

May I Come In?

(Message 1; Series: My Heart, Christ's Home)
(Ephesians 3:16-17a; Revelation 3:14-21)

Scripture:

¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Ephesians 3:16-17a).

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. ¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

²¹To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Revelation 3:20).

Message:

The Nazis imprisoned Victor Frankl, a brilliant doctor, in a concentration camp. They took his livelihood, confiscated his possessions, mocked his dignity, and killed his family. They locked him in a cell with no way out. A room without a door is a prison. But he found a door his prison guards didn't know about: *“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms--to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”* (Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*)

Frankl discovered **doors** are not just physical. Every door is a **choice**. He found that when circumstances seem to close every outer door, they reveal

the doors that matter far more - the doors through which a soul can leave fear and enter courage, leave hatred and enter forgiveness, leave ignorance and enter learning, leave self and enter community. He discovered his guards were far more imprisoned by their cruelty, ignorance, and foolish obedience to barbarism than he was by walls and barbed wire.

Some people learn this and become free; some never do and live as prisoners their whole life. There is **always a door!**

Researcher Sheena Iyengar found the average person makes about seventy conscious decisions a day, or 25,550 a year. Over 70 years, that's 1,788,500 decisions. Albert Camus says, "*Life is the sum of all your choices.*"

For the next few weeks, we'll talk about the single most important of those almost two million choices...the one door you need to open and walk through...

Sixty years ago, Bob Munger, pastor and the professor of Evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote a little essay entitled, "*My Heart, Christ's Home.*" It is a quick read, but not an easy read; it is an invitation to open a door. The most important door you can open in your life. It has sold almost 20 million copies; it has impacted tens of millions of lives.

While many people would say this is about opening the door to Jesus as your *Savior*, it's more about opening the door to Jesus as your *Lord*. We probably shouldn't make this kind of distinction. We really shouldn't be able to distinguish the difference in our lives (it's two sides of the very same coin), but the reality is—we do, and in many lives, we can!

It is ultimately the question of ownership. Who or what rules your life? And if you profess to be a follower of Jesus, are you willing to pay the price of discipleship? The truth is, there is one fundamental, conscious decision you need to make; one door you need to deal with – everyone needs to deal with – and it is the door of your heart, and Jesus is knocking on it...

Munger takes us through our heart room by room —the study, nursery, living room, work room, rec room, bedroom, hall closet—so we understand what Jesus demands in every area of our life.

THE INVITATION

We get a lot of **invitations:** invitations for credit cards, for weddings and showers, for birthday parties, for lunch or coffee, to tag along with a son or grandson and for retirement planning (or is it just me?). Mostly, we enjoy getting invitations. An invitation means someone is thinking about us; some one likes us, we're being included, we're loved.

Jesus invites us to ask him into our heart - into the center of our being and life. Paul writes: *"May God strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith"* (**Ephesians 3:16-17**). Weymouth translates this: *"May Christ settle down and be at home in your heart by faith."*

Jesus wants to take up residence in our life and offers to come into our heart and do some renovating, perhaps an extreme make-over, and make **our** heart **his** home.

Sadly, in the busyness, clutter, and distractions of our lives, he often finds us unresponsive (ignoring) to His offer. Invitations often include four letters: RSVP. (*Respondez s'il vous plait*; French for *please respond*). The expectation is a response is expected and in order...

Christ's invitation also requires a response. We often put it off - until we're older, less busy, financially set; until we think we might be more interested. All invitations have deadlines; don't let this invitation's deadline pass.

Our God is a God of invitations...he stands at the door and knocks.
Listen:

Genesis 7:1 - *"The Lord then said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and your whole family, I have found you righteous in this generation."*

Numbers 10:29 - *"Come with us and we will treat you well, for the Lord has promised good things to [us]."*

Isaiah 1:18 - *"Come now, let us reason together says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they'll be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they'll be like wool."*

Isaiah 55:1- *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; you who have no money, come buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost"*

Matthew 11:28 - *"Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

Matthew 22:4 - *"Come to the wedding banquet."*

Luke 14:17 - *"Come, for everything is now ready."*

John 10:10b - *"Come, have life, and have it more abundantly."*

John 14:23 - *"If a man loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him"*

Revelation 22:17 - *"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" Let him who hears say "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."*

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, *“I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat (i.e., live) with him...and he with me.”* (*Quiet knocking begins*).

