

**Christ Community Covenant Church
Resurrection Sunday - "Doors"
Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 24, 2011**



I want you to have a look at a door - if you look at it closely for even just a few seconds, I think you'd have to admit that's a purpose-manufactured door. That's a door with a mission. Just look at the hardware on it. That's a door meant to keep people out or to keep something in, but it's not to be easily penetrated. That is one sturdy, impressive door.

The New Testament tells us that shortly after Jesus was publicly crucified, one of his followers, a person of means, offered to put the body of Jesus in his own tomb. And when he put the body of Jesus in the tomb, there was a door – a stone actually – that was put in front of that tomb entrance.



Like that vault, this is another impressive door designed to keep people out and to hold something in. A circular stone weighing four or five hundred pounds was rolled down a ramp that directed the stone door into a groove that would in effect close up the tomb in darkness. It wasn't considered a door at the time more like a seal, more like this vault. It couldn't be opened from the inside at all, and from the outside it would take five men with levers to remove it. Rolled down a ramp it fit perfectly into a groove that allowed it to fall perfectly in front of the opening. The Romans wanted to make sure that the whole controversy about Jesus was done; and so they agreed to put a Roman seal across that tomb, which made a violation of the moving of that stone sort of a federal offense punishable by death. And they put prison guards up, like marine-type guards, in front of the tomb. The goal was to close the door on this event. Everyone seemed to want the Jesus problem to go away.

The idea was that the whole deal with Jesus was over. The teachings that inspired so much controversy, the dreams that were ignited in so many people, the threat to the religious and the governmental establishment – it was done. Sealed behind an impenetrable door.

But something amazing happened on the third day after Jesus was murdered. According to the scriptures, Jesus was raised from the dead. That is why we call this resurrection Sunday in honor of the anniversary of that cosmic event. The Gospels tell us that hundreds saw Him in His new body alive and billions believe it is true. Now you might be asking, "So what if someone who claimed to be a religious leader has come back to life?" It's not the historicity some people worry about; it's the relevance. What difference does it make to my life?

There's a fascinating passage in Ephesians 1:19-20:

Ephesians 1:19-20. I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

This says that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available for the day-to-day challenges of people who trust in that power. Let me say that again. The very same power that burst through the tomb, that raised Jesus from the dead, that authenticated his identity, that upset all of history . . . the same power that brought Jesus back from the dead is available this day to human beings who are humble enough to ask. Because Jesus is alive today, not a dead idea, He is available to those who by faith take a step and open themselves up to the resurrection power of God. Resurrection power is available to you.

Now here's the door thing I want to spend the next few minutes on. The power that opened that door is a power that can open doors in your life that by human strength most of the time we can't open ourselves. So let me build the case. Let's move to another door.

Mirrored Door



Now I'm in front of a door that looks to me like a closet of a very neat person. Clothes all hung just so and you can see the large mirrored door on that closet that helps the man or woman look just right before heading out for the day. Just right, so that their world will see them just so. Standing in front of that mirrored door we find a reflection of our external identity. When I say the word 'identity,' how is the word most bandied about in our culture today? Identity theft, right? Where someone gets your credit card number or they get some of your financial data, and then they rip you off. Whole industries now have been created to be able to protect you from financial identity theft, as though the theft of your money was the greatest threat to your identity.

I just don't believe that's true. I believe there's a far greater threat to your identity. And that's when you grow up and you live your whole life with a marred or distorted or wounded or damaged identity. That's far worse for your soul than to get ripped off of some money, trust me.

I think one of the most important understandings you have about yourself is who you are. Who are you? Who values you? What do you think about yourself on the inside? Whose voice do you listen to? Whose affirmation defines you? Are you defined by how others see you all dressed up just so, or by some higher standard?

Most of us are wounded on the inside and it impacts everything about us. But the Bible says you can become a new person with a new identity.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Sometimes have you thought, "If I could only move and just start all over." That never works because where ever you go, there you are! But what if today this was a door you could walk through and you would find the identity that God has set aside for you. You can open this door to

the power of God, walk through it, and come out the other side with an identity defined by God and His love. It's not necessarily a one-time thing. I had my identity restored the day I became a Christian when I was 16 years old; but many times since, I've had to have the words of God and the power of God restore me and make me a little bit newer if that's possible. I wonder what it would be like if this morning you walked through this door and were made new?

