying to urge those Christians who were going through persecution from the Roman Empire.
- All the Christians, during the persecution, were scattered, and scared, yet never hesitated to worship God, wherever they were, mostly at home.

- It was a life-and-death situation for the Christians.
- Maybe it was worse than a pandemic or government lockdown.
- If you get caught, no citation or fine – you could get killed - executed.
- That's why Peter was reminding his flock of Christ's steadfast and never-ending love for those who would follow him.
- V. 24
- **He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.**
- And this is the key verse!



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- V. 25

- **For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.**

- My brothers and sisters in Christ!
- Jesus is your Good Shepherd who loves you so much that he would give his life for your life –
- Not just a life – but it’s an abundant life in Christ!
- Jesus is the guardian of your soul so that even though you are living in the

strangest times Jesus offers you an abundant life in him!

- Thanks be to God!
- **Amen!**