Behold I stand at the door and knock

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Prof J.Douglas Macmillan

[0:00] Would you turn with me this evening to that chapter in which we read, Revelation chapter 3 and verse 20. A verse I'm sure which is very familiar to all of us.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will stop with him.
And he with me. One of the first sermons I recall ever hearing was a sermon in this text.
I was just a wee boy. I certainly wasn't five, I'm not sure what age I was, but I was under five. I may have been three or I may have been four.
I don't know how good my recall is, but I was certainly not in school. On a Sunday afternoon, it seems to me, a sunny afternoon, but then when I look back it seems as if all the afternoon Sunday afternoons when I was a wee boy was sunny.
[1:14] I seem to remember the good ones and forget the days when it rained. As a wee boy in a little meeting house, a hall in the village of Sanna in Ardmerton, I can remember still very vividly sitting between my father and my mother.

I'll always remember sitting in these seats because they didn't allow one much scope for not paying attention.
At that stage, my feet didn't reach the floor and there was no back to the seat. And I couldn't sit back and put my thumb in my mouth the way some of the boys and girls do in the church here.
I had to sit up and sit very straight or I fell into the lap of the old lady behind me. And I suppose that was a good thing, that I was made to sit up and pay attention.
And I can remember our minister, the late Reverend Alec MacLeod, he was a skyman, I can remember him preaching on this text. I think that it is the first sermon that I really remember listening to.
[2:27] And Mr MacLeod had a wonderful gift of holding the attention of wee boys who were apt to think about all sorts of other things than what the minister was saying.

Now that may be one reason why the Lord has laid this text to my heart for tonight. Because there are a lot of wee boys and girls in the church and it's very nice to see them.
And I want particularly to speak to them this evening. Because I think that a text and a sermon that I remember so vividly might teach them something too.
Then I remember hearing another sermon in this text. I remember that very vividly too because it was just very shortly after I was converted and I was converted in June 1955.
It was preached in the church in Cochrane by the late Reverend Donald Mackenzie, then the free church minister of Auburn. Mr Mackenzie had many virtues as a preacher and his sermons had many virtues.
[3:35] I remember before I was converted thinking that one of the virtues of Mr Mackenzie's Auburn sermons was that they didn't last longer than 20 minutes. They were finished very quickly.

Another virtue that he had was that he very frequently repeated the text from which he was preaching. And I don't know that I can quietly recall every text in which I had Mr Mackenzie preaching because in the first two years of my concerted life I had the privilege of hearing him preach very often.
He was incidentally brought up within this congregation when it was Hope State Free Church. But I certainly remember a great many of his texts.
And one of the texts I remember him preaching on is this one. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And he repeated it so frequently that it burned itself into my mind.
Now, I don't know if the reason may be that I remember two ministers preaching on this text and probably others that I don't remember.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[4:52] But in 22 years of preaching, every time I have come to this text I've felt unable to preach from it for some reason. And the fact that I take it tonight doesn't mean that after 22 years I suddenly feel that I understand what it's all about and I am able to preach it.

No, far from it. I think that it holds depths of truth and holds out to us marvels of grace which I cannot penetrate and which are precious things.
The text is most often, at least it seems to me, most often looked upon as a text which is particularly suited for arresting the attention of unconverted people and for showing how the Lord Jesus Christ demands entrance to the heart and life of sinners.
This is certainly the way that Mr. McKenzie-Oben began his sermon because he began talking about what he said was a very famous picture, painting, by, I think, Holman Hunt.
I have never seen the painting, but I can remember how vividly Mr. McKenzie described it in the introduction to his sermon. The picture depicted the Lord Jesus standing at a door.
[6:31] And there was the chill and the gloom of night about it. There were tears in his eyes and so on.

And one thing I remember he said was that there was no handle on the outside of the door, which meant that the door had to be opened from the inside.
Mr. McKenzie handled that thought very beautifully and laid very clearly before the congregation there the responsibility of every gospel preacher.
But you know, the text is not first of all to unconverted people. That's the first thing I want us to notice this evening.
That when Christ speaks these words, he speaks them to a Christian church. He is talking to the church which is that Laodicea.
[7:31] And the context of his speaking to that church is even wider than that.

