

## **Philadelphia and the Open Door**

Revelation 3:7-13

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#9 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

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### **Prayer**

Father, thank you for wishing and willing upon this whole world—and upon each one of us—Jesus. Would you help us to see Him by the power of your Holy Spirit? Help us to preach Lord God. In Jesus’ name, amen.

### **Message**

“I’m waiting for my dad. Have . . . have any of you seen my dad?” He said.

The tall and skinny scarecrow-kid shifted before us on the street corner, fear racing across his face, dirt smeared all over his body. His speech was slowed and slurred, his eyes dull and empty. At first I thought “drugs,” but then I realized it was something else . . . the boy was mentally disabled.

These are the words of sister Mary Rose Mc Geady from Covenant House in New York City.

“Have . . . have any of you seen my dad?” he said.

He was like a baby really . . . a little boy . . . in a sixteen-year-old’s body.

“I’m sorry, son, but I don’t know your dad . . . What’s your name?”

“Eric.”

“Hi, Eric. What do you mean you’re waiting for your dad?”

“He’s coming back. I hope. . . .”

Eric clinched his hands tightly into a fist, and began to rock back and forth . . .

“Maybe we can help you. Where do you live, Eric?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you live in New York City?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you live in a city, with lots of streets and buildings?”

“Yeah. Lots of cars.”

“When did your dad say he would be back?”

“He just took me for a walk, and then said, ‘Wait here, I’ll be right back.’

That was right after he gave me breakfast. But he must be coming back . . . right?”

“How long have you been here, Eric?”

“I don’t know, but I’ve been here for awhile.”

“Have you slept here?”

“Yeah. I sleep in my pipe. I wish I had my blanket, though, ‘cause . . . it gets really cold.”

“Your pipe? Where is that, Eric?”

Eric pointed to the bridge that runs along the Hunts Point section of the Bronx, and then led us to his “home.” Sure enough, hidden in the dirt and squalor of a dark

corner sat a large, old pipe.

“Is this where you sleep, Eric?” He nodded . . . .

“Eric, how many times have you slept in the pipe? One time? Two times? Or more?”

“Yeah. I sleep here a lot.”

“Eric, what’s your last name?”

“Eric.”

“No, your other name. Do you have another name? Like, I’m Mary Rose, but my last name is Mc Geady. Do you have another name?”

“Just Eric.”

His name was “Just Eric.”

You wonder how many people there are in this world like Just Eric . . .

People with little power, who find a closed door at every turn . . .

In this insanely affluent and media soaked culture of ours, we occupy ourselves with the lifestyles of a few celebrities and successful business folks, while most of the world lives like Eric . . . just Eric.

You wonder how many people there are in this world like Just Eric . . .

People with little power, who find a closed door at every turn . . .

Yet, people with a confused but belligerent hope that “he’s coming back.”

Thinking: “. . . I must have a source, a father . . . He must be coming back?”

Of course, we Christians believe that we do have a Father and He is coming back in the form of Jesus our Lord. He’s coming back for us . . . but what about Eric?

You know, if you didn’t want to help Eric, it would be really convenient to believe that God wasn’t coming for Eric, and didn’t care about Eric—that God was not Eric’s Father and Eric was not your little brother.

I did a little research this week:

Experts estimate that approximately 108 billion people have walked the face of this earth...

Whether you start counting 6,000 years ago like some fundamentalists or 50,000 years ago like most anthropologists, the number works out just about the same, since the human population would have been so small the first 40,000 years.

So, 108 billion people, created with the breath of God and dust . . . and of those 108 billion people, approximately 8 billion have called on the name of Jesus.

Many of those 8 billion have argued that “God the Father” is coming back for them and for the other 100 billion who haven’t called on the name of Jesus.

He is still coming back, but not to save them, but to consign them to endless torment for

they didn't call on the name of Jesus.

And now this is the truly ironic part: the name Jesus literally means, "*God is salvation.*"

Names mean something in the Bible . . .

Actually, no one even knew the word Jesus in the Bible; they knew the name *iesous*, in Greek, or *yeshua* in Aramaic, *yehoshua* in Hebrew—Jesus is the English form of the name . . . and no one spoke English in the Bible.

