

**St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church
Moore Street, Adelaide**

Reflection for the 4th Sunday of Easter

“I AM THE GATE” SAYS JESUS

At this stage in our history, even before Covid-19, most of us keep our doors and gates firmly locked. We do this out of fear – either of unwelcome intruders or of losing our ability to be insured. When I was young I recall our home being unlocked even when everyone was out. There was a time, a few decades ago when Anglican churches were nearly always open to the public at least during the day if not overnight as well. At some stage we stopped this practice and began to lock. I suspect that St Mary Magdalene's Church would have been one of the last churches to lock up.

It is interesting that Jesus says in today's Gospel reading that he is “the gate of the sheepfold”. Gates and arches are often significant because they signify entry to a special area or even a new experience or venture. Jesus the Gate falls into this category. He is ready to welcome us into his new world of the Kingdom of God. Will we recognise the voice of Jesus as he calls us through his Gate? It is fascinating to know that in rural areas of Turkey the shepherds actually sing to their sheep. It is this singing voice which the sheep come to know and appreciate.

This thought leads us to another point of this Gospel teaching. Jesus warns us about voices we shall hear which will distract and lead us astray. They have their own agendas which are to do with goals or offers which are not those of Jesus. Jesus teaches that he is the way, the truth and the life. He will lay down his life for his sheep whereas the false shepherds will not. They have their own agenda.

A teaching from the Gospel today is that we are free to come and go through Jesus the Gate as we negotiate our ways through life. We shall know when it is time to return to the sheepfold through the Gate and know when it is time to venture out into the demands of life.

Today we have the two images of Jesus – the Good Shepherd and the Gate of the sheepfold. Both are reassuring and the encouraging as we experience the successes and failures our lives. But there is another personal matter raised in the Gospel. How easily do we help other people find the Gate? To what extent do we mirror the example of Jesus the Gate? How hospitable are we? Are we as closed as our locked homes? This is worth thinking carefully about. For us to take a risk may well be us trying a commendable venture. The Church, too, always asks us to be open in our relationships with the poor – this can be risky but potentially rewarding, too.

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