He is giving seven letters to seven churches. And he has a word of rebuke and commendation for nearly all the churches.
And only two of the churches, it would seem, really pleasing out of seven. That's a very solemn thought. That only two churches out of seven really pleased the Lord Jesus.
The church of Smyrna and the church of Philadelphia. And I think of all the churches that displeased him, this one at Laodicea displeased him most of all.
And it displeased him not because it was doing some of the bad things that other churches were doing, but because it was neither hot nor cold.
[8:43] It was a lukewarm church. And the text, in fact, comes in the midst of what we might call Christ's council to a lukewarm church.

Now all the older boys and girls that belong to St. Vincent Street, is that not a solemnizing thought for us? If Christ was to visit St. Vincent Street, and we hope that by the Holy Spirit he is visiting St. Vincent Street right through this service.
But if the Lord Jesus Christ was to come into our church in a manifest form tonight and speak to us, I wonder how he would regard us.
This church thought highly of itself. And we tend to do the same. This church was rich.
It was one of the congregations that sent most money to the Sassentation Fund in its time. They were rich and increased with goods.
[9:55] And that was one of the reasons why they thought very highly of themselves. They lacked no good thing as far as this world was concerned.

From the way Christ speaks, I think they were well-dressed people, and I think they were probably very well-educated people.
And they lacked nothing as far as the temporal necessities of their church life went. This is what they say of themselves.
They say, We are rich and increased with goods. And have need of nothing. But they were deceived. For the Lord said, You know not that you are wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked.
And then he gives them counsel. And among the counsel, or when he's given the counsel, he brings in this thought. I stand at the door and knock.
[11:16] So even though, this is a lukewarm church that he's talking to, and even though he does say, I am about, and that's what the original Greek, the way we should really translate the original, I am about to spew the out of my mouth.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

You know it's a very strong figure. Take something into your mouth that's nauseating. And very often, if it's meant to be cold and it's not cold, or if it's meant to be hot and it's not hot, you just feel like spitting that thing out of your mouth.
That's the phrase, that's the figure, that this phrase sets before us. But despite that fact, Jesus counsels the church, and then, he offers, his renewed companionship.
Now the boys and girls here, do you know what a companion is? I'm sure you do. It's the wee boy, or the wee girl, down the street, or round the back that you play with. A companion.
A friend in life. Jesus comes to this church, and offers his companionship to it. And when he comes to a church, of course, he comes to the individual people in the church.
[12:39] And there is one word in this text, I remember Mr. McKenzie-Oben pointing to it, there is one word in this church, in this text, that broadens the appeal of Christ out, to the church in every age, and out to every hearer of the gospel.

Because he says, if any man hear my voice, and open the door.
That's the word that all those who preach in this text, is an evangelistic text. That's the word they use to show that it can be done.
Who stands at the door of the churches, and at the door of the human heart? Well, the Lord Jesus does. Just think, you and I can entertain and be the host to the Lord Jesus Christ.
God put great honor on Abraham. Remember, boys and girls, that one day Abraham was visited by three men.
[14:00] And he took them, and he made a meal for them, almost a feast, I was going to say. But he fed them, and they talked with him, and he talked with them.

And before they had left, Abraham knew that he had entertained the angels of God. and you and I, we would love to have an angel.
Imagine an angel coming and knocking the door of your house and saying, I would like to come in and have my supper with you. You would think yourself very favored. But here is this, the angel of the covenant, the king of angels, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.
And he is saying, I stand at the door. And there are people here who are not children. And sometimes in your heart and in your thoughts, you wonder how you could ever get messy with God. And you say, how can I reach up into the heavens and bring our Savior down? My friend, you don't need to reach up into the heavens. Paul tells us that in Romans.
[15:15] He says, who says? How can I get up into the heavens that I may bring Christ down? Or how can I go down into the depths that I may bring Christ up? Don't say that, he says, for the word.

