

# Triple Threat:

## The Gate, The Shepherd, and The Lamb

*Relentless Series: Reminiscere Sunday*

Lent Week 2 - Mar 13th, 2022

Rev.Rynn Parraw

(originally written for a small country/rural-church circuit

Delivered: Sunday, August 14th, 2011)

Scripture Lessons:

Genesis 22: 1-17a

Psalm 23

John 10: 1-18

Hebrews 10: 1-22

I am sure we have all heard about the triple threat: a singer, dancer, actor; the Holy Trinity: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit; and that good things come in threes. But, more than any of that I have heard plenty of warnings to stay away from mixed metaphors.

Yeshua was the king of metaphors, and this morning I want to introduce you to another triple threat. Yeshua calls himself all sorts of things throughout the gospels, especially in John. In this mornings' passage John 10: 1-16 he refers to himself as both the gate and the shepherd, and I am sure that we have all heard of him as the Lamb.

But, these passages make about as much sense to us in 21st century industrialized Canada as most of the Old Testament does. We need to take a deeper look at this passage to understand what he was getting at. If we do that we will see that the 1st century Jews to which Yeshua was talking, didn't get it either. How much of a chance do we have?

We also need to take a deeper look at the culture to which he was referring. Not speaking to (as I already pointed out, they didn't understand him any better than we do) but the people that he was actually talking about.

## The Shepherd

I think we know the basics about sheep-shepherd relationships. The shepherd herds the sheep from place to place, fattens them up and then sells them. Sometimes even sacrifices them. There is some careful breeding, some disease recognition. Even a little boy like David or a little girl like BoPeep could do it. An easy job, right? You get one lamb and the rest will follow.

Did you know that if you make a sheep jump over a stick and then remove the stick all the rest of the sheep will continue to jump in that spot? They trust that that first sheep knew what he was doing and therefore since he made it through safely, it is best to do what he did. Some people think that sheep are dumb, but they are actually quite smart and recognize that their strength is in sheer numbers.

A sheep trusts his leader, a sheep knows who cares for him. There is one main difference between western and eastern shepherding. In westernized shepherding the sheep are pushed around from place to place in a herd formation, they flow almost like water. This is often done through utilizing the strengths of their nature, i.e. capitalizing on the predatory actions of a carefully trained dog. The sheep move pretty well predictably. As with any herd animal is it easier to move a hundred than just one.

In Eastern shepherding, they use a different approach. There is no pushing, there is no scarring, and there is no stressing out the animals. The sheep follow their leader. The shepherd walks out in front and trusts that all of his little friends (or investments) will follow suit.

The sheep know the voice of their shepherd. They know that he will find them food and water, he will give them rest when they need it, shade when they are hot, and lush grass whenever possible. One or two of the flock might be required as a payment (dinner) in exchange for this care, but the sheep gladly take that chance as they know full well that their chances of survival increase greatly with the help of their Shepherd. They trust in him.

They know their shepherd so well that when he calls they know his voice out of a crowd and they will follow him anywhere.

Is your relationship with God that tuned in?

Could you recognize His voice when He calls you?

Will you willingly follow Him wherever He asks you to go?

Can you tell the difference between a message from God and an enticing ploy?

A gentle correction and a trick to make you stray?

How well do you know His voice?

Will you follow Him?

Do you ultimately trust Him through and through with your life,

your safety,

your health,

your money?

We call Him the Good Shepherd,

but are you one of His good sheep?

## The Gate

In 1st century near eastern shepherding, there weren't fenced paddocks, rotational grazing, and livestock auctions like we have here. It was a communal thing, including the pens. The shepherds used something called sheepfolds. These structures had four walls usually about five feet tall, often made of stone and a small opening that was about two feet wide. On top of the walls, there were often briars or thorn bushes laid like barb wire to keep out robbers and other non-human predators.

At night the shepherds would bring their sheep into the sheepfold. In the morning they would let their sheep back out and lead them to pastures.

There are three main things in the Sheepfold culture to remember. The shepherds brought their sheep in for safekeeping. The precious lambs were led into a walled fortress with a barbed-wire perimeter and an armed guard standing watch 24/7. This Shepherd was taking every precaution to protect his investment.

The second thing to remember is that come morning, the shepherd came to lead the sheep out. However safe the sheepfolds were, there was no food and there was no water

inside. The shepherd lead the sheep out to new lush pastures and freshwater every day. If the sheep were to try to remain in the safety of the stronghold they would starve, they would die of thirst, they would bake in the sun.

Inside the sheepfolds was safety and protection: security. Outside was life abundant, sustenance, and all the things a little lamb needs to be happy and grow up strong and pure. They both had their pros, they both had their cons. Both were necessary for survival.