You see it's not how the name sounds but what it means that counts. And it means, "*God is Salvation.*" Or "*God Saves*" (Who He is and what He does are the same.)

Well, many believe that unless you say the word "Jesus" before you die, then, God is *not* salvation, but just the opposite of salvation. So, in effect, they believe that we create "*God is Salvation,*" that is Jesus, with our word. While Scripture clearly teaches that God creates us with His Word, that is "*God is Salvation,*" that is, Jesus.

(Acts 4:12) "*There is no other name under heaven by which a man must be saved...*" That's entirely true! But Scripture is clear that every man will one day say the name, "*Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father...*" (Phil. 2:10).

So all will confess, "God is Salvation" . . .because He is. And yet, you're not fully saved until you do—until you believe "*God is Salvation;*" until you believe you're alone, in the dark, trapped in your own illusions like a homeless kid taking shelter in a cement pipe.

So anyway, I was just wondering how many Just Erics there are in the world and how God the Father feels about them . . .

Maybe each one of us is just like Just Eric. The only difference is the size of our cement pipe and whether or not we've abandoned it.

Your cement pipe is your power, your security, your shelter against the storms of this world, your attempt at salvation in the absence of your Father.

Eric had little knowledge and little power so his cement pipe was a cement pipe, but your pipe might be made of brick and wood, with indoor plumbing and electricity. It might be your resume. . . It might be a name that you've made for yourself—like Professor, Doctor or Reverend. . . It might be a bank account.

It's security against the question "*Is He coming back? And does He love me?*"

Some of us have such magnificent cement pipes that we've learned to forget the question, pretending that we don't even need to ask the question or want to ask it . . . But a storm is coming and there is no cement pipe strong enough to endure this storm . . . It's the perfect storm.

Well Eric reminds me of Philadelphia . . .

*Not* Pennsylvania, but the sixth of the seven churches at the start of the

Revelation.

Revelation 3:7 “*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia...*”

Last time, we preached that this angel appears to be Christ’s Spirit resident in each church and each believer. Some would argue that the Spirit of Jesus is even resident in a hidden way in each person: God breathed His breath into earth to make each person . . .

A person is like a cement pipe (an earthen vessel) containing the breath of God, like Just Eric.

Revelation 3:7 -11

*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that [hoti: because] you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast . . . Hold on. (People in Philadelphia dwelt on the earth.)*

A great storm is coming (the perfect storm) to test those who live upon the face of the earth. But Jesus is going to *keep* the Philadelphians from the storm. Some say that this “hour of trial” is a seven-year period sometime after the year 2017. So, Jesus is saying, “Cheer up! You won’t be around for the seven years of tribulation two thousand years from now! Hang on; I’m coming soon . . . actually, in two thousand years, sometime after 2014.”

That’s just silly...

Jesus is saying the whole world will experience this trial—at least within one generation—and I will *keep you* from it.

He promises to *keep them*, but probably not with power . . . right?

He just said, “*I have placed before you an open door. I know that you have but little power.*” A more literal translation is “*I have placed before you an open door, **because** you have little power.*”

He will keep them from the storm but probably not with a power over storms, but maybe some sort of power *through* storms. He will keep them.

You may remember that once Jesus calmed a storm, and even more amazingly slept on a boat in a storm—on a raging sea. Perhaps even more amazingly He walked on water through the storm...

In John 17:15 Jesus prays for His disciples saying, *“I do not pray that you should take them out of the world but that you should keep them out of the evil.”* He uses the same phrase there in John 17 that he does here in Revelation 3. He kept them out of the evil, and yet they all suffered the evil—all of them were martyred except John who is now writing this from a prison colony.

You know people worry about the tribulation, but Jesus promised tribulation to His disciples. . . And can you think of a more difficult trial or tribulation, in this world, than the hour of death?

In John 8:51 Jesus said, *“If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.”*  
In John 11:25 He clarified saying, *“He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”*

It's like believing, that is Faith, is dying and living all at once.  
Jesus did say something about losing your life to find it . . . so maybe you can die before you die, experience eternal life now, and float right through physical death and into Heaven.

Well, Jesus says a great storm, an hour of trial, is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.

