**Is Jesus the Gate? 2017 05 07**

**John 10:1-10 Pr. Hitoshi Adachi**

Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Currently we are in the season of Easter in the church calendar. Do you know how many days we are into the Easter season? The answer is 7 weeks or 49 days. For those of you that know about Buddhism, you might hear the sound of a ringing bell.

Setting aside the 49 days of Buddhism, let’s think about the 49 days of Easter and think about what kind of season it is. You might have thought Easter was just one Sunday and not a season, but there is a deep meaning for the season.

When we reflect upon what happened 2000 years ago, the disciples could not believe Jesus was truly resurrected. However, as time passed people gradually understood the resurrection.

Then in the Christian Church, in the Season of Easter, during the first three Sundays, the focus in the Gospel texts was meeting with the risen Christ. Then from the fourth Sunday in Easter, the focus shifts toward the deep relationship between Jesus and human beings.

In the Gospel text, Jesus discusses the parable about sheep and a shepherd. Sheep are human beings and the shepherd is Jesus. It is often said that sheep are similar to humans. Sheep prefer to herd together and are timid, anxious, and become lost easily.

Therefore, sheep find safety in numbers and they require a shepherd. After following a shepherd, every sheep, in the group, is guided inside the sheepfold by the shepherd in the evening. Then they stayed there during the night.

Even if there is a fence, it should have a gate that sheep enter and exit the sheepfold. There should be some sort of locking mechanism, as well, but it can be picked by a determined thief…

In Jesus’ time there were many shepherds, and once they came to the sheepfold and left their sheep, each shepherd probably went somewhere to sleep.

Jesus said, I am the gate. Jesus is a good shepherd always together with his sheep and stayed at the gate. He, himself, became the gate and protected his sheep.

Of course the next day, the sheep need to go out from the gate to find water and pasture. In the last verse of the Gospel text today, Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Let’s think about the deeper meaning of this sentence.

Here the word translated as “life” means the real essence or energy to live. Jesus gives the true essence to live. Actually, one verse after today’s last verse, Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd.” And he even said that “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Again, is it ringing a bell? We do not know exactly when it was said, but it was many days before he was crucified. Then he was actually crucified to sacrifice himself for the life of humanity. His sacrifice was not only for people living 2000 years ago, but also for the life of all human beings since Adam and Eve. From the old and new testaments, we know that through Jesus’ crucifixion, God, forgives all humans. But not only that, Jesus is risen and gives new life to all.

Our lives are like sheep, we often are unsure, anxious, and need guidance in our lives. God protects us and wants us to thrive. Please reflect on what you were doing last week. It is wonderful each one of us came to LCR. Because Jesus’ enduring protection and guidance we are here.

Jesus also gives us the new, true essence to live for each new day and each new week. All sins, shame, or anxieties are cleansed, and in the deep relationship and love between our Lord and human beings, each one of us is able to walk and follow Jesus, the good Shepherd; as Christians, we are compelled to share His love and Grace. Amen.