

Morialta UC Worship May 3rd 202

Light candle – spend time in quietness acknowledging the presence of God in the place in which we gather, for the light that shines in Christ, and for the flame of the Holy Spirit active in the world

Call to worship

Acknowledge land

We acknowledge that wherever we meet today is the traditional lands for the First Peoples of this Land, and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their Country. We acknowledge them as traditional custodians and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important today.

Prayer of thanksgiving

God of infinite love: we come today in many different settings and places in response to your warm tenderness to us. As the Good Shepherd of every flock, and of every tradition and culture, we come to worship you for your all-inclusive love and care of all that you have created. In confident trust we gather together as your people in this time and in the place that we are to offer to you our praises of thanks for the way your love is seen and experienced in all spheres of life

God of limitless mercy: we come in response to your gentle nurturing of us as we travel through life with all its challenges, and blessings. Gracious God, as the Compassionate Carer of all people, we give our thanks and praises for the way you support and strengthen us when we are at our weakest points in life and living. There are many times when we are overwhelmed by the pressures of life; and that is when we are most in need of our Good Shepherd, to nurture us with your presence as you walk beside us, giving us the trust in you we need.

We give to God our thanks and praises . Amen

(Source: Joan Stott, [The Timeless Psalms](#) adapted)

Day by day, God leads us: to the deep, deep pools of peace,
To the green, lush lawns of grace.

Day by day, Jesus calls us to pour out ourselves in service to anoint the stranger with hope.

Day by day, the Holy Spirit shows us the community we could be, the family we are called to become *(Words: Thom Shuman, [Lectionary Liturgies](#))*

We shall join together in the singing of the song

Jesus calls us here to meet him (TIS 477)

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of Life and Lord of All,
sharer of our flesh and frailness
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other:
found in him are no divides.
Race and class and sex and language
such are barriers he derides.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

A prayer of confession and commitment

Lord, we would follow you
wherever you might lead.
Lord, we would follow you.
Forgive us when we stumble
and when we stray.
Forgive us when, distracted
we lose our way.
Be the one to whom we turn,
whose hand we hold,
the Shepherd who leads us
safely to the fold.
Lord, we would follow you
wherever you might lead.
Lord, we would follow you. Amen
(Words: John Birch, [Faith and Worship](#))

Focus: Holman Hunt painting. Jesus standing at the door



This morning, I want to talk about the image of Jesus as being the gate or the door or doorway, and we'll hear that in the reading from John chpt 10. I want to focus more on the image of door rather than gate because I think it speaks a bit more into our lives today.

An image we might have in mind is that famous painting by Holman Hunt of Jesus standing at a door with a lantern, knocking. This painting is an interpretation from Revelation 3:20. Here Jesus is knocking on our door, the door of our heart, asking to be invited in.

Jesus is painted very much in the Victorian style, white, with long blond hair, the way he appears in thousands of stained glass windows around the world. Hunt painted Jesus in a manner in keeping with his own tradition and Culture as often as Artists would do depicting Jesus as being the same race as themselves.

The halo around Jesus' head shows that he is a holy, 'set apart' person, but with a crown of thorns relating to Easter.

Hunt painted Jesus' expression as one of great patience. He does not show anger or fatigue, but waits quietly for the door to be opened. Jesus' eyes seem to look directly at you wherever you stand, and many people would say they are eyes full of love. Jesus' hands show the marks of the nails of crucifixion.

In the painting, Jesus' right hand knocks at a door, whilst his left holds a lantern.

Holman Hunt painted Jesus' feet turned sideways away from the door. The meaning of this is that he has been knocking at the door for a very long time and now is preparing to go.

Jesus is standing in a forest or garden at the end of the day. Its dark but Jesus is contrasted as the Light of the World.

The door represents the door of our lives. Jesus knocks on the door, and waits patiently for us to open it up. Crucial to the painting is that the door has no handle. The only way for it to be opened is from the inside.

All the light in the painting comes from the lantern held in Jesus' left hand. This serves to explain the meaning of the painting's title. Jesus declared, "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:14). "

As the Light of the World, Jesus gives life, just as the Sun gives life to the world. He also leads his followers through the dark and difficult times of our lives, providing guidance and hope.