The word who was God and who was with God. The word is near you. It's in your mouth. It's nearer to you than you're breathing. And Paul is talking about Jesus.
And my friend, who feels, you who feel that you have to strive after salvation or something you've to grasp, let me remind you of this.
Jesus is standing at the door. He has bowed the heavens and he has come down. And he says, if any man, you included, hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him.
salvation is not a difficult thing. Salvation is very simple. It's its very simplicity that baffles the carnal mind and that requires the miracle of the Holy Ghost to see the way of salvation.
[16:27] Who stands? The Lord Jesus Christ stands. The second thing I want us to think about is this, how near the Lord Jesus has come.

Well, I've kind of spoken of that already, haven't I? But how near the Lord Jesus Christ has come.
Boys and girls, sometimes you get the doorbell of the house ringing, don't you?
And you know that whoever is ringing the bell or flapping the leather box or knocking on the panels of the door, you know that they've come to your house. And you want to pay attention to the person who's come near to your house out of all the other houses in the street.
I know one house and when the doorbell rings at tea time or at lunch time, they all rush to the door. I'm sure a lot of houses are like that.
Who can get to the door first? And sometimes the rush is because friends are coming to the door. And if you've got five people who are up to five friends each coming to the door, then there's a big rush to the door.
[17:39] Now, here is the greatest friend of all. And he's knocking. One of the things that made me remember Mr. MacLeod's sermon and his text when I was a wee boy was this.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

He preached at a huge wooden desk. He just saw the top of his body and suddenly he was talking about knocking and he was a very vivid kind of preacher anyway.
And he said, listen, listen, listen, listen. Did it last. And I never forgot it. And he said, there, you can't help hearing that, can't you?
And he did it again. You can't help paying attention to that, can you? He said. And he said, Christ is knocking and he's knocking in ways that you can't help hearing and can't help paying attention to.
And then he said, why does anyone knock at your door? Oh, just because they're wanting in. Well, that was, that was a very simple thought but it was very true.
[18:44] Nobody ever knocks at your door unless, unless they're wanting to make contact with you. Come in. That's why Jesus has come here. He wants in.

And you know, the very worst thing I'm standing at the door and not tell us not only how near he has come but how far we have kept him from us.
Because if you don't get up from the tea table, if it's tea time and the doorbell rings or the door knocks, if you don't get up and go to the door and open the door, the person might as well be miles away from you.
And the very fact that he is standing and speaking and knocking on the outside of the door tells us how far we can keep the Lord Jesus away from us sometimes.
And especially when we remember that he's talking to people who are his own. How many believers are there tonight? And for weeks, months, maybe even years, you've kept the Lord Jesus Christ your Savior at Adam's Lent.
[19:59] Instead of having him in the house and feasting with him, he's out there. Everything else comes into the house. But Jesus doesn't.

And the very words that he uses to tell you how near he has come to you, I stand at the door. At the same time tell you how far you have kept Jesus away from you.
And you know, nearness and farness are very important things. Only many of the boys or girls have an enemy. I don't know. Some people think that we boys and girls don't have enemies.
But I know better. I had a lot of enemies when I was at school at one time. And I'm sure some of you have enemies at school too. And sometimes when you get back home from school you're very glad that they're not near you any longer.
They're big bullies. And if any of us have enemies or hear about enemies, if we hear about a strong army, and we do hear about a strong army, don't we?
[21:09] Even the wee boys in our house sometimes talk about how strong they're reading the papers or they hear on the wireless about how strong the Russian army is. And I was visiting our house one time and a wee boy said to me, Mr. Macmillan, do you think Russia's got the biggest army in the whole world and do you think they might invade us?

