

Introduce myself. Welcome visitors. Safe place to hear a dangerous message. Room for One More. Next week and January series.

Doors – they don't just hide stuff. They are highly symbolic.

- Welcome – to our home!
- Opportunity - Walking through a door – like a university classroom or dorm room –
- Freedom – Oh, I remember the first time, I opened the door of my first car with no parents in it. **A 1976 Ford LTD** – Gargantuan sized and made of metal – none of this plastic stuff – Red and White, just like the Glenbard East Rams – nicknamed the BEAST from EAST
- Love – You may not think of this, but you sing it... fill in the blank - Love is an open _door_
- Adventure – You know the story of Narnia when July goes through the doors of the wardrobe in Spair oom... and it opens up to a whole new world...
- Doors are all over and are highly meaningful

Trivia – how many doors do you think exist on the CCC property – all four buildings, anything that has a hinge and people walk through. Turn to the person next to you and make a guess. (701)

Christmas is about a doorway. About a God who opened the doors of heaven to immerse himself in the stuff of earth. About the transcendent becoming imminent. About the eternal becoming temporal. About the infinite becoming infant. You know the movie “Honey, I shrunk the kids?” This doorway is God shrinking himself in space and time to meet with us... and show us what life could be.

When Jesus first came, though. Doors god shut in his face. Mary and Joseph showed up in Bethlehem that night around 2000 years ago, they didn't have a place to stay. And the popular story goes that there was 'no room for them in the inn'. This line comes from the 1611 translation of the Bible called the “King James Version.” It has spurred on pictures of small hotels already booked up. Innkeepers have had a bad rap ever since then in the 'how could you turn away a pregnant lady, let alone the son of God?'

A better translation, however, is that there was no guest room available. In those days, when Bethlehem's population would swell, people would generally stay in the homes of relatives. And, apparently, there was no relative who got the word to prepare room for Mary and Joseph. Maybe it was because they were just full of people. Maybe it was because they didn't clear out space. Maybe it was because their back room was so packed with stuff they accumulated over the years that nobody could go there anymore! So, they closed their proverbial door and left Mary and Joseph to find another venue. In a stable, according to tradition, but in Bethlehem, mangers were not found in wooden buildings, but in caves.

Where was there an open door? A cave. Not a wooden shed, but the place where sheep were kept at night... caves, high on the hillsides of Bethlehem. Imagine 5-6 feet high, 10 feet deep and 10-20 feet long. Not huge... but to this day you can find these caves dotting the hillside just outside of Bethlehem.

And the cave door was wide open. Why? It is super likely that these caves were used for sheep – not goats or cattle. Why? Because Bethlehem was just five miles from Jerusalem where they killed tons of sheep for sacrifice of sin.

And so, one of Bethlehem's main industries became sheep herding. Now picture this. Often times the pregnant sheep-moms gave birth in these caves. And the lambs born there were bound for Jerusalem and bound for sacrifice. Similarly, Jesus – who would be known as the lamb of God – was destined for Jerusalem... and for sacrifice. And the door was wide open.

So here is the question for you to answer today. How open is your door? Are you like the cave or the guest room? Have you prepared room for the savior? Maybe your life is just super full – with people, with goals, with aspirations, with entertainment... with junk. Or maybe the door has been locked. Nobody welcome here! Especially not Jesus! Cuz truth is, I like being in charge of my life and "There aint room in this house for the both of us!"

Doors and gates were a favorite analogy for Jesus too... In fact, he said " 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:9-10

In Jesus' world there were sheep pens. And those pens were designed to protect the sheep at night – keep them from wandering, keep them close to the shepherd. Jesus recognizes that we need protection... and we need to get into that place where we will be protected and close to the shepherd. And in this verse he drops a truth bomb. – I am the gate. In other words, I am the way in. Into the family, into protection, into a relationship with the good shepherd.