Readings: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely^[a] goodness and mercy^[b] shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.^[c]

Poem: I BELIEVE I NEED A SHEPHERD

**I believe I need a shepherd.
Because I am sometimes timid and other times overconfident,
because I often don't know the best path yet pretend I do,
because I rush into dead ends or lead others into hazardous places,
because my brightest ideas are seamed with darkness,
because the things I crave may not be what is good for me,
I need a shepherd.**

**I believe in Jesus, the best possible shepherd;
his wisdom leads me to the optimum opportunities,
his word comforts me when I'm anxious or afraid,
his arm steadies me when I feel weary and heavy-laden,
his wounded body displays the cost of my rescue,
I believe in Jesus, the best possible shepherd.**

**I believe that I do not find him but he finds me,
that I under his care by virtue of sheer grace,
the love he gives me is to be shared with others,
that he treasures my name and prepares a place for me,
that his fold transfixes earth and heaven.**

I trust Jesus, the good shepherd. <http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocA/31EAST4.htm>

John 10:1-10

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Shall we join together in the ...

Song: Praise the one who breaks the darkness

Praise the one who breaks the darkness
With a liberating light.
Praise the one who frees the prisoners,
Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the Gospel,
Healing every dread disease,
Calming storms and feeding thousands
With the very bread of peace.

Praise the one who blessed the children
With a strong yet gentle word.
Praise the one who drove out demons
With a piercing two-edged sword.
Praise the one who brings cool water
To the desert's burning sand.
From this well comes living water,
Quenching thirst in every land.

Praise the one true love incarnate:
Christ who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose for many
That we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
Seeing what our God has done.

Praise the one redeeming glory,
Praise the One who makes us one.

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Witness

Right from the outset we are dealing with metaphor¹, with symbolism, or parable because we know that Jesus is not a gate or a door - a plank of wood with hinges and a handle. Here Jesus is in effect saying I am **like**... A door, like a gate, I am like bread, like a vine, like a good shepherd.

We all use doors and they come in all shapes and sizes. The function of a door is either to give, or restrict access, to either let you in or keep you out. A door is an entry point at the same time an exit point – depending on the situation or need.

John 10:10 sums up Jesus' ministry when he says, "I have come that you might have life, and life in all its fullness". In other words, the meaning of Jesus, is to give life, or to provide access to life, or to full living. Jesus is saying that he is the door, by which we enter this life.

In the Gospel of John, we find highly figurative, deeply metaphorical or symbolic language. In fact John's gospel is the only gospel that contains what are called the 'I am' sayings of Jesus.

Earlier on we heard about the painting by Holman Hunt where Jesus is standing next to the door. But in John's gospel, the image is turned around. Rather than Jesus knocking on 'the door', or 'our door', as we often say, we are to knock on him, Jesus, as the door, the gate, the path.

We are, says Jesus, to enter the sheep fold, which is another name for the house of God, via **the Door**. We enter through the front door, so to speak, of the house.

Jesus says a direct statement, saying "I am **the** door." I am the gate.

Jesus would know a bit about doors. Everyone knows that Jesus was a carpenter. After all, [Mark 6:3](#) identifies Jesus with the profession, when Jesus' first miracles are met with astonishment from his neighbors, who say "Isn't this the carpenter?"

Jesus grew up in the house of a carpenter, that being Joseph. I reckon Joseph's business name could have been something like "doors are us", or "Doors by Joseph and Son". Mark's Gospel

But let's reflect theologically this morning and '**open up**' or '**unlock**' this concept of Jesus as DOOR.

What does it mean for Jesus to say directly to us, "I am the door or the gate?" Jesus is the door that leads to God.

A door, is not the house, not the dwelling place. A door is a passageway or a means into the house, a way of getting to a destination. When Jesus says, "I am the door," it is similar to Jesus calling himself "**the way**, or the vine, the living water.

What he is saying is that he is the way to God, the way to abundant life, the path to true freedom. Jesus is the means whereby we get to God. Or, maybe the traffic is moving in the other direction. Maybe Jesus is better thought of as the way that **God gets to us**?

In my line of work I get to visit lots of homes and knock on many doors. Every house has a least one front door. This door gives access to the home. The door might be plain or ornate, it might be a fly screen or a solid piece of timber, but I am often amazed at what lies within.

¹ <http://www.stapleford-centre.org/files/files/09-Similes-and-metaphors-40CreativeIdeasSecondary.pdf>

Once I'm inside a whole new world, new experiences, new information and new relationships open up. In the house I see and experience living, I see busyness, love, creativity, values, habits. I hear stories, experience hospitality and celebrations. I also see and experience pain and stories of loss sometimes.

But over all, I experience life and living in all its daily forms, both good and bad. What I see and experience **in** the house tells me much of who lives there and what goes on.

Jesus is the door through which we experience the home and relationship of God, for God is the house, and Jesus is the door and we are the family.

This understanding of Jesus as **door** is a humble image of Jesus indeed. **If** he is the door, then he is not the destination, the end result, but rather the way to that end. And yet, as we have said before, doors are important.

