Robber vs. Rabbi

That you may have abundant life
"Truly, truly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gate keeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.
The Shepherd of life

No flock ever grazed without a shepherd. He was never off duty. Constant vigilance, fearless courage, patient love for the flock. These were the necessary characteristics of the shepherd.
Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! (Psalm 80:1)
Psalm 23
“But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.” (Psalm 79:13)
“For thus says the Lord God: Behold I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.” (Ezekiel 34:11-12)

He comes to save and protect the lives of his sheep. There is no fear from the sheep as long as they hear the voice of the shepherd.
In Palestine, the sheep are generally used for their wool. In Greece, that might be different.

The sheep are often with the shepherd for years and often have names by which the shepherd calls them. “Brown-leg, black-ear.”

Some defining characteristic.

What are the defining characteristics of the people that Jesus encounters?
The shepherd leads, the flock follows. If they lose sight of the shepherd or can’t hear his voice anymore, panic ensues. The shepherd will call out sharply from time to time to remind them of his presence. How does this happen today?
Intermingling with other sheep.

Shepherd stands at a distance and gives a call that only his sheep would know. Soon they all come running. They would come for no one else.

Their ears were always open for the voice of the shepherd.

This speaks to the importance of daily worship for us. Running for our lives.

In what ways can we demonstrate this kind of life for the students?
So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and 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.”

The Jews did not understand the meaning of the story of the good shepherd. So Jesus, plainly and without concealment, applies it to himself.
In villages and towns there were communal sheep-folds where all the village flocks were sheltered when they returned home at night. They were protected by a strong door of which only the guardian held the key.

In the warm season, when they didn’t return at night, they were collected into sheepfolds on the hillside. Open spaces enclosed by a wall. There was an opening that they could go in and come out, but the shepherd slept in front of the door in the evenings.

No sheep could get out or in except over his body.

In the most literal sense the shepherd was the door.
So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and 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.”
Through him and him alone do people find access to God.

“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the father.” (Ephesians 2:18)

We can come in and go out. Probably a well-known Hebrew phrase. To be able to come and go unmolested was the Jewish way of describing a life that is absolutely secure and safe.

The leader of these people is to be one who can bring them out and lead them in. “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” (Numbers 27:16-17)
“Blessed shall you be when you come in; and blessed shall you be when you go out.” (Deuteronomy 28:6)

Solomon’s prayer “And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my Father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.”

And yet...

Jesus says that those who came before him were thieves and robbers.

Do we see these thieves and robbers today?
Have life, abundant life

To be absolutely protected is a mark of true life. The Greek phrase for abundant life is marked by *super* abundance.

“For if you love those who love you what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, *what more are you doing than others?*” *i.e.* What are you doing that is remarkable/abundant?
Interesting that abundant life ties the ordinary to the extraordinary. Jesus is going beyond what is deemed necessary.
Life isn’t merely about being able to breathe, but implies so much more.
To look outside oneself is part of abundant life because you know that you are protected. Life is worth living.
What’s the point of knowing life but not living it?
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Jesus was God’s final, authoritative word even before the first sunrise.

To announce a word is to speak one’s will or intention. How does John’s use of these words inform us abundant life?
He came and worked in an ordinary occupation—carpenter. If he had come today, he might have come as a bank teller, accountant, farmer, or a mailman. The occupation is not as important for abundant life as living out our vocations.

He came that we may have *ordinary life abundantly*.

Does ordinary mean boring?
Luke 12:1  “In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered that they were trampling one another…

Mark 2:4  “And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him…”

John 6:2  “And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs he was doing on the sick…”
People trampled one another and ripped roofs off houses to gain access to him. They were responding to the striking availability of God to meet present human need through the actions of Jesus.

This was the life longed for. Life at all costs. They had to see what true life looked like—even in the life of a simple carpenter. How do we show this kind of urgency today?
John 14  “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 17:3  “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

John 20:31  “...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
What is this life? The inevitable conclusion

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now life in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

My life is his life. What he did, I get to do. How he saw people, I get to see them. How he loved people, I get to love people. Sanctified moments and lives.

If my life is his life then...
When people encounter you, it follows they encounter...

However...“I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” Romans 7:15

The battle of the robber vs. the rabbi.
What really explains the enduring relevance of Jesus to human life?
Why has he mattered so much?
Why does he matter now?
What robs? The selfish robber

“For you have died, and you life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is you life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:3

- Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (2)
- Put to death what is earthly in you.
- Sexual immorality
- Impurity
- Passion
- Evil desire
- Covetousness
Anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk
No lying
Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.
“I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”
The answer (12-17)
Abundant life together. Seeing each other.

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, **holy and beloved**, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive. And above all these **put on love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be **thankful**. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and **admonishing one another** in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, with **thankfulness** in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving **thanks** to God the Father through him.
Among those who live as Jesus’ learners, there are no relationships that omit the presence and action of Jesus. All relationships are mediated through him. “I never think simply of what I am going to do with you, to you, or for you. I think of what we, Jesus and I, are going to do with you, to you, and for you. Likewise, I never think of what you are going to do with me, to me, and for me, but of what will be done by and Jesus, with me, to me, and for me.” Bonhoeffer

Christian brotherhood is not an ideal that we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. It is a place where we come in and go out because Christ is in the midst of the relationship.

We do not do this for our own sake but for Christ’s sake.
Do you see your coworkers in this manner? As ones holy and beloved?

Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Abundant life is not selfish. It is an imitation of God’s sacrifice for his people. How will we sacrifice for the students and each other?
“In Him we live and move and have our being.” Acts 17:28
What ways can we find joy with each other in this preparation time?
What abundant things do you see about your vocation here?
What are ways that Concordia, as a whole, can show students more abundant life?
• Jesus still lives and he always will