

## **Many Doors**

Last week I was here working in the office when the doorbell rang. I had never heard the doorbell before, so it took me by surprise. I looked out the window and saw a handful of firefighters, so I opened the door.

They were here to do a fire inspection.

I have never shown fire inspectors around anywhere before, so that in itself was a new experience. The truth is, I had never gone all over this facility before when I was the one unlocking the doors!

I hadn't thought before about how many doors there are around here!

Doors into each room. Doors out of each room. Doors out of the sanctuary and doors into the kitchen. Doors that lead to closets and bathrooms.

Many doors. Doors that lead in and doors that lead out.

When I first read this morning's passage from Ephesians a couple of weeks ago, when I prayed through it the way I talked about last week, an image of many doors came to mind, very similar to the doors I unlocked for the fire inspectors last week.

The image is this---

A long row of many doors. The doors are locked. You can't go through them. They are in a long, tall wall so you can't go around them. If you are outside, you can't go in. If you are inside, you can't get out.

And then suddenly you are given a key. It feels like freedom just to have a key! Then you can try the key until you find the door that unlocks for you.

Now imagine that there are many people with you facing these locked doors. And you are all given keys. All the keys do not unlock the same door. You all have to try your keys and see which one works for you.

You can't use someone else's key, although another person might help you find the right door for your key. In fact, someone very well might point out the door that somehow looks like it will fit your key. And as you approach the door, and then easily unlock it with your key,

it feels like exactly the right thing to do, to open that door and walk through it. Going through that door is not scary or difficult. Going through that door fills you with joy and excitement and a feeling that this is the door you were born to go through.

Now, you might well ask, what does all this have to do with the passage from Ephesians? What is there in those verses that triggered an image of doors for me?

I'm getting to that----

This is the third week I have preached on Ephesians. The first week I talked about the unity we have in Christ, that Christ has broken down all the barriers between us. Last week I talked about being rooted in God's love, and how that prepares us to share God's love with others.

The first part of the letter to the Ephesians describes what the church is, the characteristics of the church. This morning's passage marks a transition to the second part of the letter, which talks about what the church should do as the body of Christ, what the function of the church is.

When Paul was writing this letter in about the year 60 AD, the church was still very new. They were still learning about what it meant to be the church, what they as the church were called to do. There were many barriers in their society---between Jew and Greek, between men and women, between rich and poor, slave and free. To hear this description, so full of hope and promise, so clear and compelling, was very good news to them.

Our lives are not so different from theirs. Our barriers may be different but they are still there. We struggle with language barriers, cultural differences, racial misunderstandings. We still have a wide gap between the rich and the poor, and while we don't have slaves in this country any more, we do have people who exploit others. We have barriers between liberals and conservatives and between "born-again" Christians and main-line Protestants. Every way you turn you can find a barrier between "us" and "them."

The good news for all of us today, Paul tells us again in this passage, is our unity in Christ. We have one faith, one baptism, one Lord, one Spirit, one God and Father. He calls it our calling, that we are called to one hope, to maintain our unity through the bond of peace.

This is not an easy calling! But God is good! He has given us gifts that will allow us to follow this calling!

“Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift”----“he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.”

Grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift, making captivity itself a captive.

The key is grace, and a locked door is subject to, captive to, a key.

Grace according to the measure-----we don't all receive grace the same way, as Paul goes on to point out here and has pointed out in other places. There are a number of gifts, a number of keys, and we don't all get the same one.

The list of callings Paul gives us here in Ephesians are for the leadership of the church----apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, pastors----but then he tells us what those gifts are for, to help others find the doors their own keys fit! The leaders are to equip "the saints"----which means all of us, just so you know---the leaders are to equip all of us for the work of service, so that the body of Christ is built up in love!

The body of Christ will work the way it was meant to work----  
-with mature understanding and truthfulness and love.

Paul likes the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ, and I like it, too, but there are other ways to look at the church.

What if the church has many, many doors and we all have a key that opens one of the doors? Only together can we open all of the doors!

Doors that let people in, doors that let people go out. Doors that are locked and need keys to be opened. Doors that are shut and need to be opened. Doors that can be barriers and doors that are opportunities.

And God has given us gifts of grace for service----

The keys to the locked doors. But we don't all have the same key. Some of us have one of the leadership keys----the key to the pastor door or the teacher door or the evangelist door.



Paul writes in the first letter to the Corinthians about other gifts, so others of us have the key to the door of knowledge or the door of healing. Some of us can open the door of hospitality, others are called to unlock the door of administration or the door of helping or the door of prayer.

I have seen the keys to many of these doors being used here at Linda Vista. The door of hospitality has been wide open, much to my joy and to the joy of my friends who visited last week. The door of administration is open, too, and meetings are led well, bulletins are created, our financial status is documented, etc.

The door of teaching is open and our children benefit, as well as those of you who are in the Bible study class. The door of helping has been opened and many of you have cleaned and restocked supplies and counted money, etc.

But I want you to notice something---

God has given you a key, but God has not and will not unlock the door. YOU have to respond to God's gift of grace! You have to put your key in the right lock and turn it!

Only then will the door open! Only then will the body of Christ be built up. Only then will people be able to go out and come in.

My image of a room with many doors doesn't always look the same. I am not locked in that room, or out of it. All of those doors open and sometimes shut, but I remember a verse in chapter 3 of the Book of Revelation. "I have opened a door for you that no one can shut." Why can't anyone shut it?

Because you have the key! Only you can open it, and only you can shut it.

And only you can serve God and open the door with the key, the gifts! You have been given!

Only when you open the door that your key fits, only when we ALL use our keys, will all the doors to the Kingdom of God be opened so that Jesus Christ, as we read in the Gospel of John, will be able to draw all people to himself!

What key do you have? Use it! For goodness' sake, use it!  
For GOD'S sake, use it!

Don't hide your light under a bushel and don't hide your key in your pocket!

When the fire inspectors were here the other day, there was one door that we couldn't get open. I don't know why. Maybe it just needs some lubrication on the hinges. Maybe it's been painted shut. Maybe it's even been nailed shut, although I don't think so.

Or maybe I don't have the right key.



