

Trinity Sunday 2020

“After this I saw, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were a trumpet talking with me; which said, ‘Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.’” (Revelation 4.1)

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

All that is described in this morning’s Lesson from the Book of Revelation goes far, far beyond anything we can imagine. It is totally different from our human experience: it magnifies the gap that exists between heaven and earth; between the eternal and temporal; the mortal and the immortal; the invisible and the visible. A throne – the throne of the Almighty and Ever-Living God with a rainbow around it and twenty-four seats. In each, there sits an elder, clothed in white and wearing a gold crown. There are seven lamps burning before the throne and a sea of glass like crystal. And from the throne proceed lightnings and thunderings and voices.

There are also four living creatures in the midst of the throne and round about it. These creatures are full of eyes before and behind, and they each are distinct in appearance. They never rest day or night, and constantly offer praise to God saying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and which is, and which is to come’. And when they glorify God, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him and cast their crowns before His throne, and say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.”

What can we say about this? It is not something written by a talented mind. On the contrary, it is something revealed by God Himself to give us a glimpse of Heaven. And what He reveals is completely different from some of the things we say after someone dies. Things like, Uncle Jerry is up there bombing around on his four wheeler, and playing cards with Mum and Dad. We try to comfort ourselves with what we know – with ideas and imaginations that are familiar. But our experience is limited. The fact is that we know nothing about Heaven except what the Lord has revealed to us. In response, some will say today’s Lesson is complicated and even weird – how can it really help us?

Well, at the beginning of the Lesson, there is a simple image we can understand – a picture of hope. It is the open door: St. John wrote, “After this I saw, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were a trumpet talking with me; which said, ‘Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be hereafter’”. Two things: an open door and an invitation from God Himself that says, “Come up”.

In thinking about this open door to heaven, I have been reflecting on a number of people and places that have extended an open door to me. Some have been church doors; some have been wooden screen doors on decks; some, front porch doors; some very humble doors that open onto the street. Some have been office doors, and some, apartment doors. Some have been in the country and some in the city. Some with paint, some without. Some wooden, some steel. Some with flowers, others have been bare. Some have been in hospitals, others in businesses, and others have been vehicle doors. But they have been open, and they have extended a welcome.

Having said all that, it is possible to say at least two things about the open door which St. John saw. First, it speaks of grace – mercy – goodwill. It is God’s door, after all. And, it is open for humans – mere mortals – miserable sinners. From our limited perspective, it says, “I want to talk and share some ‘time’ with you; I would like to share something of myself with you.” This is a remarkable thing! The One Who is the Maker and Redeemer of the world – the High and Holy One – the Living and Triune God – graciously opens His door and extends an invitation for us to come up and be with Him in eternity. Truly it is a hopeful and life-giving offer.

The second thing about this open door is that it is the only door that is opened. John did not see a couple of doors, or multiple entrances. He saw one open door. From this, we may remember what Jesus said: “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved...” (St. John 10.9) We may think as well about the temple veil that was torn in two on the first Good Friday when Jesus died on the Cross. When that happened, the Holy of Holies – the most sacred place in the Temple was opened to all, whereas previously it was accessible only to the high priest. Through Christ’s Sacrifice it was opened. We might also think of the door of the Israelites’ houses when they were slaves in Egypt. On their last night in that country, they painted the blood of a lamb over their doors in order to provide a

sign to the angel of death that was to pass over the land. They were saved by the blood of the lamb; and we are saved by the Blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

The point is, there is only one door and it speaks of God's amazing grace and love; it also speaks the truth; the truth that, as mere mortals, we need Divine assistance. Why? Because we cannot deal with our hurts and pain and faults and fears adequately by ourselves; nor can we muster any solution to the problem of death. While we may encounter many places that can provide us with temporary relief, there is only One where we can find true and lasting Hope. That One is Christ, the Lamb of God, Who gave Himself as our Substitute on the Cross. Why and how can this be said? Because only Christ, the God-Man, died and was buried and rose from the dead, defeating the powers of sin and death for us. In Him, there is both grace and truth. In Him there is forgiveness, salvation, peace and everlasting life. Through Him alone, we enter into the land of Everlasting Life and the Kingdom of Heaven. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," Jesus said "no one comes to the Father but by Me". (St. John 14.6)

As clear as this may be for us, we know that our society is on a desperate search for peace and satisfaction. Our culture is pushing on many doors, looking for what is authentic, genuine and real. There are the old doors of sensuality, money, success and power; but some of the doors people are currently using are doors of discovery: discovery about our world through travel and nature and agriculture; doors of personal discovery also, such as self-awareness, meditation, mindfulness, and food.

Many of these doors offer good things – important and useful knowledge. But they are limited in dealing with life's ultimate questions. This morning, we hear that an open door is available to us – a door to the Divine mystery of God's grace and truth. A door to a new birth, as the Gospel says. This open door is for you to enter; and, once you go through it, you may become a door or a light for others. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (St. Matthew 5.16)