Prison Door

And there is this door.



It looks to me to be a prison door. I learned this week that there are almost 21,000 people who live behind doors much like this here in Colorado. Confined, shielded from society, most likely for very good reasons. There is no mistaking, people who walked past these doors are under no misconception. They won't be free till someone else makes them free. Well, there are some of us who appear to be very free here today. We drove here freely. We dressed freely. We ate freely. We appear to be very free. And yet the truth just under the veneer of what you see on the surface around here in this church is that there are more people enslaved than you would have any idea about. Enslaved to vocational ladder-climbing. Enslaved to the acquisition of money or power. Enslaved to a destructive relationship that all the smart people in your life are saying to get out of, but you can't. Enslaved to some kind of mental, physical or emotional substance or habit and you just can't break free.

There are a lot of us who appear to be free, and yet we just can't get free. Try as we might as the scripture says we can't break free on our own, we are "slaves to sin." How do you get free from what has you enslaved? It's going to take something new and different than what I bring to the table – something/ *someone* - beyond my natural efforts. It takes a 'super' natural to break me free. The empty tomb tells us that there is resurrection power available to help those of us who are enslaved to something. Today I believe that we can walk through a door of liberation and gain freedom.

Some of you have just given up. You don't think there's any real possibility that someone like you could be free from what has you enslaved. You say to yourself that people don't just change. I've tried. But I'm here to differ. I can say with absolute conviction that if by humility and by faith, you would ask God for his resurrection power to help you get free from what has you bound, God will help you. Who knows what would happen? Who knows what would happen if you would walk through a door like this? Jesus said:

John 8:36

"If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed."

What do you think? Bigger things have happened on this day.

Emergency Room Door

I want to look at one more door. It is a door most of us hope we will never have to go through.



This is an emergency room door. It is the door of sickness and trial and heartache. This door is where we walk through when our bodies are broken. But where do we go for healing when our heart and soul are broken? When our circumstances are so despairing that we just can't seem to get out of bed? For all of us at different times there is a door of hardship that just behind it is a flood of tears and fears that can paralyze us.

There is a kind of deep, low-grade, chronic fear in people my age who are getting older. It's death and what waits on the other side. Death is the third most feared thing in the United States, right behind public speaking and getting trapped in a fire.

The apostle Paul writes one time in the New Testament – it's really cool, he was reflecting on the resurrection and almost like he's trash talking the power of death, if you think about it in baseball terminology – he says,

1 Corinthians 15:55

O death, where is your victory? O grave, where is your sting?

You see this is what makes the cross and the empty tomb so relevant some 2000 years later - that death itself has been overthrown. It's been proven through the resurrection of Jesus Christ that death doesn't have ultimate authority over mankind anymore. The power of death has been broken through the resurrection of Christ. Know today, you need never die!

Now our bodies will give out. The death rate in our society still hovers around 100 percent. All our bodies will someday give out. But the ever-living never dying part of you can continue to live in Christ. We have to ask the question Jesus asked; "What does it profit a person to gain the world and lose his soul?" As we approach our last breath here, in what condition will you be? Will you be in terror? Will you be incapacitated the final weeks or months of your life from just the horror and the terror and the uncertainty of death? Or will you fearlessly leave this world knowing that your life is now hidden with God in Heaven?

Jesus is the Door

You need to know about one more door. It is the door I spoke of earlier with the children. Jesus says in **John 10:9** these powerful words:

John 10:9

"I am the door. If anyone enters by me they will be saved . . ."



Now this is not a politically popular statement these days because we'd like to tell the world there are all kinds of doors. You can walk through that religious door, this religious door, follow that religious leader – like, any plane goes to L.A. That's not true, right? Some planes go to the east coast.

Some of you would like to believe that any door anyone chooses to walk through will lead to God. But Jesus said, *I am the door*. That's just truth. You can have your hopes on another door and find out after the fact that it didn't get you where you need to go. Jesus is saying: "I'm not bragging, I'm not trying to set myself up. I'm just telling you the truth; I'm the doorway to the Father."

This tomb became the doorway to new life. Walk through this door, like Jesus did and find life eternal at last.