A door tells you a great deal about the character of the house, what goes on inside. When we look at Jesus, we believe that we have seen as much of God as we ever hope to see.

Commentators tell us that shepherds in Jesus day often acted as doors or gates to the sheep fold by sleeping across the entrance. So the shepherd was also literally the door, or the way in and out.

In another passage in John, Jesus refers to himself as the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the father but by me." Perhaps he is saying something similar here.

As Christians, we believe that the way to know God is through this door, the door named Jesus. He is the door to the house of God.

I am saying this today, to all of us, because we are those who are gathered as the church today. This means, in light of today's scripture from the Gospel of John, that you know what I am talking about. You are those who have gathered here in the 'house of God'. In your house or room, in this house, and in the dispersed yet gathered online community.

But how did you get here? We had to come through **The Door**. Yes we came through the doors of the house, the room, the porch, and also **the Door** of the church. We gather in the name and presence of Christ.

You grasped the handle, opened the door. Or, maybe more to the point, that door has miraculously, graciously opened to you, and you walked through the threshold and came inside. That is why, historically, baptism fonts are usually in the very front of the church, to remind ourselves of our baptism into the household. Or family of God.

In your own life, you have demonstrated the truths of this scripture. Jesus is the door for you, the way to life full and living. That's why we are here. That is why we worship. That is why we still make an effort to gather in community in these times either on line or by reading and reflecting on the printed service of worship.

So today, reflecting on Jesus as the door, we can be encouraged in our faith life. For us, this scripture today is not so much leading us to do something, or be something, but rather a **confirmation or affirmation** of what you have already done, something that you have found to be true in your own experience, as psalm 23 reminds us:

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I **shall dwell in the house of the LORD**
my whole life long.

Thanks be to God

Prayer

Lord Jesus, in your resurrection, you sought us out, spoke to us, opened yourself up to us. You became for us a door, a gate to God. Give us the grace to move through that door, to move closer to the God who, in your love, has moved close to us. Amen.

Prayers for others, incl acknowledgement of offerings

God of grace and love, we hear your call to generous giving
in the way you meet our needs each day,
and in the peace you give which passes understanding.

Having received much, even in these changing and difficult times, we offer what we have, our time, talents
and money, both cash and e Give.

Bless the offerings we give for the work of your church.

Let us continue to pray with and for others,

Loving God, help us to pray with something of the compassion of Christ in our hearts as we think of our
sisters and brothers in all lands.

We pray for the taming of the wolves of terrorism and war, violence and hate on the face of this earth; Good
Shepherd, hear us we pray.

We pray for the end of injustice, neglect, discrimination, and the apathy of those who look on yet do
nothing.

We pray for people who have been mislead and misused by false shepherds, or exploited spiritually and
materially by slick religious and political salesmen. Good Shepherd, hear us.

We pray for the removal of the hurts, resentments, misunderstandings; for the rescue of those who once
had faith in God but have fallen into empty cynicism.

We pray for the blessing of all who are good shepherds to their fellows; who foster hope through the work
of medicine, counselling, social planning, legal aid, wise laws, and sincere good-neighbourliness. Good
Shepherd, hear us.

We pray for special care of the dying and the grieving; the sick and the suffering, in our time around our
planet, in cities, towns and villages, that they may know in a first-hand way the comfort of the Shepherd
whose love does not terminate at the valley of the shadow of death...

We offer thanks, and pray with and for medical and emergency workers in this Covid-19 time and those who
attend crashes and violence in the home. Good Shepherd, hear us.

Most loving God, enable your flock, us, you people to embody the spirit of these prayers in our words,
actions and intentions. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen!** (<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocA/31EAST4.htm> adapted)

TiS 411 filled with the Spirit's power (Woodlands)

Filled with the Spirit's power, with one accord
the infant church confessed its risen Lord:
O Holy Spirit, in the church today
no less your power of fellowship display.

Now with the mind of Christ set us on fire,
that unity may be our great desire:
give joy and peace; give faith to hear your call,
and readiness in each to work for all.

Widen our love, good Spirit, to embrace
in your strong care all those of every race:
like wind and fire with life among us move
till we are known as Christ's, and Christians prove.

Blessing

May the fold of Christ keep you safe from the wild things that are too fierce for you.
May the door of Christ open wide for your spirit to go out & experience the sunshine of God.
May the foresight of Christ the good shepherd lead you in fruitful pastures and beautiful places.

The blessing of God Most Wonderful, will certainly be with you as you leave the doors of the places in which we gather to encounter the many joys and irritations of a new week.

May God Go before you, may God lead you, May God be beside you in all that you do and say.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the HS be with you now and forever.

Amen!