Well, I didn't know. But I said to the wee boy that I thought that if you took America and Britain and France and Germany, the army would be even bigger than the Russian one.
I didn't want him to be too frightened. But when you hear about a big army or a strong enemy, if it's as far away as Russia, then you don't really worry. You've got all these other countries, they can get worried, but he's far away from you.
You see, when you keep a thing far away from you, you don't worry about it and you're not afraid about it. It's the same with the Lord Jesus Christ and with death and standing before the judgment seat.
we all put it a long way away from us. But my friend, it's very near. Jesus has come right to the door. On the other hand, if something we don't like comes very near to us, we're not very happy either, are we?
[22:27] if we hear about a thief working in the area of the city we live in, and then if we hear that he's going into and out of houses in our own state, we say, oh, we'll have to put locks on all the windows.

He's getting near us and we'll have to lock the door. You begin to get worried about a thing that's too near. And you know, some of us feel like Christ is so far away that we don't have to worry about him.
And then others of us feel that Christ is so near that we do have to worry about him. And they worry about having to take Jesus in, opening the door.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

I actually remember someone saying to me, a person of 18 or 19 years old, Mr. Macmillan, I'm not coming back to your church.
It wasn't St. Vincent Street, it was Aberdeen. Mr. Macmillan, I'm not coming back to your church because if I keep on coming back to your church, I'm going to get converted. And right now, I don't want to be converted.
[23:37] He was dead scared that Christ would come in. No wonder he didn't open the door. Why? Because if Christ came in, he was afraid he would put out a lot of things that were in his heart and his life that he wanted to hold on to.

So he didn't want this guest. You know, many people are like that. How foolish. How terrible too. You know, we really need Christ. We have lost sinners. And isn't it sad that the very need, our sin, which has brought Christ so near to us, and my friend, it's not your goodness that has brought Christ near to you.
it's your badness. He's the saviour of sinners. It's your sin that's brought Jesus near. And isn't it a solemnising thought for every one of us, as well as for the boys and the girls here, isn't it a solemnising thought that the very need which has brought Jesus near is the very thing that can keep Jesus out, our sinfulness, and our love of our sin.
Amen. You know, the sun, when you can see it, and they tell me that you've been able to see it occasionally in the last few days, but very occasionally, but when the sun is shining bright, our shines, Luke tells us that its light is coming millions of miles, I can't remember how far, and I don't think I could understand what all these millions of miles would mean, but the light is coming a very long way.
[25:24] There are bright lights up here, and up here, and if you look at these lights, they begin to dazzle you, don't they? But you can shut them out. You can shut out the light of the sun too.

All you have to do is close the doors. See, all the boys and girls, you've got two doors that can close out the light of the sun, and they're just wee doors, and they're very easily closed.
And if you close them hard and tight, even in the sunlight you'd think it was dark. And some people, some people do that with Jesus.
They close the doors, and then they pretend that Jesus isn't there. Have you ever lain out in the sun, and looked up at it, and closed your eyes, and said, pretend it, the sun's not there, although it's so nice and warm, it's really dark.
I used to do that when I was a wee boy or something. But you know, although I closed my eyes and pretended the sun was away and it was dark, it wasn't really. It was still there.
[26:36] And even if we pretend that the gospel is not real, and that Jesus isn't standing there, we're only pretending, because the gospel is real, and Jesus is standing there.

And although we keep the door closed, he's still on the other side of it. And he's making his presence felt. He knocks, and then he speaks.
If any man hear my voice, you see how gracious the Lord Jesus is. He doesn't stop with knocking, he calls as well. And this is what your friends do, isn't it? The wee boy that visits our house, he's one of the ones that comes to the back door, and he can hear his knock, it's a very wee gentle knock, and it will go on very persistently for five minutes, if he didn't open the door, and sometimes just to tease, we don't open the door at first.
But he's not content with knocking. After a little while there'll be a wee voice shouting, Hi! Hi! Hi! Now Jesus is the same.
He is not content with knocking, he calls! And he voices a message! Then he says, if any man hears, any man, or any boy, or any girl, or any congregation, if you hear my voice, and open the door.
[28:15] Well, that's why we ask the Mcgawen calls the door. He wants the door open. and if Douglas is not there to play with, he wants to play with Lassie or something.

