



*1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. 7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:1-10)*

### *The Eighth Sunday after Trinity.*

#### *The Collect.*

**O** GOD, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; We humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Collect for today is extraordinary in its depth of meaning and its appeal to the absolute and unconditional sovereignty of God.

Archbishop Cranmer re-crafted the introduction of this Collect to reflect that reformed view of the omnipotence of God Almighty in things heavenly as well as things temporal. It is also such a comfort to know that the One who "sticketh closer than a brother" shares that omnipotence in the Triune Godhead. *All power is given unto me*

*in heaven and in earth.* (Matt 28:18) God is never taken by surprise either in Eden, or in our own times. This Collect, like all others, is not intended for a limited application of collecting our thoughts before worship. It is a prayer that may be uttered every minute of every day with equal impact. Our mortal minds pray for those things, which in the wisdom of God are hurtful to us, to be put away from us – not merely those things which WE consider hurtful (there may be a difference). The prayer also appeals to God to grant us those things that are, in every way, profitable for our eternal souls and not simply those things that are glossy and well-decorated and that appeal to the world alone. Finally, we ask all these things be granted through Jesus Christ who loves us with such a love of whose depth we cannot comprehend. We love Him because He FIRST loved us.

To attempt to present such beauty and meaning with which God has imbued the Parables, especially the Parable of the Door and the Good Shepherd, is a daunting task, a humbling experience, and a challenging exercise of prayer and spirit. Regardless what we say in describing these parables, we leave so much out that should be said. The mark of a great writer is the gift to say very much with very few words. That is the distinguishing factor of the Author of the Word. God says so very much in one sentence that we poor men require a volume, or tome, to attempt to address it, and then only in part – and He says it with such touching beauty as we are put to shame in emulating His art. Please forgive my inadequacies and look to the underlying perfection of the Word that God has given.

***1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber*** The main function of a door is to grant entrance to those without. It also serves to protect those who are within from those who may intend harm to all who enjoy the occupancy of the haven within. The Door Christ represents offers both an eternal admittance to those who accept His grace, and an eternal rejection for those who refuse it. Though the wicked attempt to take heaven by storm, they shall not gain admittance. ***For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.*** (1 Cor 16:9) Those who are the Elect and Chosen of God have already gained entrance to the sheepfold. Christ does not emphasize their entrance because it has been decided in heavenly councils from time and eternity past. He does, however, mention those impersonating men and ministers who seek an alternate entrance other than through Him. The Door of Christ is one which no man can open, and no man can close. Its opening and closing is solely at His prerogative just as was that great door of Noah's Ark. ***And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*** (Rev 3:7-8)

***2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*** The Door actually belongs to Christ. The sheep, too, belong to Christ – and so does the porter at the Door. There is a door of the heart at which Christ stands and knocks. Though all cannot hear His voice, to those who DO so hear His voice, He will come in to them and abide with them. ***Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*** (Rev 3:20) The walls and defences of God are sure and impregnable. Only His own shall be in the fold of Christ. The DOOR is the only means of entrance. ***I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*** (John 14:6) It is by way of the DOOR that one takes possession of his estate. (In Christ)

**3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.** The use of the DOOR is the sole discretion of the Lord. He closes the DOOR to predators and wolves, and opens to His beloved. His sheep have grown very accustomed to the voice of the Lord. How? Through constant and diligent study of His Love Letter to them (the Holy Bible). Any other voice to the Christian is as discordant as a counterfeit bill to a bank teller. **4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.** The DOOR is opened ONLY to those who follow Christ. *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.* (Eph 2:18) We dare not go out from our sanctuary of rest without the sure leading of our Shepherd. He is not only our SHEPHERD, but has taken on our own nature as the Lamb of God! He knows us. He has lived our hurts and pains. He loves us in spite of our infirmities. It is by means of the DOOR that we are privileged to view the inner beauties of heaven which the world cannot comprehend. But we cannot forever remain inside the comfort and beauty of the fold – we must go out to the place of grazing and fountains of water to be fortified in our faith. *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* (Rev 7:17)

The ability to call others by name is a great power. Cyrus the Great is historically, or by historical courtesy, credited with the power of repeating the name of every man in his great army. "Wonderful", says De Quincey, "is the effect upon soldiers of such enduring and separate remembrance which operates always as the most touching kind of flattery." General Westmoreland also memorized the names of each man in morning formation along with the names of their close family. The common soldier in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne was deeply moved to have the general inquire about his wife and children by name.

**5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.** Yes, that is true of the real sheep of the fold and not the pretenders. Though my opinion may offend some, I must say it nonetheless – it is likely that there are far more wolves occupying the pulpits of America than lambs. It is correspondingly likely that far more pretenders sit in the pews each Sunday than true believers. The evidence is obvious. Far more people attend church today than 150 years ago, yet please observe the unwholesome fruits of their worship in modern society.

**6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.** Our failure to grasp the simple things of God is often amazing. Jesus recounts this parable with clear language and articulate meaning, yet many did not understand His words. How many read a single passage of the Bible and construct an entire theological position based on a single verse taken out of context!

**7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.** One way or another, Jesus will bring us to understand His meaning. We may be stubborn and self-willed, but He will bring us more and more profoundly to understand over time. Christ is the very DOOR of which He speaks and, not only the DOOR, but the Sheepfold itself. We are the sheep who are privileged to enjoy His benefits. In all of His care for us, He demonstrates His zealous love. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.* (Psalms 23:2) The door is not only the entrance for invited guests, but also a resort for beggars who, knowing their great need, understand the privileges of a Great House.

**8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear**

*them.* Who came before Christ? In the economy of heaven, no one came before Christ. But men have crept in whose words were only deception and lies. These false prophets made fools of all whose hearts were not fixed on God. Even Adam and Eve opted to hear the voice of the Serpent when they tarried before that tree of ill winds in the Garden. It was to this tree they went first rather than that Tree of Life which stood for Christ. I shall never forget the voice of my mother though she has been with God these past two decades. It was soft and sweet. It never spoke to hurt but to comfort and instruct. I heard that voice every day of my life until I went away college. But the voice of Christ is even more constant, sweet, and of greater comfort. He whispers love. He whispers wisdom. He whispers faith. My mother's favorite hymn (and now mine) conveys the meaning sweetest in its words:

### **I Come To The Garden Alone Hymn**

**I come to the garden alone  
While the dew is still on the roses  
And the voice I hear falling on my ear  
The Son of God discloses.**

#### **(Refrain)**

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own;  
And the joy we share as we tarry there,  
None other has ever known.*

**He speaks, and the sound of His voice,  
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,  
And the melody that He gave to me  
Within my heart is ringing.**

#### **(Refrain)**

**I'd stay in the garden with Him  
Though the night around me be falling  
,But He bids me go; through the voice of woe  
His voice to me is calling.**

#### **(Refrain)**