

**Easter 4 (A)**

**St. Peter's, Norfolk**

**Text: John 10:1-10**

**Date: May 3, 2020**

In the mid-1970s a Hungarian professor of architecture teaching in Budapest wanted to develop a teaching tool he could use in class that would help his students recognize spatial relationships in three dimensions. And so, this professor designed and built a large square cube with smaller colored cubes, some of which were movable.

The professor's name was Erno Rubik, and so the cube was called "***Rubik's Cube.***" You might remember that it was very popular in this country in the 1980s and 90s.

Rubik's Cube is a puzzle that has nine different squares of varying colors in the six faces of the cube. And all the squares on the six faces of the cube can rotate in different directions. The object in solving the puzzle is to rotate the cubes on the faces in such a way that all six sides have one solid color.

The difficulty in solving the puzzle lies in the fact that there are more than 43 quintillion possible arrangements for the movable cubes. Most of us have never heard of a quintillion, but just to give you an idea of its size, the age of the universe in seconds is only thought to be 5 quintillion! And yet, there are 43 quintillion possible arrangements for Rubik's Cube!

And so over the years, 100 million of these things have been sold and one in every five people in the world have spent countless hours trying to solve Rubik's Cube. Some have been successful, and many, many more have not. Perhaps many of you watching this have solved it.....

Generally speaking, those who have tried to solve Rubik's Cube can be divided into three groups:

**First, there are those who go at it haphazardly, with no plan or direction.** They spend hours and hours rotating the faces of the cube, trying to solve the puzzle, but usually they don't. If they do happen to solve it, it's only by pure luck, and only after many days, weeks, or months.

**Then there are those who have been known to cheat.** They have either taken the cube apart and put it back together in its right order or they have changed the

colors by taking off the removable colored stickers and putting them back on where they are needed in order to solve the puzzle. They may tell everyone that they have solved the puzzle, but in reality they have solved nothing.

**And finally, there are those who have solved Rubik's Cube by discovering the key to its solution.** And the way they discovered the key is by reading and following the instruction book that comes with the Cube. It's a guide that offers suggestions and step by step procedures that can be taken to successfully solve the puzzle.

Well, if you think about it, our lives are sometimes like Rubik's Cube in the sense that life can sometimes be very *"puzzling."* There are certainly many great mysteries to life and all of us are seeking answers to them. Sometimes in our searching, we become confused or mixed up or make wrong turns. Many times we find that the pieces of life just don't fit, and we're ready to give up and quit. Searching for the answers to life's mysteries can seem overwhelming at times, can't it?

And much like the three groups of people who try to solve Rubik's Cube, so too, those who seek the answers to life can be divided into three categories:

**First, there are those who live life haphazardly.** They go through life with no guidance or direction. If they're lucky, they will stumble upon solutions to everyday problems. Spiritually speaking, they may or may not believe in God, in an Almighty plan, in eternal life, and in the saving and healing power of Jesus Christ.

These are the people whom Jesus referred to in today's reading from the Gospel According to John as the ones who *".....do not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climb in some other way...."* These are the people who seem to be lost or completely ignorant of a gate that leads to eternal life. Some may even be blind to the fact that the gate (the gate of the Good Shepherd, Jesus) is right in front of them, and some remain deaf to the call of Christ in their lives.

It's easy, isn't it? to get lost in a world that has so many, many different ways to turn. And how easy it is to lose sight of where we are and what we are all about and which way to go. But Jesus reminds us today that it is He who stands at the gate to God's kingdom. He tells us very clearly and very concisely that He is the way. He assures us there really is no other way of entering God's kingdom, except through Him.

**Then, there are those who cheat at life, those who cut corners or compromise on important issues.** They are the ones whose philosophy of life says that it is perfectly okay to do anything and everything they want, as long as no one gets hurt. But people do get hurt.

Sometimes they even fool themselves into thinking that they have solved life's problems. But in the end, their problems have multiplied and become worse than they ever were. Jesus refers to these people as the *"...thieves and robbers..."* the ones who mask the problems in life with temporary pleasures. They have lost their perspective on life....they are focused on temporal (temporary) things and not on things eternal; and rather than come to know and worship a God of mercy and compassion (a God of eternal life) they are wrapped up in and worship material things....worldly things. Their goals in life are inclined toward earthly happiness, wealth, and pleasures rather than eternal peace, eternal joy, and everlasting life.

In John 10, Jesus tells us exactly what the truth of this life is. He tells us that there is no other way of going to the Father..... of experiencing this eternal peace and joy except through Him. Jesus said, *"I am the gate."* Later he will say, *"I am the way, [and] I am the truth."*

**And finally there are those who follow the instruction booklet that comes with life, The Bible.** Those who take the words of Scripture and apply them to their everyday lives.....these are the ones who have entered the gate to the flock and have become followers of Jesus, and who try daily to apply Biblical principles in their every day lives.

These are the people who have found the solution to life. Oh, life is not necessarily perfect for them, but they have discovered that the answer to living life to its fullest can't be measured by counting the number of material things they can acquire in their lifetime. Nor can success in life be measured by the amount of honor and praise bestowed upon them.

These are the people who have found Jesus Christ and have accepted Him as their Savior and Lord, and have acknowledged His presence deep within their lives- through His Holy Spirit. These are the ones who know without a doubt of the unconditional love of Jesus present in their lives.

They have come to the gate and they have found it opened, and they have entered, and they have become followers of the Good Shepherd and they have found peace-

a peace which surpasses all human understanding....a peace which allows them to deal with the tough times in life.

Today, Jesus reminds us that He came so that we might have life and have it in abundance. He reminds us that that it is He who is the life, and that it is through His life-giving graces, blessings, and power that we can gain entrance into His flock....the flock of the Good Shepherd. Jesus tells us, ***“I am the Gate, I am the Way, I am the Truth, I am the Life, I am the Answer, I am the Key, and I am the Solution to all of life’s problems. Follow me and you will have life in abundance.... not only in this earthly life....but you will have eternal life in paradise.”***

***My dear friends...my brothers and sisters in Christ***, we all face problems in this life. In fact, it may seem sometimes that we have to face 43 quintillion problems! Right now, some of us are going through broken relationships, some are facing serious health issues, or devastating news of a terminal illness. Some have lost a loved one. Some are, or have been caught in the trap of addiction to alcohol or drugs. Some of us have deep, dark, hidden problems in our lives that we are afraid to deal with, some of us are just plain afraid....We all of us face problems in this life. But we also have a solution....Jesus Christ.

There is absolutely no puzzle (even Rubik’s Cube) that Jesus can’t solve. There is no problem that Jesus can’t fix, and no life that Jesus can’t mend and make whole again. He stands at the gate to peace, love, hope, and serenity. And he invites us to come....to come in and to be part of His flock. He is waiting for us. But we have to choose to enter.

If you haven’t already done so, let me encourage you to seek the gate, and when you find it, go through the gate and follow the Good Shepherd...the One who is the answer to all life’s problems and the key to eternal life. If you haven’t done so, do it today. Amen.