



Message from Pastor Chris

I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

~ **John 10:9-10**

(Adapted from Pr. Chris' Sermon, Good Shepherd Sunday, May 3, 2020)

For those of you who have been relegated to working from home recently, you are probably aware of the unique challenges it brings. In order to work effectively and efficiently, a myriad of boundaries have to be set. Most notably for me, working at home means tending to children and pets. In our house, there are three creatures that constantly demand attention, begging for food or a lap to sit on. It's difficult to sit at a computer without the cat jumping up to interrupt the task at hand.

Maybe that's why I appreciate what Jesus has to say about gates. Gates are useful. They help to maintain boundaries and keep the furballs out! For example, when I really need to, I just shut the office door and gate everything off to create the space I need to get work accomplished. I know the cat doesn't like it though, because inevitably, I'll see this fuzzy, furry little paw reaching underneath the door trying to pull it open!

Gates are not only helpful in keeping out cats and kids, they serve as important protections. Currently, we have closed all semblance of gates to a world where an invisible enemy lurks. Like a thief in the night, COVID-19 threatens to steal away our health and wellbeing. But there are other gates we place all around our lives as well. We put gates around our finances to protect our budgets. There are gates around our schedules to protect our time. We put gates around our diet to protect our bodies. Wherever there is something to protect, I can dream up some form of gate doing the work.

Jesus' metaphor about being the gate for the sheep, however, is a bit different. It's interesting in John's Gospel that Jesus never describes himself as the 'gatekeeper' but rather the gate itself! It would seem to me that Jesus is not as much interested in being some sort of heavenly bouncer keeping out the riff raff. He is much more compelled to be the one through whom sheep enter. So, what if, instead of keeping things out, Jesus is more concerned with being the gate that invites each one of us in?

Jesus calls himself the gate, because that was part of the functioning of the shepherd itself. In ancient near East 'sheepdom' there was no actual physical gate. It was the shepherd who would lie himself down in the opening to allow entrance and exit. In this way, the shepherd knew precisely who or what came and went. So, the shepherd was not only the gate, he was the means through which all the fluffy creatures traveled! Apart from such metaphorical details and stated another more powerful way...Jesus, as our Good Shepherd, is the means of grace by which you and I as His creatures enter the Kingdom of God!

The truth is that many of us get confused or even intimidated by the gates of this world. Perhaps there are even more of us who get confused thinking that there is some sort of gate or boundary between heaven and our lives on earth. Seen in such a way, perhaps we have to attain a certain level of living on this side of the fence in order to gain entrance through the gate to God's Kingdom. After all, how many times in our own flawed judgments of others have we fancied ourselves as some sort of gatekeeper for God's grace? It happens all the time in our thoughts, words, or actions toward others. How many times have we judged others as if our own lives of sin don't matter? Perhaps I am a better "Christian" than you so that the gateway to God is open that much wider!

My guess is that when most of us hear Jesus' words in John's Gospel we hear them through the filter of our own human experience and expectations for this world. We sometimes only think gates can open if we are worthy enough or have the right credentials. But the Gospel truth is much different. Jesus is asking us to suspend our understanding of worldly gates as boundaries to overcome. Instead Jesus desires for you and me to see His gate as a means of divine grace...of death and Resurrection!

There is good reason Jesus says, "*I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly.*" Why else would Jesus be "the gate" if He was not willing to die on the Cross in order to grant beloved children abundant life in his name? Even in this time of isolation and limited freedom, when we are sliding our fuzzy paws under the gates of quarantine, trying to open things back up, we remember that we are still recipients of God's abundant life and love. That even when we are isolated and bored



and speculating about our future, reflecting perhaps on all of the ways we took life for granted, Jesus is granting us unmistakable freedom.

That freedom is in the form of his everlasting and freely given promises. If that's not abundance, I don't know what is! But it only happens because He is the gate. It only happens because Jesus died and is Risen. It only happens because of the Cross. This is what Jesus' gate is all about!

If we're honest with ourselves, I think we tend to dwell too much in our faith journeys about what we are saved from. Yes, we are saved from sin, death, and the devil as Luther was fond of saying. But what really happens when we enter through the gate of God's grace? What happens when we are invited through the gate of God's Kingdom and experience that kind of abundant life now? It seems to me that when we enter through Jesus' gate, through the Cross, through death and Resurrection, we are not just being saved *from* something. We are being saved *for* something. We are being saved for life in Christ's name. We are being saved right now for the sake of Christ to live the kind of life God has preferred and promised for you and me right now!

In other words, when we enter through Christ and receive His life, we are freed to be His life for our neighbor. We are freed to share an abundance of life and joy for those in this world who need it most. We have been freed to share the life, which can only be found in God's Kingdom, with those entrapped by gates of racism; Gates of poverty; Gates of illness; Gates of loneliness; Gates of whatever...you fill in the blank.

Friends, you have entered through the gate and invited into the abundant life. Remember, it's not a life of this world, but of God. The question is: How will you live it?

