

Reflection for April 26, 2026 – Jesus Calls Based on Psalm 23 and John 10:1-10

A few days back I was walking Duffy down to the dog beach. Outside the Blind Angler Grill a woman was getting out of her car with her dog. He was a beautiful inquisitive friendly golden-doodle cross. His owner and I chatted for a few minutes and then I began to walk toward the beach. The owner asked if her dog could come with me. "Of course, I said." She told me he would be fine without her, as she needed to put on her shoes before joining us. Off we went, Duffy on his lead and the other pooch walking along with us.

It is a bit of a walk from the Blind Angler to the Dog Beach, perhaps 500 m. I looked back and could not see the woman coming. But we kept on, nonetheless. When we arrived, I still saw no sign of the woman and became somewhat uneasy. Did she know where we were? Did I perhaps now have two dogs instead of just one?

Well, there was nothing to do but go in and let the dogs do their thing. Duffy was immediately in the water. Fido or whatever his name was, was not far behind. I kept wondering and looking for the woman, but no one appeared to be coming to the beach.

I expect it must have been at least 10 minutes before I heard a whistle. Fido ran up to the fence, but he couldn't get out as the gate was closed. I wondered. The owner? Fido came back to me and then I heard it again, Up the dog goes once more to the fence looking excitedly down the road. Then I saw the woman. And Fido saw her. Tail wagging enthusiastically, I opened the gate and he was off like a shot, happy to be reunited with his owner. I was duly impressed. What great recall.

Analogous to the shepherd in today's gospel reading, a gatekeeper for his own sheep, Jesus is depicted as a gatekeeper too. **"I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture."**

A gate to where we might ask? John says it's a gate into a place where we can have abundant life. I think Jesus calls us there, to a place of refuge, a place of quiet communion with our soulful selves, a place of knowing we are loved regardless of our circumstance.

This is a place not offering our physical protection like an armed barracks, but one that sets aside space for spiritual nourishment, space for the heart to heal, space for our minds to rest in peace. Thieves and bandits may find ways into the shepherd's sheepfold, but not the one Jesus guards. They would try to enter by trickery, deceit, through treachery, or dishonestly, but they are denied entrance by the divine gatekeeper.

Those that gain entry are seekers of a path paved with honesty and integrity. The willing servant and the willful healer travel that path too, as are those with hearts filled with love and souls overflowing with empathy. They are accompanied by Jesus, the consoler and the truth-teller.

And welcomed are the desperate, those in search of justice, societies' orphans, the weak and the infirm. Cherished are the lost, lonely and searching. They all pass through the gate into the open arms of compassion, the one who calls us, "come, I am the light, and the way. "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

Jesus also calls ordinary folk, people like you and I. Yes, Jesus calls us too. We are called to come into the fold and "have life abundantly." The incredible reality of that gift is that it is absolutely free.

Now I am not sure about you but I'm like that dog that accompanied me to the beach the other day. When I hear that call, I run. Because when I run to answer Jesus' call, I run into the grasp of the creator herself.

That is a peaceful place of contentment, a respite from have-to's, a time out from worry and fretfulness, a place to be hugged by divine love.

I was in such a place yesterday morning as I lay lounging in bed all snuggled up beneath the covers. It was a warm, cozy, and dreamy time before the alarm would sound and summon me to the day. Jesus was there saying, just stay here for a bit longer. Enjoy the silence of this moment. Protected, comforted, held in a few holy moments, I was in a blissful place.

Do you find yourself in such a place at times? Working in the garden perhaps, with the damp soil sifting through your fingers. The warm sun on your back and neck. Perhaps it is a slalom run down the ski slope with your legs buried up to the knees in fresh powder. Perhaps the solitude of a canoe ride over the glassy surface of an alpine lake. Perhaps it is being engrossed in a good novel in a comfy chair when your eyes flutter and close. A dreaminess envelopes you, a peaceful, calming. Where is your peaceful, contented, blissful place?

Called out of our business and routine. Called away from what we believe to be most important. Called from what is demanded of us. Called to be mindful that time spent with the Holy Presence is nourishment for our thirsty spirits. Called from a place of deep longing.

Called from such times brings us to a heavenly peace-filled and safe place. It is a sheepfold sheltered from the storms of hostility, the agony of loss, the uncertainty of change.

And Jesus calls us there. Calls us to live life and live it abundantly.

O that we could be like Fido, alert, and attentive to the master's call. Alert to the voice of the shepherd Jesus on the wind which sings; come my friends, come from your weariness, come in from the cold, lonely and too often broken world you inhabit, come all who are weary and heavy burdened. Come into my sheepfold for in my care you will find rest. Come in anytime. The gate is always open and I will be there to welcome you.

"Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture."

Jesus calls us. The pasture awaits.

Thanks for listening this morning. Amen