A little over ten years ago, I remember sitting in my office on Lookout Mountain. I had been pastoring a church that grew from less than a hundred to a few thousand in twelve years or so.

I had agents and publishers competing for my attention. And we had just built a multi-million dollar brand new facility. They had just taken out a multi-million dollar key man insurance policy on me. I had a lot of power.

But some folks had complained about the word that I had preached, and now my Presbytery was demanding that I make a public confession:

1. That there is a group of people that could never be saved, which means that God is **unable** to save some . . . AND
2. That God takes pleasure in damning this group of people, which means that God **doesn't want** to save some, which to me sounded like renouncing *“God IS Salvation”*—or at least renouncing it some. It sounded like renouncing His name—Jesus.

I remember sitting in my office thinking about my staff, some people that wanted control, my associate Gary who was losing his mind, the politics at the denominational headquarters and in the church, and this pending trial. I had thought that I was invincible.

I thought of all these factors coming together and I distinctly remember picturing this

scene from the movie: *The Perfect Storm*.  
It was the perfect storm. It was a miracle storm.

[A man and woman are sitting at a desk looking at a computer screen observing weather patterns and discussing them.]

Meteorologist: (pointing to images of weather patterns on a screen) *“What if Hurricane Grace runs smack into it? Add to the scenario this baby off of Sable Island scrounging for energy; she’ll start feeding off of the Canadian cold front and Hurricane Grace. You could be a meteorologist all your life and never see something like this. It would a disaster or epic proportions; it would be the perfect storm.”*

It may have included all sorts of evil, but it was clear to me that God was in charge. I was publicly tried, defrocked, and removed from my denomination and my church. It felt worse than death—for you can die with dignity, but it felt like something was intent on stripping away all my dignity or what I thought was my dignity, that is everything that I had worked for.

If “Just Peter” had a cement pipe, I think that was it. And my cement pipe may have also been your cement pipe, for it wasn’t only my church, it may have also been yours.

Within a few weeks, some of you met with me, Frances, and Susan.  
You asked: “Can we worship together in downtown Denver?”

And so, ten years ago today (last night), December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007 we held our first worship service as the Sanctuary Downtown. At the time, a friend gave me a prophetic word.

*DO NOT* trust every person that says God gave them a word—many take the name of God in vain, for their own purposes, but I had come to trust prophetic words from this person; he had also prophesied the storm.

He came to me and said, “Peter, Revelation 3:7-10 is for you.”  
That’s what we just read, and as you know it’s also for the church.  
It’s addressed to the angel in the church in Philadelphia, and maybe here.

*“Look. I have placed before you an open door.”*

There is no period at the end of that Greek phrase, and it’s followed by the word *hoti*, normally translated *that, for, or because*.

The ESV translation is really weak and that must be due to the fact that what Jesus says is so counter intuitive. We think that open doors have been opened by “power, strength, or maybe dynamite—*dynamis*. That’s the Greek word translated power in verse 7. Jesus literally says, *“Look, I have placed before you an open door **because** you have little dynamis (power), and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.”*

In case you forgot, His name is Jesus, which means *God is Salvation*.

Now frankly this is still a bit embarrassing and nerve wracking for me to talk about, but I think I'm supposed to do so. I didn't map out the preaching schedule with this verse planned for December 9th and 10th.

And for ten years the "*little power*" has felt miraculous—my every effort to make a big splash or set off some dynamite has fizzled. And yet, every time I plan to quit, I see an open door . . . that I didn't open . . .

*"I place before you an open door, because you have little power, have kept my word, and not denied my name."*

So what's that Open Door?

It might be worth asking that question as a church, as well as individuals . . . even if, or especially if, you feel like "Just Eric."

So what's the open door? Maybe it's . . .

## The Open Door to your heart,

In the next section, to the angel of the church in Laodicea, Jesus says, "*Look. I stand at the door and knock, if any one opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.*"

It appears that they're not opening the door in Laodicea because they have a really nice cement pipe. They say, "*I am rich. I have prospered and I need nothing.*" "*I don't need any help...*"

Maybe power itself can be a closed door and seizing it the very act of denying His Name.

