

A Knock at the Door
Revelation 3: 20

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Have you ever had an unexpected knock at the front door of your home? Perhaps it was a delivery man from UPS, a friend stopping by to say hello, or a repairman showing up to fix one of your kitchen appliances. But what if that "knock, knock, knock" on your door came from an even more unexpected source? What if Jesus, Himself, was knocking at the front door of your home? Would you invite Him in or would you just stand there with your mouth open in total surprise?

Well it wasn't exactly Jesus knocking at the front door of his church, but years ago Jim Henry, the pastor of a mega church in Orlando, Florida shared this personal account during a seminar I attended. One Sunday morning while Jim was sitting in the pulpit area of the sanctuary, a young man walked into the back of the church. He was a rather hippy looking young man with long, brown hair dressed in blue jeans and a tee shirt. Jim was surprised when none of the ushers greeted the young man. Couldn't they see him? The young man then proceeded to walk down one of the side aisles. Once again Jim was surprised that no one seemed to sense his presence, including several of his staff members seated nearby. Walking towards the front of the sanctuary, the young man would stop occasionally and look around as if he were observing and evaluating this congregational setting. Arriving at the pulpit he approached Jim and said, "Just stopping by to see how things are going." Turning to leave he added, "It's going to be a really cold winter," and then he was gone. Jim didn't know what to make of this strange encounter until later that winter during a prolonged cold snap that pushed temperatures way below what is normal for that time of year in Florida. Remembering that departing comment, Jim couldn't help but ask himself, "Who was that hippy looking visitor last fall? Could it have been? No way! Yet who knows? Maybe He was checking us out."

What if Jesus came knocking at the door of our church? Would He be pleased? I hope so, but what if He came knocking at the door of your heart? Would you open that door and let Him in. During these past four weeks we have been talking about God's plan of salvation. It goes something like this. God loves us but sin has separated us from Him. That's why Christ came as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. When in repentance and faith we place our lives in His care we can experience God's deliverance. The only thing that remains is to invite Him to enter our lives and become our Savior.

That's precisely what the risen Christ told the church in Laodicea in the book of Revelation, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Now to be straight forwardly honest, Christ was addressing an entire congregation of believers who had become lukewarm Christians. They were in danger of being spit out of His presence. They needed to repent of their halfhearted commitment.

Nevertheless, this verse of Scripture has a personal application which can be summarized by two powerful word pictures. The first word picture is a shared meal. It represents the kind of warm hearted companionship that is exemplified when people sit down to enjoy a dinner together. Throughout the pages of the Bible this idea of a shared meal describes the kind of relationship which we can enjoy with God. Going all the way back to the days of Moses, he and the leaders of Israel ate a meal in the presence of the God on Mount Sinai. It occurred after the people of Israel had entered into a covenantal ceremony with the Lord at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 24:1-11). It signified the new relationship that had been initiated between the people of Israel and their God. Moving to the New Testament, on the last night of Jesus' life He and the disciples ate a Passover meal together. Not only did it celebrate the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, but the beginning of a new relationship with God through His sacrificial death. After blessing a cup of wine, Jesus said to them, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). Finally, in the book of Revelation, Christ's followers are invited to the wedding feast of the lamb (Revelation 19:9). Christ is the bridegroom and the Church, all of Christ's followers down through the ages, are the bride. Over and over again, the shared meal is a description of the intimate and personal relationship which we can have with Christ. Jesus invites us to sit down with Him for a supper of warm hearted companionship.

The second word picture precedes that of the shared meal with Christ. It can best be described as a knock at the door. In Revelation 3:20, Christ says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock." Jesus is standing on the outside of the door of our lives. He's knocking because He wants to get our attention. He's knocking because He wants us to open that door and invite Him in. Some hear the knock and Christ's acknowledgement of His presence and immediately open the door of their lives. Some people are more reluctant. They've heard the knock and the sound of Jesus' voice, but they're not so sure that they're ready to welcome Him. The lives of others are so filled with the noise of this world that they can't even hear the sound of the one who is knocking and patiently waiting to gain entrance. Finally and most regretfully, there are those who have no intention of responding, no matter how long Jesus knocks, even if the knocking persists for a

lifetime. In any and all of these possible responses, there is one thing that remains constant. Jesus will not force His way in. He will not force us to accept Him into our lives. It's our choice. We must be the one who opens the door of our lives.

Beginning with William Holman Hunt's inspired painting of this passage of Scripture in 1854, many artists have been inspired by this passage of Scripture in the book of Revelation. One of the most famous renderings was painted by Warner Sallman. Named *Christ at Heart's Door*, it was completed in 1942. Considered to be one of Sallman's finest works, it remains popular to this day. In this painting Christ is standing in front of a doorway, the luminescence of His presence casting a heart shaped reflection around Him. Beside the doorway are thistles representing sin, darkness and stubborn willfulness. A small window high up on the door indicates that the person on the inside can see who is knocking. Only one thing is missing, a handle on the outside of the door. Asked why the handle is missing, the answer is always, "This door can only be opened from the inside."

The same is true for all of us. The doorway to our hearts can only be opened from the inside. When Christ knocks on the door of our hearts, we are the only ones who can open that door and let him in.