

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021**  
**Glynde Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon on Revelation 3:7 – 8**  
**Theme: “Welcome!”**

**“The door to heaven is open for you!”**

***No. 6 of sermon series on Letters to the Churches***

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***Introduction:***

Isn't it great when you are made to feel welcome by someone who you are visiting. They open the door to their house to you, and they invite you in, and they offer you a cuppa and a biscuit or whatever. It's great when you are made to feel welcome by people.

And on the other hand, it feels lousy, doesn't it, when doors are shut in your face.... I guess that we all have had the experience of this: of being told that we are not wanted at a particular place and having the door slammed in our face. It has happened to me many times, and I can tell you from personal experience that it feels very lousy.... (*Addendum re examples from my personal life*)

And, you know, this was the very experience that the people, to whom Jesus was speaking the words of our Bible reading, had gone through. They were Jews who had become Christians, followers of Jesus. And because they had become followers of Jesus, they had been excommunicated, it seems, from the synagogue in Philadelphia (*cf. 3:9, & Addendum 3*). The doors of their beloved place of worship had been shut in their face. Imagine how they felt! Imagine how you would feel if you were shut out from worshipping here at Glynde....

By the way, what happened here at Philadelphia to the Christians wasn't at all unique. Read through the book of Acts and you will find that again and again Paul and those Jews who

became Christians met with intense opposition from the Jews in the local synagogues (e.g., *Acts 13:49-52; 14:1-4, 5-6; 17:1-9, 10-15*).

We are not told explicitly told by Luke in the book of Acts that Jews who became Christians were excommunicated. But this is most certainly what would have happened. Indeed, John tells us in his gospel that Jesus predicted that this would happen....

John tells us that Jesus said to his disciples:

**“I have told you this, so that you will not give up in your faith. You will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time will come when anyone who kills you will think that by doing this he is serving God (*John 16:2; cf.9:22; 12:42*).**

The Christians at Philadelphia would have been excommunicated from their local synagogue, from their place of worship, for proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, and our Saviour. The door to their synagogue would have been slammed shut in their face.

To them, Jesus speaks *through John* the wonderful words of our text. He says to them:

**This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. When he opens a door, no one can shut it, and he closes a door, no one can open it. I know your deeds. Behold, I have placed before you a door that has been opened, a door that no one can shut. I know that you have little power; you have followed my teaching and have been faithful to me... (*Rev. 3:7-8*).**

Jesus is commending the Christians at Philadelphia on their faithfulness, and in the middle of doing this, he says these wonderful words to them:

**Behold, I have placed before you a door that has been opened, a door that no one can shut *in your face!***

What door is Jesus talking about, this door which has been opened for them? He is talking about the door to “heaven”, God’s coming Kingdom (*Addendum 3, Mounce, p. 117 on Rev. 3:8*). Jesus is saying to them:

**“Look, the door to your place of worship may have been closed in your face. But, look, the door to heaven, the door to God’s house, has been opened for you by me, and no one can close this door in your face!”**

What a wonderful promise this was to the Christians who lived in Philadelphia in the first century, and what a wonderful promise it is for us, too. To us, too, us who are Jesus’ followers, Jesus says:

**“Behold, I have placed before you a door that has been opened, a door that no one can shut *in your face!*”**

This is a promise of Jesus, God’s Son, to us who trust in him as our Saviour, and who follow him in our life. And this is a promise that Jesus echoes again and again elsewhere.

Listen, for example, to some of the promises of Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel:

- **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish (*“be lost”*), but have eternal life”** (*John 3:16*)
- **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”** (*John 11:25-26*)
- **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me”** (*John 14:6*).
- **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never ever be lost. No one can snatch them away from me”** (*John 10:27-28*).

These are wonderful promises from Jesus, promises that echo Jesus' promise here:

**“Behold, I have placed before you a door that has been opened, a door that no one can shut”** (*Rev. 3:8*).

And it's great to live our life, knowing that the door of heaven is open for you and me. It's great to live your life knowing that you won't have to somehow prove to the gate-keeper of heaven that you should be allowed to come in.

It's wonderful to live your life knowing that you *are* God's forgiven child, because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross. It's wonderful to have no fear of the future and no fear of dying. You are set free from fear, set free to love those whom God has placed around you.

The door to heaven was opened for you and me, when we were baptised. Then we received all that Jesus did for us when he suffering and died on the cross. When you and I were baptised, we received God's forgiveness, we were adopted into God's family, and we have now in store for us the inheritance of life with God and with our Lord Jesus in “heaven” (*see TDD, 18C, E*).