And I love his contrast – Them thar thieves – they come to steal, kill and destroy. In other words, watch out for counterfeits! Watch out for posers. They are not the gate, heck they don't even use the gate – they hop over the back fence. And their agenda for the sheep – steal, kill destroy. There is no 'nurture, grow, multiply, feed" in there. That's Jesus job. He is the door to life. And not just a little life – life to the full.

And for Jesus, this is not defined by material possessions, or comfort, or prosperity, or living pain free, death free or always healthy. It is defined by your alignment with the God of the Universe.

Opening that door could be the best thing that ever happened.

You see, Jesus walked through the doorway of heaven to come to earth. He went through the doorway of a cave and the doorway of the womb in order to be human. He said "I am the door." And at the end of his life, after they killed him, they laid him in a brand new tomb and rolled a stone door – likely about 1-2000 lbs. But three days later, the door couldn't keep him in! It was rolled away and Jesus was dead no more! You see, Jesus blew the doorway of death off it's hinges and did something people thought impossible. He walked backward through the doorway of death back into life.

When my wife Kelle was (9?) she got invited to a Methodist church in her town by her fifth grade friend. Sometimes, Kelle found herself sitting alone, at the end of a pew, letting the sun from a stained glass window wash down on her and literally feeling the presence of God and his love for a little girl. When she went to Sunday School, she found that her grade school principal was the Sunday School Teacher. And he taught the kids – if you want to follow Jesus, just open up the door of your heart and let him in.

So Kelle went back home, laid on her bed and opened up the door to her heart. Motions and all. She had room for him. And so, she opened the door to let him in. She has been following Jesus for decades and is so thankful for that day that she opened the door. So am I. So are our four kids. So are the thousands of people she has invested in since that point.

Jesus came to wreck our paradigms. To blur the line between heaven and earth. To show that he is not bound by one way doors. He is God and he wrote the rules... certainly he can bend the rules.

And in the very last book of the Bible, he gives one more door illustration: “Here I am!” he says, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” Revelation 3:20

Isn't it interesting that Jesus doesn't blow that door off its hinges. He just doesn't. Because he knows human beings. It just doesn't work to announce your intrusion into someone's life. That's why you don't just walk up to a girl and say “You're marrying me baby.” It just won't go over well. No. Jesus is a gentleman. He knocks and waits to be invited inside.

He gives you that yes or no opportunity. Now some of you said yes to Jesus long ago. Cmon in! And that life to the full we talked about is coursing through your body. And you know him and relate to him and have that daily experience of Christ in you...

Some of you, though, might be at the place where you are saying. I want that. I want a fresh start, a new lease on life. Heck, nothing else has worked – maybe I'll try inviting Jesus in. Wow. He's knocking. Maybe you heard the knock just because you got invited to a church for Christmas Eve. That is the knocking. Maybe you have been feeling it for a while. Maybe it is a friend who knows Jesus and you are watching their life saying “I want more of that!” He's knocking. Maybe it is just that life is not the way it was supposed to turn out. And you want power from on high to change. He's knocking...

In fact, he crossed the universe to get here so that he could knock. He became human so he could knock. He did miracles and made claims and died and rose so that he could knock. He died on a cross so he could knock. And he blew the doors off of the tomb so he could show up at your door and knock.

Music Here

It really is amazing that a Holy God would waltz into an unholy world. The crazy thing about his presence is how his power works backwards. That his holy touch actually makes other things holy. Usually if something clean touches something dirty, you are concerned that the white will get stained. This is why I never wear white and eat spaghetti. Or why farmers don't have white shoes. When a healthy person touches a diseased person, you are worried that the healthy person will get sick.

But Jesus is the opposite. His clean infects dirty people to make them clean. His health takes away disease. His purity takes away sin. Anything he touches becomes holy. And he is knocking at your door, wanting, waiting to touch you.

Take this time to reflect, to hear God's knocking, to feel your soul's worth and to do whatever business you need to do with God today. Maybe you need to open that door. Maybe you need to feel your value to him. You matter so much that a holy God on a holy night would come to make you holy with him.