

November 12, 2023

**"Enter the Gates"**  
**By Rev. Edgar F. Solís**

**Introduction**

*We have three weeks before the end of this liturgical year, and we turn to gratitude as the guiding theme for worship. What does a life of gratitude look like?* Often, gratitude comes amid overcoming a time of challenge, when we have experienced a test or a difficult time, or we receive awaited good news.

In life, we all have experiences, situations, or thresholds to cross to enter a new place, a new moment, or a different reality.

Years ago, I watched an excellent movie, "Temple Grandin" (*TV Movie 2010*); this film is a biopic of a woman who overcame the limitations imposed on her by her condition of autism to become a Ph.D. and expert in the field of animal husbandry. She loves animals! She developed an interest in cattle early in life while spending time at her aunt and uncle's ranch. She had speech delay until age four and had difficulty throughout high school, mostly in dealing with people. Her mother was incredibly supportive, as were her teachers. Temple is noted for creating her "hug box", widely recognized today as relieving stress in autistic children. This film was a potent and moving reminder about how different an autistic person experiences life in all dimensions. As a sibling of an autistic person, I know exactly what all of this means as my brother suffers various kinds of challenges and accidents due to his condition. For instance, a simple haircut could be a tremendous defiant experience for my brother. In Temple Grandin's movie, we see that she was terrified of passing sliding doors. Today, Grandin is a world-renowned academic, making TIME magazine's list of the one hundred most influential people in the world in 2010. As an educator at Colorado State, Grandin was named as one of the top ten

college professors in the United States in 2020. Temple Grandin is a powerful example of facing life transitions with positive expectation and hope.

### **Bible passage**

In the context of Psalm 100 invitation "Enter the Gates," God invites us to move forward, looking at the future with immense joy, expectation, and hope.

UMC discipleship worship series states; *Today God is inviting us to consider our common humanity, our shared experience of living in a world with heartache and struggle with injustice, violence, hatred, and war.*

*However, we also can experience profound joy and satisfaction that is deep and true and binding of heart to heart. That is what we celebrate this week as we worship. As followers of Christ, we have gratitude in our hearts, and all of this begins with God! Every time is an excellent time to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving; let us see the psalmist invitations as a great opportunity to enter the gates of a new time with thanksgiving. Let us believe God invites us to pass through every door with gratitude in our minds and hearts.*

### **Reflection**

A transformative lesson we can learn from Temple Grandin's movie comes in the shape of a metaphor; it has to do with opening doors. Grandin learned that doors, literally and figuratively, are things you must walk through to make progress. For her, it meant taking on challenges like advancing in her professional education, facing oppressive systems of gender discrimination, learning something new, and walking through the automatic doors at the supermarkets! When faced with a new challenge, she girded up her courage. She told herself she needed to walk through the opening — to learn, make changes, and grow professionally and as a person. Eventually, Temple was able to open the doors and walk through. We all have those

doors, don't we? We must walk through those metaphorical doors if we want to change and grow.

Let us live a life of gratitude amid the difficulties of our human existence.

Dare to cross the threshold of challenges and opportunities in every moment that a new beginning, project, time, and problem is present in our lives.

In a new documentary of the life and work of Temple Grandin, she mentioned, *"A lot of people don't see doors to opportunity," "I want to open doors for other people now – I figure that is what I should be doing." "When I was younger, I used to look for like great, mysterious meanings of life." "When I've gotten older, I thought the most important things are the things that I do to help do something real to make something better."*

Today, she is one of the most well-known and respected experts in animal behavior. Her latest book, *Visual Thinking* (2022), made the New York Times Best Seller list.

Temple Grandin is a champion of the humane treatment of livestock, autism rights, and inclusive neurodiversity by employing her gifted insights from her personal experience with autism and visual thinking.

Through the courage of passing through the door opening, she has given the world a unique perspective on working with animals and treating and including individuals with diverse ways of thinking.

### **Conclusion and application**

People of God, as we, the church, move forward into a future full of uncertainties and situations that can bring anxiety and worry to people, we, as followers of Christ walking ahead in our journeys, must have the conviction that God is inviting us to see the doors as gates of

opportunities to experience God's presence, where we can find courage, love and the rest that Jesus offers and gives.

Let us enter the gates with great expectations and a positive attitude, knowing God is good. *What does a life of gratitude look like?* Well, God is love, and the Divine wants us to succeed in sharing the good news for the transformation of the world. A grateful church intentionally passes through whatever door or obstacle to create and exercise actions to connect the people of its community with God, modeling Christ in all efforts, programs, and activities.

A faithful follower of Christ expresses gratitude by collaborating with their faith community to build a welcoming environment and actively participate with the congregation, pastor, and staff in having a positive atmosphere of acceptance, trust, and compassion. A life of gratitude serves others regardless of their condition or differences. A person that follows Christ is a persona that obeys Jesus' command, "Go and make followers of all the nations" teaching these new disciples to "obey all the commands I have given you". These people replicate Jesus' character, actions, and mission in a world desperate to see God's transformative power.

Let us enter the gates of a new time with faith and hope, Amen!