

Sanctuary First

May 2013

Theme Summary

“Who’s at the Door”

Text: Revelation 3:20

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

Background

This is the last in the series of texts chosen by the Moderator for this year. As we have sought to share "heart texts" with the next generation, this famous verse invites a response. It has been used powerfully over the years as an image of Christ standing at the door of the human heart seeking admission. It has helped thousands to make a personal response of faith to the Risen Christ,

However, the verse sits within the letter of the Risen Christ to the church at Laodicea, the lukewarm church which has become complacent and too comfortable to be effective for Christ. The image is one of Christ being excluded from his own church, standing on the doorstep seeking readmission.

Either way, the core message is that Christ knocks and seeks entry to the hearts of this generation. On Easter evening "when the doors were locked" Jesus made a miraculous entrance into the upper room. Here he waits for the invitation - patient and persistent. The image begins with Jesus as the guest seeking entry; and ends with Jesus as host at his meal.

Setting

- a. The congregation may be kept outside and invited to knock before being allowed in. Some may be kept waiting longer than others. One person may knock, but no one answers. Others are invited to knock, but no-one answers. When, eventually, the doors are opened, make sure that people are welcomed warmly.
- b. Once inside, the church/area may be divided in two by a white sheet on which images of doors are projected on a loop - some inviting, some intimidating. Add a sound track of percussion to represent the persistent, patient knocking of Christ at the door. On the other side of the divider is a table at which food is set for a simple meal and where communion will be shared later in the service.
- c. Alternatively, you may have a series of "doors" to open with surprise items on the other side.

PRESENTER	What did it feel like to be kept waiting? What did it feel like to be welcomed in?
READER	<i>Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)"</i>
SONG	Jesus Christ is waiting (CH 4 360)
PRESENTER	Life can take different directions depending on the doors we go through. A classic example of this is the film "Sliding Doors".
VIDEO	Clip from Sliding Doors
PRESENTER	Another famous story suggests that we can pass through a door into another life - in this case the life of Narnia where it is winter but never Christmas.
VIDEO	Clip from "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe"
CONVERSATIONS	Share occasions when you have been faced by a situation where life has changed for you because a door has either opened or closed.
PRESENTER	(Image of Holman Hunt's "Light of the World") The image of Jesus standing at the door and knocking has been used over the years as a way of helping people to respond personally to Jesus. The image by Holman Hunt shows Jesus at the ivy-covered door, with no handle on the outside. Jesus knocks, and we respond. That is an invitation to every person and to every generation - at any stage of life.
IMAGINATIVE EXERCISE	Invite people to sit comfortably, be still and close their eyes, entering into the story as it unfolds..... "Jesus at the Door" (see attached)
SONG	Here I am waiting (Eagles' Wings)

VIDEO	The Other Side of the Door
<p><i>You may want to end here or move to the agape meal if the group is mainly seekers with little experience of church.</i></p> <p><i>If the group is more accustomed to church life, then this second section may be included as a different angle on the theme.</i></p>	
PRESENTER	<p>There is another way of hearing this invitation.</p> <p>The words first appear in a letter to a church in Laodicea - one of seven churches in Asia Minor at the end of the first century.</p> <p>The letter is a message to the church from the Risen Christ, given to the elderly apostle John who is in exile on the island of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea. The church is very wealthy - a financial banking centre, a centre for textiles and famous for its pharmaceuticals for producing eye ointments.</p> <p>One of the features of the town is the tepid river water that flows through it. Jesus describes the church as "lukewarm" - and is clearly disgusted. He would rather they were hot or cold. Their affluence has dulled their faith and fervour.</p>
ACTIVITY/ CONVERSATION	<p>Bowls of water at different temperatures which people can test and comment on. (Note - not too hot!)</p> <p>Invite people to dip fingers in the different bowls of water and talk together about what "temperature" their church is.</p> <p>Is there a "chilly" atmosphere where some people experience the "cold shoulder"? Is it a good place to "chill out" and relax?</p> <p>How "warm" and welcoming are we? What do we get "heated" or excited about - are they important or trivial?</p> <p>What areas of our church would Jesus mark out as "lukewarm"? What aspect would you like to heat up a bit?</p>
ACTIVITY	<p>Writing a letter from Jesus to our church.</p> <p>(People may choose to write to their own church, to the church in the city/town/area, to the Church of Scotland, or the Church in Scotland.)</p> <p>The letters from Jesus to the seven churches followed a pattern:</p>

	<p>a. A letter to the church infrom the one who(with a description or title for Jesus)</p> <p>b. A commendation for what was good</p> <p>c. A criticism of what was wrong.</p> <p>d. A call to change/repent</p> <p>e. A promise for the future.</p> <p>Give everyone a template with these headings, and invite them to write a letter from Jesus.</p> <p>Invite people to read samples of their letters - or to display them for others to read.</p>
SONG	Jesus us calls us here to meet him
AGAPE MEAL LEADING INTO COMMUNION	<p>(Simple food of bread and cheese and grape juice. Leave an empty chair at the table as a sign of our Unseen Host.)</p> <p><i>Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)</i></p> <p>Offer a simple narrative of the last supper read by one of the group - noting that Jesus is no longer guest, but the host of the meal - and we are his guests.</p>
SONG	Seek ye first the Kingdom God

Jesus at the Door

[Extract from "Oh God, Why? - a journey through Lent for bruised pilgrims" by Gerard W Hughes
The Bible Reading Fellowship, 1993, pp 23,24]

Imagine a ring at your doorbell one evening. On answering you discover the visitor is the Risen Lord himself. Somehow you know it is the Lord. How do you react? What do you do and say? Do you shut the door on him and tell him to come back on Sunday?

Presumably, you welcome him in, summon everyone in the house, and find yourself making such ridiculous statements to the Lord of all creation as "Do make yourself at home and stay as long as you like. Everything is yours."

Now take a fortnight's leap in your imagination. Jesus has accepted your invitation and he is still with you. How are things at home now? You remember that disturbing passage in the Gospel where Jesus says, "I have come not to bring peace but a sword, to set daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law, son against father."

The letter to the Hebrews says that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever", so presumably there has been a bit of friction over family meals in the last few weeks, some members leaving the table, slamming doors, possibly the front door, never to return.

You remember what people said of his friends in the Gospel, when he dined with sinners. What kind of people do you see coming to your house now? What are the neighbours saying, and what is happening to the local property values?

Then you decide that you must keep Jesus all to yourself, so you arrange for him to give a talk in the local church. You remember that scene in the Gospels where he addresses the scribes, Pharisees and chief priests and assures them that the criminals and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before they do. He gives the same message to a gathering of men and women and your parish church and there is uproar, the parish losing its principal benefactors.

You return home with Jesus, your saviour, who has now become your problem. What are you to do? you cannot throw out the Lord of all creation. You look around the house, find a suitable cupboard, clear it out, decorate it, sparing no expense, get a good strong lock on it and put Jesus inside. Outside you can have a lamp and flowers, and each time bow reverently, so that you can now have Jesus, and he does not interfere anymore.