All this is ours, and remains ours, as long as we remain in God's family, *as long as we cling to Jesus as our Saviour*.

The door to heaven is open for us, because of what Jesus, God's Son, did for us on the cross. If he hadn't suffered and died there for us, if he hadn't taken on himself the blame and the punishment for the whole lot of us, then the door to heaven would be well and truly closed to all of us.

By the way, not too many people in our society understand this. Most people in our society think that if you are a good person, that is, if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, then the door to heaven will swing open to you.

Most people believe that it's only if you've been a really bad person, like an Adolph Hitler or an Idi Amin, or a murderer, or such like, that you won't make it into heaven (*cf. the film "Ghost", starring Patrick Swayze*).

But that's not what Jesus taught, or what the Bible proclaims in echo of Jesus. Jesus taught that none of us can by our own steam enter "heaven", or have a relationship with God now.

We've all done wrong. None of us have loved God, loved one another totally and utterly.

We all deserve God's rejection and His punishment: we all deserve to be shut out from God, now and in eternity (*Mark 7:20-23; Luke 10:25-37; cf. Rom. 3:20-26; Eph. 2:1-10*).

The only way that we can enter "heaven", *and enjoy life with God now*, is by God making it possible for us to live with Him. That's what God did for us by sending His Son to this earth to suffer and to die for us. God's Son, Jesus, made it possible for us to live with God now, and in eternity. All we have to do to have the door of heaven opened for us is to receive what Jesus has done for us: by being baptised, and by going on trusting in Jesus as our Saviour (*cf. John 3:16*).

### ***Conclusion:***

Quite some time ago, I remember Jenine and I and some others doing a radio drama at one of the churches we were at. Its title was *Please don't get in the way*, and it was a radio drama about prayer, featuring various animals who were trying to see Mr. Owl. I don't remember much about the play, but one line from the song that they sang in this radio drama sticks in my mind, the line:

**"The door is always open *now*  
Every night and every day..."**

Well, the door is always open now for us who are baptised and who trust in Jesus as our Saviour: not only the doorway to God in prayer, but also the doorway to “heaven”, God’s coming Kingdom. Jesus promises us, as he did the Christians at Philadelphia:

**“Behold, I have placed before you a door that has been opened, a door that no one can shut”.**

*Addenda:*

1. Three examples of being ‘shut out’ come to mind:

- **Rejection at pubs and dance venues in my University days because of the clothes that I was wearing: e.g., jeans and sandals, rather than pants and shoes**
- **Being unable to go to a family wedding because I didn’t have the right clothes *due to my impoverished state....***
- **My father not attending church because he didn’t have a suit to wear: *this was in the sixties, when men were expected to wear suits to worship***

2. Comments from Robert H. Mounce on Revelation 3,8:

**Now in verse 8, John reminds the Christian in Philadelphia who may have been excommunicated from the local synagogue (v. 9) that he had placed before them an open door into the eternal kingdom, and no one can shut it. No matter if the door to the synagogue has been closed, the door into the messianic kingdom remains open (p. 117).**

3. Comments from Robert H. Mounce on Revelation 3,9:

**Verse 9 takes us into the heart of a serious conflict between church and synagogue in Philadelphia. The Jewish population was convinced that by national**

identity and religious heritage it was the people of God. Not so, claimed the Christians, *because they had rejected Jesus, God's Messiah....*

Members of the local synagogue my claim to be *true Jews, God's chosen people*, but the very claim constitutes them liars. By their slander of Christians, *the true "Israel of God"*, they have shown themselves to be the "synagogue of Satan".

4. There are many jokes which relate to St. Peter being on the gate of heaven, and him only letting in people who pass a certain test.... For example:

**One Christmas Eve, three men die in different circumstances. They roll up to the Pearly Gates, and St. Peter is there waiting for them. He looks at his watch, and sees that it is 5 minutes to Midnight, and he's due in heaven at the Christmas party at Midnight.**

**So St. Peter says to the three men, "Right, if you can give me something 'Christmassy', something associated with Christmas, then you can come into heaven.**

**The first man reaches into his pocket and pulls out a twig of holly and gives it to St. Peter. St. Peter looks at it, and says, "O.K., you can enter". The second man reaches into his pocket and pulls out a Christmas card and gives it to St. Peter. St. Peter looks at it, and says, "O.K., you can enter".**

**The last man reaches into his pocket and pulls out a pair of women's earrings and gives them to St. Peter.**

**St. Peter looks at them, and says, "What have these got to do with Christmas?" The man answered, "Oh, they're Carol's...".**