The Name, "God is Salvation," "*Yahweh Yasha*," "*Yehoshua*" in Hebrew, means that *Yahweh* is our helper. In Scripture, Salvation means far more than getting your ticket punched for heaven—it means "help." In the beginning Adam couldn't find his helper . . . and now we discover *God is Help: Yahweh Yoshua*.

*Yahweh* is "isness," the Ground of all being, the Creator.

A creature cannot create itself or it hasn't been created.

To be a creature is to be created.

And to truly know your Creator is to observe your own creation.

To be created is something that you cannot do, by definition.

To be saved is to observe your own creation, and thus know your Creator.

Scripture reveals that the chief end of humanity is to know “God is Salvation,” But you can’t truly know “God is salvation” until you know your own need for Salvation.

In other words, to be truly known by you, God must create you, and then let you experience a story of salvation. He must subject you to futility, disobedience, nothingness, evil and the void and then save you with His Word, which created you in the first place. His name is Jesus. It means *God is Salvation*. The thing that keeps you from knowing *God is Salvation* is believing the lie that *You are Salvation*.

So, Israel wondered in the desert forty years until the first generation died and their arrogance died and then a man named Joshua lead them into the Promised Land. Joshua is the Hebrew form of the name Jesus.

Still Israel would not keep God’s *word of patient endurance*, and so trusted in Egypt, Syria, the kings of the earth and their own strength. They trusted in idols so God sent a prophet named Hosea, which means salvation.

Through Hosea God said, “I will take you to the valley of trouble—the valley of storms—and there in the wilderness, I will make for you a door of hope.”

You can’t know *God is Salvation* until you realize you *need* salvation. And you will know that you know *God is Salvation* when you desire *God is Salvation* for all. “*We love because he first loved us,*” writes John.

So anyway, perhaps the door is open because God has brought storms on the outside, and placed His Spirit on the inside, and created a desire in Philadelphia and us to open our hearts to *God is Salvation* who stands there knocking.

If you have little power like Just Eric, it means God loves you and He *is* loving you. If you have little power—and one day we will all have little power—it’s because God loves you very much.

And if you believe *God is Salvation* the door in your heart becomes a door to other hearts. You love because He first loved you.

## The Open Door to your heart, to your neighbor’s heart,

In several places, Saint Paul talks about a door being opened for the effective preaching of the Gospel.

As I was being tried, defrocked, and removed from the second largest church in our denomination, the pastor of the largest church in our denomination took me aside and



said, “Peter, why are you saying these things—that ‘God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all’—are you trying to increase attendance?” For a pastor, increased attendance is power. You see, we often preach the Word, and even twist the Word, for power.

He asked, “Are you preaching this to increase attendance?” It was then that I realized that Gospel spoken from a naked man hanging on a cross sounds different than gospel spoken from a BMW, gold throne, or institution...

Just a little before that conversation, a man I didn’t know came up to me after worship in our new multi-million dollar facility and he said, “As you were Preaching, I heard the Lord say, ‘He will have to stop driving this sports car.’” I said, “Thanks . . . I guess.” And hoped he was a false prophet.

Don’t get me wrong: there’s nothing wrong with buildings, and it was a great building. You can build very large and powerful buildings and institutions with words preached from golden thrones and BMWs, but it takes something more to change a heart. With just a few words spoken from a cross, you can shatter a hard heart and make it new, and then that cross isn’t a curse, but a doorway to infinite blessing.

Take a look at the life story of everyone that God uses in Scripture. It’s just like Soren Kierkegaard wrote, "God creates everything out of nothing—and everything which God is to use he first reduces to nothing."

You’ve read your Bible haven’t you?

Joseph, Moses, all the Prophets, King David . . . Remember he was the least likely candidate—a shepherd boy . . . And then even as the chosen king, he was tormented by Saul, failed with Bathsheba, was betrayed by Absalom (his son) and yet a man after God’s own heart.

The keys of David, refer to a steward unlocking the Palace of David in Jerusalem. And I think they refer to David’s ability to unlock hearts:

David wrote most of the Psalms...

He unlocked hearts, perhaps even God’s heart.

He was called *“the man after God’s own heart.”*

But just look at everyone God uses to set captives free . . .

