

Focus

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.

Sermon

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.

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.

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

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^[e] goodness and mercy^[f] shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I **shall dwell in the house of the LORD**
my whole life long.^[g]

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.