

4-27-2025

“Jesus at the Door”

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.

³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

A verse I often quote when explaining Jesus, our relationship with him, and his character to people is **Revelation 3:20. “Here I am! 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.”** I expect there’s a chance that you have seen a copy of the famous **Holman Hunt painting, “The Light of the World,”** that’s at Keble College, Oxford.

Hunt shows Christ at dusk, crowned with thorns yet also with a royal diadem and a glowing halo, gently knocking at a door tangled with briars and dead vines. Notice that the door has no exterior handle: it must be opened from the inside. The lantern Jesus carries is the only bright light in the scene, throwing warm rays onto the doorway, hinting that divine light patiently seeks entry into a darkened, cluttered heart.

It’s a beautiful painting, Christ tenderly knocking at the closed door of the human soul, hoping that the door will be opened. Jesus comes to us humans first. And He stands at the door of our hearts and knocks. He is not someone who breaks down the door of our hearts and forces his way in, but rather he lovingly waits until we voluntarily open the door of our hearts and receive Him as our Savior, Lord, and King.

There’s poignancy in Revelation’s portrayal of Jesus standing in the night, patiently, tenderly tapping on the closed door of some human heart, holding his flickering light in the darkness, hoping for entry. However, today’s lectionary passage, which we read after Easter, shows us a completely different image of Jesus than the one waiting outside the door. In our passage today, Jesus doesn’t politely tap upon a closed door; he knocks it down, or completely ignores the lock, and strides right in among his frightened disciples!

Easter evening. Some strange things have been reported. A few of Jesus's disciples went to the tomb in the early morning darkness and found it empty. Mary has told them that she was encountered by the risen Christ. But maybe because she is a woman whose testimony was not valued, or maybe because it was just too impossible to comprehend, the disciples don't believe her.

There they are a bunch of frightened disciples, full of fear, behind locked doors. Can you blame them? The same authorities who arrested and crucified Jesus may now be looking for his followers. And for these fearful disciples, Jesus ignores their locked doors, enters their closed room, stands among them, reveals himself to them, pronounces his peace among them. **"When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."**(v.19)

As I said earlier, this image of Jesus coming to the disciples is very different from the image of Jesus we see in Revelation 3:20. There's power in John 20's picture of the risen Jesus using the night as an opportunity to do some of his most aggressive, dramatic work, Jesus breaking through a locked door without being invited in, without requesting permission to enter, Jesus inviting himself.

If I remember correctly, it was last year. My son Samuel locked the bathroom door on our second floor from the inside and couldn't open it, trapping himself inside. A panicked Sam started shouting and crying from inside, and a flustered Yoonjung came downstairs to find me because she couldn't open the door. Usually, in such cases, you can push the latch bolt from the outside with something pointed and turn the outside knob, and the door will open without much trouble. But this time, no matter what we tried, it

wouldn't open. My child was crying inside, and Yoonjung was just stamping her feet in frustration. What would you have done? Of course, no one would calmly knock from the outside and wait for the door to open.

I quickly got my toolbox, forced the door open, and got Sam out. The Jesus we encounter in today's passage is not someone who endlessly waits for us to overcome our sorrow and fear and come out to Him when we face unbearable difficulties. To the disciples trapped in extreme sorrow and fear, Jesus didn't wait for them to open the door and come out; instead, He passed through the door and strode towards them, comforting them and giving them new hope. Likewise, when you and I are immersed in unspeakable difficulties and sorrow, **Jesus is the one who breaks through our doors to embrace, comfort, and encourage us.**

Of course, when you think back over many of the episodes in Jesus's ministry, that was just the way he operated. He doesn't wait to be invited to dinner or into conversation with people. He just barges in, strikes up a conversation, initiates the encounter. We never heard Jesus say, 'Excuse me, would you like to hear about God's Kingdom?' No! He just started talking about it. And Jesus' way of stepping right in seems even stronger and faster in today's gospel story.

Some of you are here in church today because you asked Jesus to be part of your life. Maybe you were going through a very hard time. Or you felt like you had no other options. Or you tried different ways to fix your life, and then you decided to try following Jesus. Maybe you started reading the Bible a lot, looking for answers. You might have joined a Bible study group or taken a class to learn about Jesus, hoping to find what you were searching for. Or maybe you visited different churches, looking around and hoping

to find the one that felt right for you – a church that inspired you and felt full of God's Spirit, so your faith would grow stronger. Maybe this church is the one you found. Well, that's great for you.

But that's not the story the Gospel of John tells us today about Jesus. In that story, Jesus suddenly appears to his disciples, who were terrified. He shows them that he has truly come back to life. He gives them his Holy Spirit and then sends them out into the world to share his name.

When I used to work with college students and young adult groups, I heard these kinds of testimonies a lot. 'When I was young, I went to church with my parents regularly. But at some point, I didn't want to believe in anything. In college, I lived life the way I wanted to. I also had difficult relationships. Things were tough at home too. Nothing went the way I wanted it to. Then, out of the blue, a friend asked me if I wanted to go to church with them. Strangely, I felt like I wanted to go. I had this feeling that I absolutely had to go, even though I didn't know why. And surprisingly, every sermon I heard felt like it was speaking directly to me.' Trust me. John 20, risen Christ barging in, showing up where not invited.

The fact that we are baptized people carries many meanings. The water of baptism signifies God's grace that cleanses our sins and gives us life. However, for people in the ancient Near East, water also represented chaos, disorder, and fear. While we don't always perform baptism through immersion, **it's worth considering the profound meaning that immersion holds.** When we baptize through immersion, we completely submerge the person in the water and then bring them out. What does this signify? It means that all of humanity existed as beings trapped in chaos, disorder, and fear. We

were people who couldn't escape those waters of chaos and fear on our own. Jesus didn't just watch us while we were in those waters; instead, He came into that chaos and rescued us from it. This is God's proactive and powerful work of salvation.

Dear friends! During these two Sundays of Easter, I've stood up before you and proclaimed that Jesus was raised from the dead. Furthermore, I have said that he was not only raised but also returned to his faithfulness followers. And this Sunday I have followed up those wild claims by saying to you that he not only returned to his unreliable disciples, showed himself to them, healed their doubts, and then gave them everything he had. On top of that, he commissioned them to be his representatives in the world, doing the same ministry that he had done when he was among them.

You could be forgiven for being like Thomas and having your doubts. It's understandable that you might have reservations and fears. Who wouldn't have questions? Because I believe the story from John's Gospel is really true, I think **Jesus will likely find a way through anything that's holding you back – your worries, fears, doubts, questions, or even if you try to refuse him.** There's a good chance that he may kick open whatever door you've locked, come in upon you, breathe his Holy Spirit on you, and give you a job to do. We believe in Christ, we follow Christ, not because we have found a way to believe in him but rather because he has miraculously found a way toward us. Take heart! Jesus at the door is about to enter into your heart! Amen.