Joseph, Moses, David, all the Prophets, Peter, Paul, John the Beloved . . .

And Jesus.

Jesus had all power to calm storms, walk on water, heal the sick, create the universe, etc. And He emptied Himself, took the form of a slave, and humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross. And in that place of utter weakness, hated and reviled by all humanity, and even feeling forsaken by God, reduced to “just Jesus”—just “God is Salvation” He cried out, *“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”*

And God the Father heard His prayer. *“Father forgive them...”*

And who is “them”?

“Them” is me,

And “them” is you.

“Them” is all who sinned against Him.

And God exalted Jesus above every name that is named.

He was enthroned on that cross and rules over all creation.

But He rules it in the very same way that He saves it.

*“Look, there is a slaughtered lamb standing on the golden throne of God.”*

There is no power greater than the power to surrender power for another.

That power is Love. And God is Love, and that Love is Free. *God is Salvation.*

Sociologists and psychologists point out that in human relationships—like a marriage—  
as power increases love decreases. And as love increases power decreases. They

define power as the ability to force your will upon another,  
while love is the willingness to sacrifice your will for another.

Power can force changes in behavior, but cannot change a heart.

Only Love can change a heart and create a new will.

On the Cross Jesus creates a new will—His will—in you.

It turns out that there is no power greater than Love.

God is Love. And Love is revealed in weakness.

[Image of a two young men—one of them in a wheelchair—laughing and enjoying each other's  
company]

Ron Heagy is an old friend confined to a wheelchair, who used to come speak at our  
church. He broke his neck as a teenager, but now he speaks to schools around the  
world about attitude and courage.

The moment that changed Ron's life came late one night in his hospital room where he  
was left alone with an eight-year-old boy, whom the doctors thought might be brain  
dead.

Ron had been a football star and so told us how he resented being in that room alone  
with Jimmy the eight-year-old vegetable. That night, Ron lost all hope; the dam broke,  
into the darkness he sobbed, “God... please let me die. I can't take care of myself. I  
can't dig a ditch or hug my girl... I can't do anything. Please just let me die.”

Then in the darkness he heard a voice... “R-o-n . . . R-o-n . . . I love you.”

It was Jimmy.

It was the only time Ron ever heard him speak, and it changed his life.

Even as I told you about Eric, a door may have opened in your heart. For a moment you stopped thinking about yourself and you thought about Eric—*just* Eric.

This is the Judgment according to Jesus,  
*“Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers you do to me...”*

See? I think Jesus calls to you from the powerless and the weak.

And when you are weak but speak Forgiveness, Grace and Mercy to those that have mistreated you, a Word rides out on your tongue more powerful than all the kings of this earth and the ancient dragon that rules them.

It's the Word that cuts to the division of soul and spirit and sets captives free: *“I place before you an open door, because you have little power, have kept my word and not denied my name.”*

**The Open Door**  
to your heart,  
to your neighbor's heart,  
to God the Father's heart,

It's a door to your heart, your neighbor's heart, and maybe even the heart of God.

Next chapter, verse 1, John writes, *“After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!”* (Rev. 4:1) Jesus then calls to John saying, “Take a look.”

John sees the throne of the Lord God Almighty and a slaughtered lamb standing on the throne. Jesus is the Lamb of God from “the bosom of the father.” He is the heart of God and He bleeds for you.

My old associate Gary Reddish once told me about a father that had been in his congregation in Wayne Pennsylvania . . . not far from Philadelphia and New York City.

One day in late October of 1991, he took his six-year-old daughter Mary sailing off the Jersey shore. He hadn't checked the weather report. Six miles out, John was shocked at how fast the winds changed, and how quickly a storm came up. It was the storm of the century, the perfect storm—the one in the movie, the one that sank the Andrea Gail.

Soon John's boat capsized. John and Mary were in the water and the life preservers were still tied to the boat as the boat was being driven out to sea.

