

Easter 2 Sunday 19 April, 2020

What does it take to unlock a door?

The doors to the heart, where we have bolted them shut? What does it take?

How do these heart doors get locked?

I've been thinking a lot about doors and locked doors and shut doors, firstly because it is in our Gospel story: twice. The fearful disciples are gathered together after the brutality of the crucifixion: once on what we know as Easter day, the third day: and again, a week later.

I've also been thinking about doors because you and I are behind closed doors as we seek to protect our community in these weeks and possibly months of staying at home. We are all at home, and there is a real element of fear, as we watch the news from communities in the world devastated by the pandemic.

Behind our doors, life continues on in a new kind of normal: restricted socialising, restricted contact, not only with neighbours and friends, but also with family.

For the disciples in this story, the new normal had not yet emerged.

Mary's account doesn't seem to have made any impact on them. "I have seen the Lord" has fallen on hearts damaged and broken after such public violence and shame.

The word that she tells them from Jesus "Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" have not yet taken any meaning in the disciple's grief and fear.

How are you going at managing your fear in this pandemic?

What steps have you taken to help you manage?

Fear can take on very subtle mannerisms in our day-to-day living. Fear can make us shrink back from life. Fear can make us withhold from those we love and trust. Fear can make us absent from relationships we value, but with whom we withdraw ourselves from.

When my father was making his journey to his death he was desperate for some truth to address the fear those around him would not speak. When his sister arrived from Perth to see him and stay for what was to become his last few days, in a quiet moment he asked me, "How long is she here for?"

I don't know, I replied.

"Well I want to know, how long is she here?" he demanded.

I said that she had brought with her carry-on luggage and she didn't have a return ticket.

He seemed satisfied, and relaxed a little.

Even in his own fear, even he could not ask the question the lies at the heart of is fear: "How long have I got?"

Fear can ask questions, and fear can refrain from asking.

– I need help.

- I'm not doing OK.
- I'm a bit blue.
- I'm going crazy here at home?
- I'm not coping.
- I'm lonely.
- Can I open that door with somebody?

**Can we open that door to Jesus, whose words to us all are
"Peace be with you"?**

So much has been made of Thomas in this Gospel, who was so clear about what he needed in order to believe: but so little of the other elements in the story:

- Receiving the Peace of Christ
- The gift of the Holy Spirit breathed upon us
- The gift of offering and receiving forgiveness.
- The advice on those things we retain, the gift of letting go of all that is broken in us, in our world, in our relationships
- The Invitation of Jesus to come close to his wounds: not to be afraid of them.
- The invitation to come into relationship again in belief.
- To receive the blessing, and know it and live it: that we are the blessed ones who believe all these generations later.

What does it take to unlock a door?

Where we have bolted our own doors shut, what does it take to open them?

How do these heart doors get locked?

The disciples too, even after hearing Mary's words, had quite literally locked themselves down in fear.

Thomas had bolted his heart shut, even after hearing his brother's words to him, "We have seen the Lord."

What does it take to unlock a door?

The comforting thing in this story is that Jesus, after the resurrection, comes to those who knew him, loved him, and grieved him again. He comes to us, through those doors we have locked and offers peace. He comes unbounded by human constraint, physical limitations, as he has come to all believers for all time, you and I included with peace and forgiveness and the power of the Spirit to share: even when we have locked ourselves in.

In our current circumstances, as we remain safely at home, I am sure many of us will begin to feel the fear and effects of isolation. How you experience that will be unique to you. And how you manage that will take some changes to your normal:

- ✓ You might need to overcome the reluctance to use the phone; intentionally call a couple of people each week as see how they are.
- ✓ You might choose to write some letters to people you miss: pull your un-used cards from the desk drawer and write a letter or two.
- ✓ You might choose to start a long overdue indoor project. (cleaning out the linen-press is one I need to achieve...and the second drawer of the kitchen too!)

But most importantly there is an opportunity to foster dwelling in that presence of peace Jesus brings in times of fear. You might like to do that just as we are in doing with our “Worship at Home resources”. Perhaps there is a way you might make notes of the words and phrases you feel as you read the Sunday Bible reading and pray with them later on, or take a prayer from the resource and pray with it each morning at your kitchen bench.

So perhaps we don’t need to worry too much about what it takes to open a door? Even in our fear Jesus comes to us.

- **In this Season of Easter, let us remain in the peace he brings to us by attending to these matters of the heart.**
- **In this Season of Easter, let us receive again the Holy Spirit he breathes over us.**
- **In this Season of Easter, let us dwell in that blessing he brings us all**

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”