“Knocking” here means a **“continuous knocking”** that anticipates an answer. Did you ever realize that the “knocking” seldom occurs when it is convenient: when you just sat down to read the paper; you just went to the basement; you’re on the phone, inappropriate times, inconvenient times (*Knocking gets a louder, more frequent*) when you’re busy doing something else...

HIS INTERRUPTION (LIGHTS DOWN)

GOD: (*Loud Knocking*) *Doug! (pause) Doug!*

Doug: (*slowly*) *Yes...*

GOD: *“Did you get My invitation? I am inviting Myself over. It seems I’ve been locked out of your life lately and there is some renovating that needs to be done.”*

Doug: “Ah...who is this?”

GOD: *“It’s Me!”*

Doug: “Oooh! Ya, come to think of it, I do remember something about You coming to clean and renovate...but this is really a bad time right now. I’m in the middle of preaching right now—Your Word, as a matter of fact. Maybe You missed the “Do Not Disturb Sign” on the door. I’d really appreciate it if You could come back later. Besides, my house is kind of a mess.

GOD: *“I saw the “No trespassing” and “Beware of Dog” signs, I must have missed the “Do Not Disturb” sign. Regardless, I’m an expert at messy houses. I specialize in cleaning things up. And there is no better time than right now! Actually, I’m the owner of this property. I’m the one who approved the loan.”*

Doug: “You approved the loan? Thank You. I really enjoy the place.”

GOD: *“You’re welcome. So...may I come in?”*

Doug: “As I said, this is a bad time. I’m giving a sermon. Maybe You could come back later when things settle down. There’s too much going on in my life right now; I can’t add one more thing.”

GOD: *“If you’ll let me in, you’ll find I’m not just one more thing. In fact, I can help you sort through the things that are less important, throw old habits away, get rid of the busyness for busyness’ sake, and give you focus and significance.”*

Doug: "Let me be honest with You. I kind like things the way they are. I don't really want to change anything. I've organized things how I like them. I have certain places where I put things in each room of *my* life. Certain priorities, and certain activities, and no one knows how to clean up and organize except for me."

GOD: *"True. You've done a great job organizing your life the way you like it. But, did you ever think that if you let Me in, you could let go of the burden of having to clean up all by yourself? I can see the clutter that has been there for so many years that you walk by every day and never even notice. It's all you know life to be, but that doesn't mean that's all the life there is. You'll be amazed at how bright a room can become when I've cleaned it out!"*

Doug: "You're right, there's a ton of clutter in my life. I have a lot of good intentions I just can't seem to get to, that they have piled up so high they block the sun and gather dust."

GOD: *"So may I come in and get started?"*

Doug: "I don't want to hurt Your feelings or anything, because most of the time we get along all right, but if I let You in, and You start changing things, people might think I've gone off the deep end, or I'm a religious fanatic or extremist. It is not that I don't believe in You. I do. I appreciate it when You come by now and then, when You provide my daily necessities and come to my rescue in times of trouble. And since I'm a preacher it looks good for people, especially the children, to see us together. And it promotes good values.

GOD: *Values are like cut flowers. Values wither and die unless they're rooted in the soil of my presence at the center of your life.*

Doug: "But if You promised to just come in, look around and leave things pretty much the way they are, I'd be more willing to RSVP in the affirmative!"

GOD: *"Yes, I know, but that's not the way it works."*

Doug: "Why can't it work that way? Other people come by for just a few minutes, look around, take me as I am, and then leave."

GOD: *"I don't want to come in for just a few minutes."*

Doug: "So what do You want?"

GOD: *"I want to take up residence. Where you are, that's where I want to be."*

Doug: "I'm not really sure what You are talking about...Okay? Why don't You walk around to the back door—to the kitchen door. You could organize the pots and pans! I don't use the kitchen much, I'm not into cooking. You know, I do like to eat - especially eat out. Once in a while I use the microwave. You

doing the pots would be okay - since my life really centers in the study, living room and bedroom.

I probably won't even hear You banging around, and I'd feel less a whole lot less guilty knowing I, at least, let You in. I really do like our relationship. So if You'll just stay in the kitchen—we won't bump into each other very often.

GOD: *"If you let me in, I'll be going anywhere and everywhere--into the kitchen and living room and study and bedroom—into the hub of your life."*

Doug: "You're persistent! Any chance for some compromise?"