And one more thing; this door is open now. Actually, the door from death to life has not been opened; it has been blown off its hinges! This is so cool about Christianity. When people say that Christianity is so exclusive, I say they've got to be kidding. Christianity is the most inclusive religion in the world. It says to come as you are. Come with your garbage. Come with your failures. Come with all of your shame. Come with what you did last Friday night that you still can't believe you did. Come with all of that. And come in humility. Come in repentance. Come in faith. *I am the door*, Jesus said. Come on in.

Jesus' words were reflected in the last book of the Bible when he said;

Revelation 3:20

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

The imagery there is that's how eager Christ is for you to walk through the door of redemption. He's inviting you to open the door and let Him into your life.

Let's just do a quick review on what you've heard today.



The Bible says the power that blew the tomb door open, the power that raised Jesus from the dead, can be accessed by normal human beings in today's world. He can give you a new identity. The Holy Spirit can give you inner liberation from some things that have you enslaved, even the fear of death. He can give you hope in the times of pain fear and hopelessness. He offers you the door of redemption if you have the humility and faith to walk through it.

So here's what we're going to do. As we listen to the closing song, I'm going to ask you to do a courageous thing. It doesn't happen at many Easter services. Usually you just come and get an optimistic message and go out the door. It's going to be a little different this year because I'm going to ask you – and I can only ask; you have the answer in your spirit between you and God. I'm going to ask you that as I close the service in prayer and before you walk out the exit doors, you consider receiving the answer God has in store for you behind these doors.

You've heard a lot about resurrection power and maybe now you want to have it in your life. You don't want to just observe it. You want to know that God loves you. The message of the cross and the empty tomb is that Jesus died to pay the penalty of our sins and His resurrection proves that same love and power is alive now. Don't fear. Some of you know exactly which of these symbolic doors you need to walk through.

- Some of you know you need a new identity so badly.
- Some of you need power over something that's enslaving you, maybe even the fear of death.
- Some of you have struggled so desperately with the hardships and pains of life that life has lost its hope. You need to know there is a door to that hope this morning.
- Some of you have been ready for a long time, but you've just never taken the step to walk through redemption's door and to become a Christian.

This closing song speaks to the hardships of life and points us to the only real hope we have. Listen and think with me; contemplate what doorway you will walk through.

There's a passage in **Ezekiel 46:9** where God is arranging the protocol for a worship gathering. He gives some specific instructions:

Ezekiel 46:9

"When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, he who enters by the north gate to worship shall go out by the south gate, and he who enters by the south gate shall go out by the north gate: no one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered, but each shall go out straight ahead.

He tells the people that if they're going to come through the south gate to the worship gathering, then they're to exit through the north gate. And if they come by the north gate, they're to exit through the south gate. You read that text and you wonder what that's all about. I think that when God gave those instructions, he was saying that when the people went into his presence, he didn't want them to leave the same way. He was saying: I want to bless your life; I want to lift a burden; I want to heal a wound; I want to reshape an identity; I want to give you an increased capacity to love; I want to free you from something; I want to save you.

As we dismiss, the temptation may be to just use the exit doors, but I would ask if you want to leave the same way you came? Why not just say that by faith you're going to walk through one of these doors? No one is going to badger you or put you on a list. This is your choice. Leave this morning knowing that this Resurrection Sunday you've trusted God for something. You've asked him for something. You've asked for the Power of His Holy Spirit to be applied to your life in some specific way.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we're grateful for resurrection power. We're grateful that your Son's death and resurrection isn't just a footnote in history, but power of the Holy Spirit is alive and available today. And if we're humble enough and just have that mustard seed of faith to believe that your power can help us in some way, you'll help us.

Now I pray that you will move people to walk by faith through the doors that they need to walk through.

And we pray this in the name of the risen Christ. Amen.

Benediction

Speaking of doors, did you know that some day the Messiah, the Risen Christ will return, this time in power not in peace? Jerusalem's front door – the Golden Gate that faces east and was the main entrance to the Temple Mount in Jesus' day – stands unused. This is it today all blocked up.



It has been blocked for nearly five centuries. If you want to enter Jerusalem, you have to go in one of the side doors.

According to Jewish tradition, the Shekhinah or Divine Presence used to appear through this front gate. Tradition says that this is the gate through which the Messiah will enter Jerusalem. For that reason the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Great sealed the Golden Gate in 1541 to prevent the Messiah's entry.

Let me just say that when Jesus comes back a few stones won't stand in his way! He is risen! He is risen indeed!