

“Jesus, the Door, Applied to our lives”

Sermon notes by the Rev. Arnold A. Bush, Dedication of the Doors, June 10.2012, Church of the Epiphany, Tallassee, AL 36078,

I Doors symbolize many truths about God and us. When I use the words *door* or *doors*, that word reminds us of many things. Closed doors may mean we are safe inside. However, an open door may mean we have opened it to let others in. An open door also can mean we are leaving to go to work or on a trip. Doors have keys to keep the bad folks out but if we have a key, we are trusted to come in. Hinges are necessary for doors to work. If there are no hinges, there are no doors, but if our doors are open, then we may say the doors of our hearts are open to God and to others. When our lives are open doors, we are transparent people and hospitable to others. My office is an “open door,” which means anyone can come for conversation.

My focus today is the doors mentioned in the New Testament:

II Jesus knocks on the “doors of our hearts.”

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock, says the Lord. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come into the house and eat with you and you with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

- While teaching a middle school confirmation class, I asked these questions: What is our relationship to Jesus? What is the business he is in? What do we need to do to have a relationship with him? What is Jesus doing every day of our lives?

He seeks a relationship with us!

Does he force his way in? Does He come like the wind in a Tornado? No. He is knocking and asking to come into our lives. Here is something about how God has wired us: Jesus is outside of us, but he wants to come in. There is a door to our hearts, but the only handle is on the inside. As a demonstration, I ask two students to go outside the room. They knock and ask us to open the door to let them in. I tell those inside to open the door the

third time they knock. The next scenario is to let one come in a little way, speak to him and then usher him out. The third scenario is to open the door with an enthusiastic welcome of hugs and high fives.

The Reflection on this exercise is for the emphasis to be on the door that has no handle or latch to open it. In a jail, only the guard can push the electric button to let you in.

The Application is that we have the volition to let Jesus in, or we can shut the door and stiff arm him.

We can invite him in as the unseen guest at every meal

We can invite him into our worship and ask the Holy Spirit to manifest himself in our Sunday Eucharist.

II Jesus is the Door to the Sheepfold (the congregation)

Jesus spoke again: "In truth, in very truth I tell you, I am the door of the sheepfold; I am the door, and anyone who comes into the fold through me shall be safe. He shall go in and out and find good pasture. I have come that men may have life and may have it in all its fullness (abundance)." (NEB, John 10:7ff)

Listen for *The Message* translation: "Anyone who goes through me will be cared for (saved) and will freely go in and out, and find good pasture."

"I have come so men can have real and eternal life, a more and better life than they ever dreamed of having."

On a biblical trip just east of Bethlehem and on sheep farm, our group saw caves and the grazing pasture. We saw how the shepherd stands in the opening of the cave to let the sheep into their home for the night.

- A. He calls them by name, and they recognize his voice
- B. He checks them for cuts, bruises, and insects.
- C. He gives them a hug, a pat on the neck and back.

D. Jesus is the door to the sheepfold.

The application and implication of these lessons is for us to know Jesus is primary to our lives. All the education, wealth, knowledge, or skill as a Christian is secondary to experiencing a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Regardless of our political preference and our families, our love for Jesus needs to happen in our lives as part of the Christian Sheepfold.

III What does a congregation needs to know about other doors?

There is a concept in congregational vitality and reaching the unchurched folks in any given section of the population.

Create some side doors. As the congregation grows and expands, it expands by having more side doors.

Examples:

Bridge card door

Sports team door, softball, basketball, HNEC, St. Anne's, St. Peter's, Sewing door, art courses

After school care

Special groups using the facilities such as 12 step groups--- AA, Al-Anon, Over eaters, Relationship addictions

Motor cycle group in I 85 Atlanta

Children's choirs

IV How do we open our doors to those who are unchurched?

On Sunday mornings the ushers present the Guest Book and offer gifts such as church mugs to guests.

Parishioners make front door visits with bread, mug, flowers, or a CD to all who visited on a Sunday morning.

A team of 10-15 people from the Niceville UMC made visits to people on Sunday afternoons.

Give a welcome card to all receiving food from the Beans and Rice ministry.

