

## September 8, 2024      The Door of Our Heart

### **Luke 11:9-10 NRSVUE**

“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

### **Revelation 3:20 NRSVUE**

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you with me.

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Do you remember the last time you opened a door? Maybe...maybe not.

Doors are a natural part of daily life.

We rarely notice the movement of passing through the space they allow for our comings and goings.

There are exceptions of course, when our arms are full of groceries, & we can't get it open or must awkwardly fit thru it like a contortionist... dropping the eggs and milk along the way!

Or we've forgotten our keys to our home or office,  
or set off alarms when we fail to remember to enter the door code  
so claxons start blaring, and the police are notified,  
& the alarm company is calling to get the “all clear” code word...  
OR maybe that's just me remembering all the times I do that here  
at church...Sorry trustees and staff...

But normally we breeze through all these helpful openings  
oblivious to what we're doing.

Yet, doors are an integral part of life.

If we are mobile & active, never a day goes by  
without moving through numerous doors.

Just think of the physical doors that are a part of your day,  
particularly the ones since you awoke this morning.

I counted 18 in just the first 3 hours of my day this Sunday.

How essential and beneficial doors are. They open and close,  
provide accommodating passageways to where we want to go,  
offer protection from unwanted elements,  
and ensure a certain amount of safety and privacy.

Doors are even useful for helping define where we are physically—  
indoors, outdoors, next door, at the front door or back door.

There is a potential power to doors.

We can use them as barriers of control with the ability to shut out,  
or allow them to be welcoming hosts with the freedom to come & go  
regardless of one's age or physical ability.

Doors give us an opportunity to make connections & find meaning in life.  
No wonder this image slips easily into our metaphorical language,  
providing ways to describe changes of attitude and activity.

For example we get “a foot in the door”, “find the door of opportunity”,  
we wonder what's happening “behind closed doors”,  
and speak of “coming in the backdoor.”

In a group coaching session I had this past week, someone shared,  
“when I closed the door on my last job,  
a whole new world opened up for me.”

I attended a powerful retreat that used this provocative image & metaphor  
of doors, openings and gates as a powerful symbol  
for spiritual growth and the faith journey.

Some of the greatest spiritual teachers & preachers have used this imagery,  
and of course, doors, gates and openings are prevalent  
throughout both the old and new testaments.

Today's scripture readings speak to this wonderfully.

Jesus says to his disciples in a powerful teaching chapter on prayer  
from Luke's gospel saying, “ask and it will be given...

search and you will find... knock and the door will be opened for you.

\*For everyone who does this will receive...will find...  
and the door will be opened.

Jesus is speaking about the love, power, and spirit of God...

the powerful indwelling presence of the Lord will shine...

be revealed...opened in profoundly life changing ways.

The door of our hearts IS what Christ is teaching about.

Because the deeper we descend into ourselves, the more doors we open,  
the more we can find God at the very heart of our being and soul.

Paul writes to the people of Corinth

“Do you not know that you are God's temple,  
and that God's spirit dwells within you?” 1Cor 3:16

Throughout the Bible the body is often referred to as a temple,  
a dwelling place of God.

Opening the door of our heart allows us entrance to the vast treasure, gifts,  
& possibility of who we are,  
& to the divine presence that is already within us.

- From Galatians 4:6, God's Spirit is sent into the heart.
- The psalmist prays, “Teach me wisdom in my secret heart.” Ps 51: 6.
- In Jeremiah, the Holy One proclaims” I will put my law within them,  
and I will write it on their hearts.” Jer 31: 33
- Love is poured into the heart thru the Holy Spirit,  
as noted in 2Cor 1:22 & Rom 5:5.
- Christ dwells in the heart and will enlighten the eyes of the heart,  
Paul writes in Ephesians 3.

Friends we have an immeasurable amount of love, tenderness & within us...if we only open the door to discover it.

I also believe the same is true with the abundance of all our qualities, Gifts, and virtues we have and possess.

Each door we open allows us to grow into the fullness of who we are as God's beloved one.

I also believe that each discovery moves us to contribute love in our world...God's love made real and tangible through our lives... our words, our actions, our service, our gifts, our strengths... poured out into a hurting and needy world.

Throughout this preaching series, I pray we will all open the door inward to help us know and claim who we are as disciples of Christ...

So that we can more fully & completely join with God revealing this love in every part of our lives, family, work, and community.

The door of our heart is a powerful opportunity to ask, seek, knock, and in throwing wide this door of possibility and opportunity... the sacred is freed in ways we might never have imagined.

Today's verse from Revelation is fairly well known,  
"Listen I am standing at the door and knocking... if you hear my voice—  
OPEN the door,...& I will come in!"

Friends we have the choice, we have the power of welcome...  
To open the door of our heart...OR the power of refusal for this opening.

Now it is also true in my experience that sometimes uninvited & unwanted life circumstances can open the door to our inner self & push us inside.

This movement happens in those situations when we find ourselves perhaps unwillingly drawn to growth, pulled inward when we least expect by undesired experiences like...  
a serious car accident, severe illness,  
betrayal in a committed relationship, or the death of a loved one.

Whether we open the door freely or are shoved through it, stumbling...  
opportunities arise for us to take God's hand and visit our inner places,  
rooms we thought were closed up for good perhaps  
or didn't even know even existed.

BUT...we learn & grow from every situation,  
every door before us...IF we are open to it.

