

4th Sunday of Easter

Security cameras are now installed at the rectory, thanks to your generosity. They include a view of the front of the church. Both buildings have an alarm system for additional protection. We'd all prefer a society where the doors of buildings like these could be left unlocked. But some people pass through doors with the intent of committing a crime once they get inside.

The problem is not new. Jesus talked about it in a parable he delivered in the presence of Pharisees. In his view, Pharisees were committing spiritual crimes; they were not good shepherds. At the time, sheep were at risk from thieves. A shepherd trained the sheep to hear and follow his voice, and to run away from the voice of a stranger. Shepherds walked into the fold through a gate, but thieves and robbers climbed over the top. Perhaps the Pharisees were trying to steal followers from Jesus. If there had been security cameras in Jesus' day, he probably would have included them in this parable.

As it was, Jesus stuck with a different image representing the technology of his day: the gate. He says you can tell who good people are because they use the sheepgate. They don't jump over or around it. Then he calls himself the gate. If you're good, you'll walk through him. He's outlining a different problem. The original problem was that some bad people climb over the gate and steal the sheep. Now he is concerned that good people may walk through the wrong gate and follow the wrong shepherd. He's implying - if you want to live a good life, look for another gate. The Pharisees are not the gate. Jesus is the gate.

Both problems threaten us. Sometimes bad people break through our doors. At other times, good people walk freely through the wrong doors. They enter the doors of sinful entertainments or companions in crime. Even at home, seated before televisions and computers, we sometimes open doors that invite us to look at and participate in actions that are immoral or illegal. We all face temptations to walk through the wrong doors.

Jesus will save those who walk through him. They will come in and go out and find pasture. He gives abundant life to those who use him as their door.

You may not think much of it when you walk in and go out the doors of our church. It's a threshold you have to cross to get here and to go home. But they represent Christ. Normally we lock those doors in order to protect the holiness of this place. When sinful people come in here, we hope they become converted. We hope that all visitors find Christ in the nature of our building and the people gathered here.

This week, pay attention to the doors you see, whether they are the doors of offer access to houses, bedrooms, businesses or computer screens. And ask this question: Is this door Christ? Or should I look for another?