John held on to Mary but soon realized there was no way he could swim the six miles

back to shore, unless he swam alone. Finally he said to Mary, *“Mary, you can float on your back as long as you want.”* They had practiced in the pool back at home. *“Float on your back, Mary. I’ll swim to shore, and I will be back for you.”*

Three hours later the Coast Guard found John. Together they looked for Mary, in twenty-to-thirty-foot swells in the midst of that storm . . . for an hour and a half. It was almost dark, and they were using the spotlight when miraculously they found Mary. She had been floating for five hours.

When the guardsmen pulled her on board they asked, *“Mary, how did you do that?”* She said, *“Well, my daddy said I could float on my back as long as I wanted to, and that he would come back for me. My daddy always does what he says.”*

Your Daddy is God.

His Word is Salvation—Jesus.

And His Word always accomplishes that for which it was sent. . . or He was sent.

The Andrea Gail, a private fishing vessel full of strong men, was lost at sea and sank during the “Perfect Storm.” Coast guard helicopters and rescue vessels couldn’t weather that storm. And six-year-old Mary just practiced her back float because her Daddy said she could float as long as she wanted to, and he was coming back.

You see, her father created faith in Mary with his word, and that faith kept Mary through the storm of the century and all the way home. She conquered the “Perfect Storm” with faith.

You think you have little power. (I think most of you think that.) That’s probably a good thing. You think you have little power; you’re just treading water, but you exercise a little faith (maybe it’s just the size of a little seed).

I suspect you’re doing the back float through the storm of the century and soon your Father will come for you and carry you home. (The angels look on with wonder.)

Jesus slept on the boat in the storm. Faith in you is His Spirit rising in you, and giving you peace in the midst of the storm.

But this is my point: Just think of John’s heart. Mary held the key to his heart.

I’m a father. And I can think of nothing, which would move my heart more, than the knowledge that *Just Jonathan, Just Elizabeth, Just Rebekah* or *Just Coleman*—at six-years-old—would float alone on the surface of the abyss, in a storm, reminding themselves, *“Daddy said He would come back for me. And my Daddy always does what he says.”*

If I could, I would move heaven and hell; I would move all creation. I think I would lay down my life if necessary, just to get to my kid. Nothing would have as much power over my heart . . . or power over their heart. I mean . . . if I saved them, it would

be a story we would tell our entire lives... It would be a story that would create them in my own image.

Now you may say, "Well that's touching Peter, but *what about* Eric, 'Just Eric?' He had faith that his father would come and his father didn't come . . ." Well, no, but Sister Mary Rose McGeady came and loved Eric, and Eric left his cement pipe, went home with her, and she told him about his Father in Heaven.

Actually, his Father in Heaven was in Sister Mary Rose McGeady, so that she could share His joy as he found Eric and saved him through her. And now you may say,

Well that's touching too, but *what about* the Marys that do drown in the sea, and the Erics that freeze to death in their cement pipes or the Erics that go on to construct shelters for their soul out of theft, murder, rape, or genocide?

*What about "Just Adolph," or "Just Caiaphas," or "Just Judas," or "Just Saul from Tarsus?"* Does God the Father see them buried in their fear shame and rage?

*What about* the 100 billion that never heard the name of Jesus, *God is Salvation?*

Well, as I was saying, in Revelation 4:1, John sees an open door in heaven and Jesus shows him the throne of God and on the throne, someone that John knows: The Slaughtered Lamb.

All creation, every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and in the sea, and all that is within them worship God almighty and God the Slaughtered Lamb...

*"Every creature:"* that means Jimmy is there with a new body. Ron is there without his wheelchair; Eric and Sister McGeady are there. Mary is there, doing her backstroke. You are there. I am there.

Everybody from the Presbytery and Lookout Mountain Community Church is there. Judas is there, and *even Hitler* is there—minus his fear shame and rage.

We're all there, praising the Lamb on the throne, for *He* has ransomed us for God.

The Open Door  
to your heart,  
to your neighbor's heart,  
to God the Father's heart,

to all creation.

If we look through that Open Door,  
I think it will Open . . .  
A door in us  
A door to others  
A door to God  
A door to all creation.

I think it's all the same Door. Jesus is the Door.

Because He has conquered, He is able to unwrap the Scroll of Creation, and give meaning to all reality. He is the meaning of God—God is Salvation.