Countless Doors open for us through limitless possibilities such as:  
a profession love, a meaningful prayer, a startling thought,  
a comforting emotion, a challenging dream, a melody or song that  
rushes the past into the present moment as Donna Shared last week,  
Doors open through a pressing intuition, a peace-filled stillness,  
a provocative book, a glimpse of nature's beauty,  
or the voice of someone we encounter.

These sources, & many, many others...are doors leading to greater AHA's  
& insights of ourselves and our relationship with the divine—  
that sacred synergy that comes alive when the two become one!

I believe God is forever startling us with the opportunity of further growth.  
We are always called to become something more, something greater,  
something better, something wonderful...  
because we are part of sacred God-sized dreams.

Every moment of our lives...every moment...invites us to discovery  
when we open the doors of our hearts to God's possibilities.

Friends while we are urged repeatedly to swing open the doors  
of our hearts to growth, it takes both intention and awareness to do so.

We develop & hone this alertness through brief or extended  
pauses of silence, focused prayer, meaningful worship,  
deliberate reflection, & trust-filled dialogue with spiritual companions.  
All such spiritual disciplines of the church open doors in our faith journey.

Our small grp ministries have this potential to open doors of opportunity to grow as disciples, discovering new & exciting ways to connect w/God.

This is why for example, we offer youth group  
& why I think it has been such a vital, growing small group ministry here at FMC—impacting 33 teenagers this past year alone.

Kids are often more willing to swing wide the doors of their hearts to learning & growing & becoming something more, something greater because of God-sized dreams of their potential. The sky is the limit!

Friends, any time we slow down, decrease our hurrying,  
or deliberately choose to stop and consider what is happening—  
or not happening—in our life, we are preparing ourselves  
to open the door of our heart.

Today we are reminded the Divine Visitor is waiting at the door.  
We need only to open it wide with our welcome.  
This is what we will be doing throughout the rest of Sept in this series.

Friends when I open the door of my heart to my Lord & Savior JC,  
I do more than simply extend a smile of recognition or say “Hey Jesus!”  
I continually open myself to grow & change in ways  
I never dreamed possible.

When I open the door of my heart, each and every time I risk  
being spiritually transformed into a person whose life  
is continually called to manifest goodness and love.

Friends, I love this imagery of the door as a way to reflect and think  
about my spiritual journey.

Because I know far too well, ALL the times  
I have missed the opportunities that opening a **door** would have offered  
to my spiritual growth...to revealing new life-giving possibilities.

This can happen because I can be too preoccupied and busy doing...  
Just going non-stop and doing...with my head down...to even notice  
there's this beautiful door to growth right before me.

Sometimes I stop at the door, full of fear about opening it...  
wondering what might be coming through it...  
OR fearful of where it may take me if I walk through it.

And you know, once in a while I will keep a door shut,  
because of pain or anger, guilt or embarrassment.  
So I choose to isolate myself by refusing to dialogue...to open up  
about a collapsing relationship...a bad decision...a hurtful action...  
a change that is just too much to endure again.

But my siblings in Christ, this I know...  
whenever I open the door of my heart and receive the divine anew,  
experiencing the HS within, hearing the knock on the door of my heart,  
and take the passage beyond where I am now,  
the wonder and richness of God's divine presence  
& the resilient beauty of my soul--humbly & powerfully amaze me.

As I've turned 60 this year and enter a new decade of my life,  
I think I am getting better at deliberately opening the door  
and leaving the known, safe spaces and places behind.

The sacred synergy series this summer has been working on my soul...  
I LOVE music and getting my praise on.

I have felt a tapping on the door of my heart to join our FMC Worship  
Music in a more intentional way.

- I've rationalized, with all the other responsibilities I have as Lead Pastor, singing as part of these worship teams is a lot to add.
- Also, I SO do not know how to read music...
- I know hymns better than contemporary songs...

- I don't think I want to be mic'd up when I sing...  
actually I don't think anyone would want that...
- It's another night out in the week that is filled with many nights out...

Listen Gina...I'm still standing here knocking...

Do you hear my voice...

did you just not READ my word as part of your message today?

HELLO???!!!!

Music moves me in ways that transform my worship experience.

I experience the divine deeply through the beautiful diverse harmonies  
and melody in both our contemporary and traditional music teams.

SO...the collaborative opportunity to serve thru both FMC Worship Teams  
is something that I have decided to open the door of my heart to.

Starting next Thursday I will be joining the praise team for rehearsals  
for the remainder of the month of September.

Then in October I will join the worship choir...

alternating each month since I can't be in two places at once!

I think I am getting better at deliberately opening the door  
and leaving the known, safe spaces and places behind.

With each open door I gain greater freedom  
to become my most authentic self, becoming something more,  
something greater as a beloved child of God.

Oh friends there is such potential power and opportunity  
to open doors in our spiritual life.

We can use them as barriers of control with the ability to shut out  
and close down, OR they can open the doors of God's opportunities  
to be welcoming hosts of the divine with the freedom to come & go,  
becoming all that God dreams & desires for us.

The choice is ours to make.



Behold I'm standing at the door knocking... Do you hear my voice?

Can you see the possibilities?

Ask and it will be given. Seek and it will be found.

Knock and the door will be opened.

In throwing wide the door our heart to God...

The sacred is freed within us and flows through us!

May it be so. Amen and amen.