

Pastor Roy's Sermon from May 7, 2017 (Easter 4)

Children: Doors and gates. Why do we have them? The garden gate. The backyard gate. The pasture fence gate. The Golden Gate. A gate without a fence. A fence without a gate. What if your house had no door? What if it was locked and you couldn't get in? Have you ever been locked out of your house? Key at the neighbors. Through the basement window. Jesus helps us to know God. To know important things about ourselves and the rest of the world. Jesus helps us to know love, forgiveness, kindness

There are people and situations which give you life. . .and there are people and situations which steal life away. Some make you feel very alive, some make you wonder. Think about it. An escalating argument? Life stealer. A thoughtful gift for a friend or family member? Life giving. But then there are all the situations where they give a little, and take a little.

Jesus' followers found life in him and in his teachings. They felt very alive in his presence as he invited them to seize every moment as a chance to grow, to be a force of justice and love. Jesus went to the shadow places of life to teach. He mingled and mixed and challenged. What about enemies? We know what they are...or do we? Then there is hunger. Finances. Health. Security. The government. The poor. Foreigners. We think we have a good grasp on these topics, then Jesus goes and throws us off a bit in our certainty.

John lifts up Jesus as the gate. What is he suggesting? From what does Jesus save us? What are we coming into, or going out of? What are we being fed?

Is this Jesus gate made of concrete? Or is this gate a way of life, a way of living? Is the gate a way of turning neutral or negative moments into opportunities for love and justice?

Perhaps to enter at the gate is to look inward to ask, how does love and peace bring hope to this situation? Does this person whom I am tempted to fear or hate actually hold the keys to my salvation, to my growth, to my discovery of compassion?

I'm sure pastors have interpreted Jesus as the gate in many ways. I'll come down on Jesus as the gate into love. The Jesus gate is love. Love in action which flows from our thoughts and intentions. It starts within and flows outward in mercy.

The writer of I Peter sees that Jesus accepted the ultimate act of violence against him, his execution, and refused to react, to seek revenge, but simply gave himself over to God because he knew this was the way for him. He consecrated himself to God, the source of his life. Fearless. Amazing. This gate is love made possible by profound trust.

The gate keeper trusts. The gate keeper loves. The gate keeper invites us to trust and love. The gate keeper dares us to allow our troubles to be transformed into mercy. The gate keeper invites us to receive healing from his wounds. To be healed even by our own wounds. To find in our own questions, doubts, and fears, a moment for faithful trust. A moment for love.

John's gate is love. Jesus is the Gate. Jesus is love. Will we accept the challenge to find peace by trusting in love?

There are other gates that invite us to enter. The gate of power and manipulation. Controlling when we are afraid to trust in love. The gate of wealth, acquiring and hoarding what we do not need because we are afraid of going without. There are many gates, there are many ways to live our lives apart from love.

Jesus, the Gate, invites us to live in love. To keep pushing ourselves in service, in listening, in making space for family and friends, for neighbors, coworkers, even an occasional enemy. This is what it means to walk through the gate of our Lord. May we have courage to do so. Amen.