Your Partner in Ministry,
Pr. Chris

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STAY HOME STAY HEALTHY STAY CONNECTED

Stay Connected! Give each other a call or email to check in. Join the FaceBook group "Morning Star" on our page to chat with other members. Let the Church Office know what's been happening in your world or if you need a copy of the directory.



Contest time!!! The best-looking homemade mask wins a dozen cookies of your choice baked by your Church Council! Send us a picture by mail, text or e-mail.

happy mother's day!

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

Consecrated HOME COMMUNION KIT

PICK UP

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB FOOD DRIVE

DROP OFF

DRIVE THRU ONLY

May 8 ♦ 1 - 3 PM
May 9 ♦ 9 AM - Noon



FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- Drive up and remain in your vehicle.
- Tell us how many communion kits you need.
- We will pass them to you on a tray along with your flower.
- Pass your food donation or check back on the tray.
- Follow along with us LIVE on Facebook Sunday, May 10 at 10^{AM} or watch later on our website.

Details on how to watch LIVE at MorningStarOmaha.org

A box is available to drop off your offering!

Self-contained
Holy Communion cups & wafers available for contactless drive-thru pick up in the front drive of the church

We have roses for all moms for a "mom" you wish to celebrate with!

Bring non-perishable food items (or funds) for the Westside Boys & Girls Club!

faith at HOME



There are so many questions with few answers to the things that are rapidly changing in our world today. Pastor Chris and Pastor Glenn have been hosting "virtual" Bible studies LIVE on FaceBook on Wednesdays at 10 AM or you can watch at your convenience online at www.MorningStarOmaha.org.

In addition to that, the ELCA has put together some great resources for you and your children or grandchildren to dig deeper in your faith. For more information, visit our website! Daily devotion books are available for April, May & June. Call the Church Office to have one sent to you.



Proud of your beard grown during this time of social isolation? Send us a picture by mail, text or e-mail. The best-looking beard collects a dozen cookies of your choice baked by your Church Council!



If you are graduating high school or college this summer, contact the Church Office to let us know what school, degree received and future plans.

Many are "adopting" graduating high school seniors, giving them snacks, gift cards, and needed items for college. Jack Neussendorfer is graduating from Burke High this year and will attend Hastings College on a football scholarship. He is an active member of our youth ministry attending trips, Lead Acolyte, and dedicates time to Trunk or Treat's Haunted Hallway. If you would like to "adopt" him to show love and support in these interesting times, sign up at www.signupgenius.com/go/9040C48A4AD2D6-adoptasenior. Items can be dropped off at the church (call first) or to Angie Hawkins' house May 20. Thank you so much for your support of Jack and consideration of showing him some love!

OPEN BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Entrance to the building is by appointment only. Call 402-393-5553 to schedule an appointment where we will ask a short health screening questionnaire. Visits with either Pastor Chris or Pastor Glenn can be arranged by phone or in person. Thank you for your help to keep everyone safe and healthy!

Green Envelope

This month's Green Envelope supports "Welcome the Stranger", our Refugee Program. Thank you for your continued generosity as Morning Star continues to expand this ministry!



Gods Reach Envelops Every Need



Morning Star Preschool & Child Care Center's Drive-Thru Parade was a huge success. On Saturday, May 2 around 100 families went through our lot to share virtual hugs, well-wishes, tears and love with nearly all of our amazing Preschool staff! Check out more pics on our website!



While we are waiting to be able to meet in person again, we will need the following supplies before we can open and we're having trouble finding them. Thank you!

- Disinfecting Wipes
- Hand Sanitizer
- Nitrile Gloves (med, lg, xl)
- Face Masks



I am so grateful for all the prayers and cards and calls from my Morning Star family. You helped me more than you will ever know. Thank you so much, and blessings to you all.
~Marge Morgan

Thank you for the use of our chapel for our Tuesday Meetings!
~ AA Group



MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

331 S. 85th Avenue
Omaha, NE 68114

Address Correction Requested



May Service Project

This month our service project is to help Rejuvenating Women! We will be collecting items from their shopping wish list. Rejuvenating Women provides hope and restoration to those enslaved in human trafficking in Nebraska and throughout the country by empowering survivors to lead healthy, independent lives. Together, we can put an end to human trafficking in Omaha! Learn more at www.RejuvenatingWomen.com!



Current Wish List

Household Items:

Dryer balls
Bunt cake pan
trash bags (13 gallons and smaller)
Clorox/Lysol wipes
Hand sanitizer (alcohol free)
Food Storage bags
Toilet paper
CRAFTSMAN Wet/Dry Vac

Passes for putt putt golf, activities in the community
Yard games

Clothing:

Socks
Women's underwear (all sizes from small to XL)
Tennis shoes (size 6- 10)
Pajamas/pj sets (all sizes small to XL)

Outdoor Items:

New patio furniture
Camping chairs for outdoor events
Cooler for outdoor events
Gardening equipment, pots, seeds, flowers
Memberships to museums, state parks etc.