



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

September 6, 2009

## Pentecost 14

In 1853 a man called William Hunt painted a picture of Jesus called the light of the world. Since then several other paintings of the same idea have been painted. One of them actually is the inspiration for our east window in our sanctuary. What is unusual about this painting is that although it is called the light of the world, it is often referred to as Jesus knocking on the door. Yes Jesus has a light but he is knocking on a door. In the original painting by Hunt, Hunt did not put a handle on the door that Jesus was knocking on. What Hunt was telling us is that when Jesus knocks on the door, only the person on the other side can open it and let him in. Jesus says behold I stand at the door and knock. But he can knock forever if the person on the other side does not open it and let him in.

That other person is us. You and me.

To open the door to Christ is to open our hearts to allow Jesus into our lives to make us a new creation in him. To open the door to Christ is to open a new way of living. But we have to do the opening.

In the gospels we have numerous references to things being opened because of God and Jesus.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Established in 1847*

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Heaven opened at the baptism of Jesus. The tomb was opened at his resurrection. The curtain in the temple was split at his crucifixion which opened the separation between god and his children. Eyes were opened. Ears are opened and voices are freed.

There are only a few Aramaic words in our gospels that are recorded coming out of the mouth of Jesus. Today we hear ephatha- be opened.

Ephatha-be opened. For Jesus to say ephatha means that something must be closed.

We are here today so we can presume that it is not the door because we say we are disciples of Jesus. We have at least let him in.

But sometimes even when we have let Jesus in there are other doors of our life that we will not open. That is still off limits to Jesus. That we do not allow Jesus in therefore preventing us to live the life in Jesus to its fullest.

So we must ask ourselves what is it that we have closed. What is it that Jesus is standing on the other side knocking and we need to open it up and let him in.

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Jesus says to love him with all your heart, all your mind and all your strength. To love him with all of that means that we may need to take a look at what is closed to Jesus.

In our hearts we say each time we worship that Jesus knows all the secrets of our hearts. But sometimes we do not believe that. We still have secrets that we hope Jesus does not know about. Those are the things that are still eating our lunch -that we may think unforgivable. Jesus is knocking, he is saying it is time to open the door and let me in and let's take care of this with forgiveness...but we need to open our hearts.

To love god with all our mind. Some of the most important words I believe Jesus ever used were 'what do you think.' God, in the creation of his children gave us a mind to think. When we think we have an opinion. It may be different to somebody else's opinion but that is ok. When my opinion is considered the only way and everybody else is wrong then it becomes not ok. One of the foundations of our great nation is the freedom of speech, and I believe that our founding fathers understood the god given gift of a mind to think and an opinion to be offered and the ability to agree to disagree.

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But when we are convinced that we are so right and everybody else is so wrong we have closed our minds. Jesus knocks and asks us to open.

When we open our hearts and open our minds, that leads to strength in Christ. You see with an open heart and an open mind, we allow Christ more intimately into our lives. His words, his actions become our words and our actions and we begin to live life differently.

Life though does not change. By becoming Christian it does not put us in a bubble that protects us from life's challenges. It does not protect us from sickness or disappointment from being hurt or even death. But it strengthens us to face whatever life brings us.

We have opened the door that used to say it is not fair, it is wrong, or even it is god's will, to allow Jesus in to see all of life in the strength that god is not against us but is with us. In whatever happens.

The door for Jesus is already opened or else we would not be here. But the doors of our hearts, our mind and even our strengths remain tightly shut.

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Today we are called by Jesus to come away privately and feel the breath and listen to the words of Jesus as he says to each one of us ephatha. Be opened.

Amen

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