As He unwraps the Scroll, breaking the seals, releasing the horsemen, sounding the trumpets and the thunders, and calling on the seven angels to pour out the bowls of wrath . . . As the dragon rages, the beasts deceive and the harlot seduces . . . As History happens, something rises through the door and before the throne.

Chapter 8, verse 4: It's the prayers of the Saints, mixed with incense from the altar on which the Lamb is sacrificed. It's prayers. Not crusades, government legislation, big budgets or even mission programs.

It's prayers.

Prayers rising from prison cells, and lonely apartments.

Prayers rising from hospital rooms, and old rugged crosses.

Prayers rising from children just like Mary, floating on the abyss in the midst of the storm muttering, "*He said He'd come back and He does what he says.*"

Prayers from cement pipes and tired old nuns in New York City and Calcutta.

Prayers from people who appear to have no power, but people who Patiently endure—refusing to call on their idols for salvation, but insisting that *God is Salvation*.

It turns out that prayers, from Philadelphia, control the world, for there is an Open Door between Philadelphia and the throne of God—His name is Jesus.

*"All things work together for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose,"* says Scripture. So what's His purpose.

Salvation.

It's His Word.

It's Jesus.

And I think we've been called according to His Purpose...

Ultimately, all that He has created is called according to His Purpose...  
It's even those hiding in giant cement pipes that don't love His Purpose,  
but hate His Purpose...

God will shatter their pride and save them from themselves, even as He has saved us from ourselves. But as for us and as for now, I do suspect that God has placed before us—and I mean this collectively as a particular church, like one of the seven churches—an open door, that no one can shut, **because** we have little power, have kept His word, and not denied His name: *God is Salvation*.

*If* that is in fact the case, we mustn't get impatient and resort to human power in order to open doors—claiming that God might *not* be salvation if we don't first believe He is salvation.

If that is in fact the case, we mustn't concern ourselves with human power, with earthly politics and budgets and big programs. We can participate in those things and use those things, but never rely on those things.

If it is in fact the case that God has placed before us an open door, we must worship Jesus. We must look to the throne and worship Jesus, and worship Jesus, and worship Jesus; and then trust that He'll show us the door, open the door and walk us through the door . . . because He *is* the Door.

The Open Door  
to your heart,  
to your neighbor's heart,  
to God the Father's heart,  
to all creation,  
and to our particular calling  
Is Jesus (“God is Salvation”)

He is the door to your heart, your neighbor's heart, the Father's heart, all creation, and our particular calling. The Door is Jesus: “*God is Salvation*.”  
That's not a map; that's The Way.

At the end of the Revelation John sees the New Jerusalem coming down as a Bride adorned for her husband. Her gates (her doors) are never shut by day, and in the city there is no night.

Revelation 13:8, 10-13

*“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut because you have little power, and you have kept my word and have not denied my name...Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who*

*dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ”*

I bet Jesus’ new name is Eric, and Mary, and Mary Rose, and Jimmy, and Ron, and Peter, and You, and also Jerusalem, for we are His Body.

Verse 13: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

### **Communion**

So Jesus took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you. Take and eat.” And He took the cup saying, this is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you.”

*“Behold, I set before you an open door.”*

*“Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the spirit says to the churches.”*

### **Benediction**

There is joy for the entire *world!* Because look who rules it! [Peter turns and looks to the cross.] Look who’s on the golden throne! It’s the slaughtered Lamb. You are experiencing the storm of the century. It feels like hell down here sometimes. But He said He’d be back, and He always does what He says. And you can float as long as you want to in Jesus’ name.

I was thinking of one more thing my friend said to me. And I think I was afraid to share this publicly for ten years. But He said, “Peter, God really wants this. But it will get smaller before it gets bigger. Right now, this is to be about worship. That’s all. Just worship. I’ve asked what is worship, and I’ve realized worship is looking at the throne. [Peter points to the cross.] And it’s saying to God, “Wow! You are so good.” You can do that everyday in everything you do: in your work, your prayers, singing, your business can be worship; every breath we take can be worship.

I think Jesus is just saying, “Come worship me. And when I want to, I can provide an open door, and you can walk through it because I’m good. And I will come for you. I will come back. I always do what I say.” Believe the Gospel. Have courage. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.*