He has a reason for coming into our home. Or he, you know, he wants it. That's why he persists in knocking him, why he shouts. Even if it's just to play with the dog.
And Jesus has a reason for coming in, but he's got a great reason for coming in. He wants you to be happy. He wants to have a feast because if any man he says opens the door, I'll come in to him. And I'll have my supper with him. And he'll have his supper with me. Or I'll eat with him, and he'll eat with me. Now, that was one of the signs of real friendship and love and fellowship in these long, faraway times.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

You see, an enemy wouldn't sit down at your table with you. He would fight you. But if a person came to your tent or your home or your castle or whatever, and would sit down and have a meal with you, it meant friendship.
[29:31] That was one of the things about, one of the horrible things about what we call the massacre of Glencoe, when the government sent all these campbells to visit the McDonald's of Glencoe.

They took their hospitality, they sat at their table, and they made all the signs of friendship until the McDonald's lost all the fear because they knew the campbells and they didn't really trust them, not one wee bit.
But after staying with them for days and eating at the table and having given all the signs of friendship, even making a feast peace for the chief of the Quarant Donald's, after it all, what treachery, the middle of the night, a snowy winter night, well you know the story, don't you?
Jesus is not like that, he comes in to sup with us and to be our friends and to show us that he has made peace with God. And we have to be his own.
If any man opens the door, I will come in and sup with him. I'll come in and have my meal with him.
Then he says something else, he's not only going to be the guest, he's going to be the host too.
[30:47] And he with me. That's a two-way fellowship. Let me put it very simply. If we take the Lord Jesus Christ into our heart and into our lives, then he'll love us and he'll expect us to love him right back.

And how about opening the door? How do we open the door? Not very long ago, I was driving on a road that meant I had to cross over a canal.
You know what a canal is? It's got huge big gates, it's in a river or a loch, and it's got these big gates so that it holds all the water back and when they want to take a boat, very difficult to explain isn't it, but the river is running up the hill, running down a hill and they want to take a boat up the hill, what do they do?
They make these locks and they float a boat into them and then they open the gates and let the water down and the boat rises up and it goes into one lock and then they can let more water in there and it will rise higher and it climbs a hill, you see?
I think it's something like that, but these big gates are very difficult to open because all the water against them on one side makes up pressure and strangely enough they open against the water and two strong men pushing on them couldn't open it and even 200 strong men some of them couldn't open them.
[32:34] How then do they open these gates? Well, they've got a very wonderful device, they've got little grills, wee openings at the bottom of the door that they can lift up.

You see, all the pressure of the water against the doors, they can't open them but they lift these wee grills and let the water come in slowly from the bottom and then when there's the same amount of water inside the lock as what is on the outside of it, something that is very wonderful happens. The pressure on one side is the gate the same as the pressure on another side is the gate and it's easy to open. You see, it's something like that with us when we're asked to open the door for Jesus. We can't really do it of ourselves because of all the pressure that's against the door. a sinner can't believe in Jesus except God helps them to believe.
But when we hear about Jesus, that's grace being given to us by God. The more we hear about Jesus and his love, the more the gospel is hold of our hearts, that's why the wee gates have been opened up and grace comes in, and then when a little grace comes in, more grace comes in, and then the doors can open very easily because all that God has overcome, all the things in our heart and our life, that would make us keep Jesus out.
[34:26] Jesus says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man or boy or girl or young person or old person hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and feast with him and he with me.

And may God give us, all of us, us passions and as our congregation to open the doors of our hearts and our lives to Jesus.
Let us pray. Oh gracious God, we thank thee tonight, for the wonder of the gospel and the love of the Savior who has done so much to save our souls and who has come so near to us.
He has humbled himself and made himself one of us. He has died on the cross and suffered to make an atonement for our sins. He has even gone down into death and we thank thee that he has

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

also ascended up into heaven and that he is able to save any one of us when we hear his voice. We thank thee for the many ways in which his knock is heard and his voice is heard by us. And we thank thee, Lord, that he is able to help us to open the door.
[35:57] Grant us grace to do that even this night. pardon all our sins for his name's sake. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host