

DO YOU HEAR THE KNOCKING?

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Revelation 3:20-22

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"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." (Revelation 3:20). This memorable verse from the book of Revelation invites us to imagine Jesus standing at a door and knocking. I wouldn't be surprised if many of you find yourselves picturing in your minds the famous painting by William Holman Hunt. The original painting hangs in a museum in England, but copies of the portrait also hang in many churches as well as homes. The portrait shows Jesus standing at the threshold of a house with a thick wooden door. He is knocking and apparently waiting for someone to open the door.

While reflecting on the well-known passage from Revelation and the famous painting by Hunt questions just naturally come to my mind. Questions such as... Whose door is Jesus knocking on? Is it just a long-gone ancient door? Perhaps it's your door, my door! Why is Jesus knocking at the door? Certainly, there are different reasons for knocking on a door – a visit, a favor, to sell something, to give something. And why doesn't anyone seem to be responding and opening the door? I suppose there are any number of reasons why someone might not respond to knocking – they're not home, don't hear it, or just don't want to see the person who is at the door.

As I envision Jesus standing at that door and knocking, I also wonder something else. I wonder about the way that he is knocking. After all, there are different types and tones of knocking. There is loud and intense knocking that often reflects desperation or anger – "open this door right now!" There is firm and regular knocking that seems to say, "Hello, is anyone home?" There is soft, gentle knocking like at a bedroom door – "are you sleeping?" The way one knocks can definitely reveal something about the mood and intent of that individual.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." How do you imagine Jesus knocking? Of course, the point is that Jesus is standing at the threshold of our hearts, our lives, and even our church. He is knocking at the door that stands between him and each one of us, and he is hoping that we will open ourselves to his presence. Could it be that we have failed to hear and respond to Jesus' knocking not just once or twice but multiple times? Today, I invite each one of us to seriously consider what it means that Jesus is standing at our door.

A little boy was walking down the hallway of their church with his mom when he encountered for the first time Hunt's painting of Christ at the door. He stopped and looked curiously at the print. He asked his mother, "Why won't anyone answer the door?" As the mother looked at the portrait herself, she said, "I don't know; I never thought about that." Well, the boy studied the portrait for a little while longer and he finally said with confidence, "I know why. No one is answering the door because it's too noisy inside."

That is a wise observation, and I'm sure it must have been based on experience. If there was ever an image for our time, it is the one of Jesus knocking and people not hearing because of the noise and distractions of their lives. We live in a world that allows little room for silence, stillness, and reflection. It's a world filled with i-tunes and earbuds, with big flat-screened TV's, enhanced speakers, video

games, and cell-phones. It's a world that lends itself much more to commotion than to devotion.

If honest, we might have to admit that we rather like the noise and commotion of our lives, or if nothing else we are simply used to it. We certainly may criticize others for their blaring music, loud cars, and rude cell phone conversations, and yet, most of us have also succumbed to the allure of noise distractions. We turn the TV on even when we are not watching it. We are attracted to the clamor as well as the benefits of a fast pace, activity driven society. Countless things keep us so busy and so distracted that Jesus' knocking is often drowned out in the midst of our every day lives. If we fail to hear the knocking, we are likely not going to respond by opening the door to our hearts and lives.

This failure on our part means there is likely a need to quiet some of the noise, to sharpen our hearing, and to sensitize our hearts to the urgings of God's Spirit. What we probably need to do is take to heart the words of the psalmist who said, "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) But many of us are not good at being still and listening in the midst of the commotion of our everyday lives. Of course, a good place to begin creating a life that is more still and open to God is by making time in our daily lives to dive into God's Word and to engage in prayer.

I direct your attention back to Hunt's famous portrait, and I invite you to notice the absence of a doorknob on the door upon which Jesus is knocking. This absence emphasizes even more strongly the necessity of the door being opened from the inside. If those of us inside do not respond, Jesus is not going to force his way into our lives. Could the Lord kick in our doors and demand a relationship with us? Sure! But God does not want a relationship with us that is based on force and fear. God desires a relationship that is built on love and devotion.

I am absolutely certain that Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart today, just as I know he is knocking at mine. His knocking is a clear and persistent reminder of his love and sacrifice for us. Jesus' knocking invites us to remember that he is here – he is ready and wanting to rescue us from our loneliness and worry, our fear and struggles, our weakness and sin. His knocking challenges our conscience, reminding us to do the right thing, even though the voices around us are telling us to do the wrong thing. Jesus' knocking encourages us to open our lives and to share our time and resources with someone who desperately needs our help. His knocking invites us to use our God-given gifts and abilities for the purpose of revealing God's kingdom on earth and making a real difference for Christ in the world.

Here today, Christ stands before us saying, "Listen! I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." (Revelation 3:20) Do you hear the knocking? Jesus wants to dine with you right now in this place. So, in the stillness of this moment, let us prepare our minds and open our hearts to receive him. Because the United Methodist church practices open communion, you do not need to be a member of this church to participate. All who seek to open their hearts and lives to Jesus are invited to eat and drink and to know the Lord's presence. As we prepare ourselves, please join with me in our prayer of confession...