GOD: *"No...I don't compromise when it comes to loving you completely."*

Doug: "And I'm trying as hard as I can to accept your invitation and still continue my life the way I've come to know and appreciate it: A little church, a little neighborly connection (You know, superficial but pleasant), serve on a few boards, some time with the kids, some vacation...

Nothing extreme, nothing earth-shattering; nothing that upsets the apple cart; just a little of this and a little of that...You know, a normal, balanced, comfortable life."

GOD: *"Sorry. I am not the God of the normal, balanced, comfortable life. I am the God of the abundant life. There is no balance. My love for you tips the scale. It crowds out all the other things you might be doing, because there is so much of it. I want what is truly best for you. But I can't give it to you unless I first clear out a space; there is a lot of clutter in your heart crowding me out. In fact, I can't even seem to get in the door."*

Doug: "Couldn't You just come right in then? You said Yourself, You own the place! Why all the persistent knocking? Why not just walk in?"

GOD: *"I could. But it doesn't make much sense to be there if you don't want me there. I want you to open the door to your heart because you love me and you want me there...so, I'll keep knocking hoping you'll invite me in."*

Doug: "And You will change things inside?"

GOD: *"I can be dangerous that way. I'm not safe, but I am good. I always have your best intentions at heart."*

Doug: "And You'll come in to stay...to take up residence with me?"

GOD: *"It's either all or nothing. My love is so big it requires every nook and cranny of your life. And once I enter, I'll have to throw some stuff out, change some priorities, and move a few things around to accommodate my presence."*

Doug: “Do You need to come into every room of my life? Some of my rooms have nothing to do with Church, praying or Bible Study—the kinds of things that interest You. I have places where I research investments, play games, watch TV, exercise, and surf the web. Things that are about the world and how it works. I don’t think You’d be interested; I know those aren’t really your thing.” (Pause) “Are You still there?”

GOD: *“Yes, yes, the world...(sigh) I love the world so much it might surprise you. I actually understand the world and how it works quite well. Now and then, I shake things up so people will think about opening the door to their heart to become my home. That’s why I died for the world...that’s why I live for the world...that’s why I stand at the door and knock for the world. It’s why I wait, for your RSVP, to invite me...completely.”*

Doug: “Okay! Okay! If I let You in...do I get to finish this message?”

GOD: *“Absolutely, my presence will make your life and your message better...”*

(Lights back up slowly)

Back to Message: Amen to that! God’s **knocking** is almost always an **interruption** and an **inconvenience** in our day. But everyone of us needs to answer!

THE INSTRUCTION (Back to Revelation 3:14-21)

Laodicea grew rapidly because of its strategic location for trade and defense. The church also grew. Then according to Revelation 3:20, Jesus came knocking. Nearby Thermopolis was famous for their medicinal **hot springs**. Nearby Colossae was known for their **cold**, running (pure) mountain water. But Laodicea had only (useless) **lukewarm** water containing minerals that clogged the pipes; and the Church was no different.

In Laodicea, in their lukewarmness, they **ignored** the loving knock and Lordship of Christ. They never answered, never gave their whole life to Christ. And the church died.

THE INITIATIVE

Picture Jesus at your door (pictures). Jesus is outside; Jesus is knocking on the door of our heart; he longs to come in...

But look carefully: there is no doorknob; he has to be let in; that is the way he designed it; he could force his way in; yet he seldom does.

Jesus’ knocking is our invitation to let him in; he expects your RSVP. RSVP means “*please respond.*” It might also be an acronym for what happens when we answer Jesus’ knock at the door:

- We **Receive** the **Savior's Victory Personally**.
- Jesus **Renovates Stuff** that is **Very Personal**.
- Jesus **Restructures** our **Schedules** that seem **Vital** and **Pressing**.
- Jesus **Remodels Situations** and brings new **Values** and **Priorities**.

Jesus longs to take up residence in our life, to sit on the throne of our heart; to rule in every room of our life.

Open the door! Accept Christ's invitation! It will never be convenient or comfortable. But he's going to keep knocking...

When Jesus knocks at your door, you need to get up and **answer**, invite Him in, and make **your** heart **his** home.

Prayer: (Singing) *"Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus; come in today, come in to stay, come into my heart Lord Jesus"*

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