



Wednesday Prayer

4th Sunday of Easter – Gatekeepers of Safety

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. John 10:1-10

Each time I’ve met with youth and parents over this past year, we’ve spent time talking about and having youth identify “Who are my safe people?” These are the people they can go to and talk about anything difficult that may be going on, whether with friends, family, online, or within themselves. It can be hard to find a safe person, especially when a young person is feeling depressed, scared, stressed, angry, or a number of other emotions. The seeming shelter of posting all these feelings through social media or chat rooms opens the gates wide open when what is really needed is the close and comforting support of a trusted person.

Jesus begins this passage with a metaphor of the sheep safely following the shepherd out of the gate because they know his voice. They will not follow one who enters wrongly as a thief; they do not know the voice of strangers. As per usual, the disciples didn’t understand, so Jesus lays it out clearly for them – he is the gate. Following him will lead to abundant life.

Jesus’ words provide a metaphor for safety in the work we do together. Helping youth identify and connect with the safe people in their lives, the gatekeepers of their safety, supports their growth into abundant life. So how can we know and teach about who is a safe adult? It’s important for us to help distinguish between who is actually safe and who may be posing as someone who cares in order to harm or exploit a child, whether in person or online. Read what Shared Hope International shares about [Identifying a Safe Adult](#) and learn how to support young people in preventing and reporting online sexual exploitation through the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s CyberTipline](#) and [Sextortion](#) resources.

Jesus our gatekeeper, guide us to follow your word and place our trust in you. Strengthen our efforts to support youth in finding those they can truly trust and who will support them no matter what difficulties they may face. Help us to be the gatekeepers of safety for all your children. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.