The third thing to remember is that the sheepfolds were communal. A shepherd didn't lay claim to the nearest fold when he was nearby, and they didn't have their own. They shared. On any given night there could be several shepherds with their flocks in the fold all mixed up and congregating. One shepherd, or hired hand, would be charged with keeping watch while the others would stagger off to town or get a worry-free night's sleep. In the morning the shepherds called their own sheep out, the sheep sorted themselves out to follow their shepherd, and headed off to pasture.

But here is the kicker: the walls were made of stone, the precious cargo was inside, what was the gate made out of? Stone? Wool? Hide? Wood? Briars? The gate was the shepherd. He sat in that two-foot opening with a fire and his rod or staff. The only thing between the predator and the prey was a man with a stick.

So what is The Gate? The Gate is the one thing through which you find safety and refuge, through which you find sustenance and life abundant, and the one thing between you and the wolves. When Yeshua calls himself the gate he isn't saying he is one of many ways to get to where you are going, one path you could choose. He isn't saying that he's an escape route for when times are tough and you need a quick way out.

He is the only way to find refuge, the only way to find life abundance, and the only thing keeping you safe. He's the only way in or out. He puts himself before, behind, and between you and danger. He not only will fight for you, but he'll stand guard all night long. He'll close you in, he'll let you out, and he'll give you rest.

## The Lamb

But Yeshua, the Lord, isn't just the Good Shepherd and the Gate that protects you, he's also right there with you in the fold. He is the Lamb of God. The one pure sacrificial lamb, the one atoning sacrifice. The purest blood that is the only thing that can wash us clean.

His was the blood that marked the doorways on the eve of Passover. He was the ram caught in the thicket whilst Abraham held the knife above Isaac in faith that God would supply. He was the one we sent to slaughter in our place - and it was a messy death at best - but, he'd do it over and over.

He's the one we feed to the lion. The one we toss to the robber. The one who, no matter how many times the shepherd goes looking for us when we wander off, we readily leave behind when something else catches our eye.

Do you know why being a Christian is fantastic? Because we have the ability to have a living, real relationship with our Lord. We can do this because he came here, lived among us, and understands what we go through. From puberty to temptation, from humiliation to fear in the storms, from love to honour. He came, he lived, he felt it all, he died, he rose, and now he intercedes on our behalf. Who better to pray to than the only God who can really understand our limited perspective.

Our Saviour is the Lamb of God. Our Lord is mixed in the herd, unnoticeable to the average eye, or to those who aren't paying attention. But he is right here among us. Both in the sheepfold and out in the pasture. Both in the temple and in the slaughterhouse. He lives, he lays down his life, and he does it over and over again for us - and with us.

Yeshua is that perfect sacrifice, the only one that can please God's requirements and make right what we have wronged, and he does it willingly for us. We no longer have to offer the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, not because we ignore the law, but because the sacrifice was made for us. Yeshua came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. And that he did.

Though we may be mixed up ourselves, and this might all be clear as mud, I think that what we see our Lord as tells us a lot about who we are and where we are in our

journey. To some He is our rock, to others, He is a warrior, the Redeemer, the Lamb, the Shepherd, the Light, the Gate, and the Teacher. He is all of those things because God knows us so well, each and every one of us, that He speaks to us personally in a language that we understand.

That's why He gives us revelation. I wouldn't understand a message intended for any of you, just as a message given for me would probably go completely unnoticed to you. I see God moving every day in herd dynamics, in nature, in Scripture, and it amazes me every day how many other people can't see what I just saw.

But every revelation must be held accountable to Scripture. The Good Lord gave us the Holy Scriptures in order to guide us and lead us through to the path He has set out for us. He is our careful Shepherd who walks before us, searches us out, and takes good care of us always supplying what we need. He is the only gate through which we find refuge and life abundant, all that we need. He is among us and offers himself as the sacrifice that settles the debt that calls for our blood.

The Shepherd, the Gate, and the Lamb all in one.

Where do you see Him?

Where will you follow Him?

Do you know His voice?

Do you recognize His face?

What do you need?

And can you see that He has already given it to you?

What do you call Him?

Soli Deo Gloria  
(solely to the glory of God)

He is everything.  
He is all that you need.  
The Lord is my Shepherd, the Gate, and fellow Lamb...  
I shall not want.

## Prayer of Confession

Lord, our Shepherd, with a forgiving hand You seek us out, You lead us safely through the gate for protection, and You offer Your only son as the sacrificial lamb to make right what I have wronged. Lord, I confess to You, all of the times my heart has wandered from Your promises and my hands have strayed from Your work...

O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace.

## Prayer of Dedication

Lord, we take this opportunity to give back just a little of all that You have blessed us with in thanks for all that You have done. We dedicate these gifts to Your service, Lord. Thank You for guiding us in their use and our work. May our sacrifice be good, and pleasing, and perfect to You.

We give Thee but Thine own,  
What e'er the gifts may be;  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust, O God from thee.

Amen.

*Selah,*

Rev. Rynn  
**Soli Deo Gloria**