

Doors.

Meeting behind closed doors, locked out of fear, the disciples contemplated the morning.

Mary Magdalen ran from the now unlocked tomb and told Peter and John that the Lord is Risen. Peter and John immediately set off to see if this was true; if it was, then what had been said before now had a different understanding.

Encountering Jesus, they returned to the shared room and locked the doors.

Everyone was there except Thomas, Cleopas, and his wife.

Suddenly, they were aware that Jesus was standing there in their midst. No doubt, a couple of the disciples would have looked at the door. Still, seeing it bolted shut would have left them perplexed.

Is this a ghost? Is this real?

Jesus sensed their confusion and immediately revealed his hands and sides to them. His face, hands, side, and feet were bearing the recent wounds of crucifixion. He spoke to them.

Peace be with you, he said. Then he breathed on them, giving them the keys of the kingdom. What is locked on earth will be closed in heaven; what is opened on earth will be opened in heaven.

And then, he was gone. The door was still locked.

Thomas arrived later. He had to knock to get in. He found them all terribly excited. They told him everything that had happened.

What happened next was not a doubting moment but a seeking of confirmation for himself. Jesus had appeared, shown his wounds and gifted them the keys of the kingdom. And he did this all behind a closed door.

A week had gone by, and again, locked in their room, the door bolted shut out of fear; Jesus was again there. Furthermore, he blessed them with the peace of God that passes all understanding. He looked at Thomas intently and said, "Come here, Thomas. Please put your hands in my side. Look at my wounds. Stop doubting, but believe."

Thomas then utters the most profound words of the entire Gospel. They were the exact words that Peter had spoken after the Transfiguration. "My Lord and my God." Sometimes we overlook that Peter was rebuked moments after that for suggesting that Jesus should not die and they would do everything to protect him.

"Get behind me, Satan."

John is also seemingly rebuked.

"You believe because you can see me. Blessed are the ones who will not see me and yet come to believe."

This is another point where the door comes into play. The disciples were in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and He gifted them the keys to the door of heaven. And now, with Thomas, the implication becomes clear. Others will come to believe, and they will believe without the Lord necessarily appearing.

The door to Thomas' mind was as closed as the room he was in until it was opened by sight.

The door of the upper room was to remain closed until Jesus was ready to further gift the Holy Spirit. They were to return to Jerusalem for Pentecost, 50 days after the Passover.

Some time passed, and the fishermen returned to their old ways. They toiled all night and caught nothing. A stranger called from the shore to them and told them to try the other side of the boat. It was as if a door was opened, and the fish swam into the net. This time it is Peter who realises that "It is the Lord!"

Doors are exciting things. Let us think for a moment about the doors of our house. It affords us privacy, security and protection. Who we open the door to depends on our sense of intimacy, hospitality and personal needs.

Once, we could leave the doors to the house unlocked. Such was our comfort with the security of the neighbourhood. We trusted that no one would violate our privacy. Some even left the keys under a pot plant or a hidden spot. For us boys growing up, it was hidden in the dog kennel.

But what about our Church? What if the door here, or at St Paul's, or at St John's?

An experiment that Janice has undertaken this autumn festival has been amazing to watch. Occasionally, I have been in the Church as it happens or arranged to meet people there. Hundreds have been through the Church. Hundreds have asked questions. People have stood at the window and artwork and marvelled. The organ has become a focus for many. People want to play or learn to play. Others have relatives who are distinguished musicians in their own right and wish to come here and perform.

Others have shared their faith journey. They have lit candles, sat in the pews and gazed. And at all times, it was from the safety of an open door with a sign saying, "Welcome."

I wandered over the road with Janice to buy a hot chocolate after I spent grief counselling yesterday in the Vestry. Marg came in to refresh the beautiful flowers. Others came in, looked and stayed. Others came in to shelter from the wind. One wanted to arrange a chance for his cousin to either give an organ recital here or play the instrument.

I wandered over the road with Janice. There was good banter between the crossing guards and ourselves, and they not only called us 'peds' but Very Important Peds. People approached and talked with us at the coffee van, and Charlie was as excellent as ever. I did wonder why people knew I was the priest, and then I remembered I was wearing a top with a large Celtic cross on the front and back.

What struck me most, though, was the moment we set out. Janice immediately locked the door for fear of being accused of not doing the right thing, and I was inclined to trust them and leave it open. When we came back, the door was open, and Ian was doing a somewhat futile job sweeping the front yard. I noted John Henry had collected some of the fallen timber earlier in the morning.

Doors are two-way. They keep us in, and they also let us out.

The point for Thomas was this. You have seen, and now you will go out and encourage others to see.

What does a closed Church door say to the community?

Leaving things open is always a risk, but keeping doors closed also sends a powerful message. I have often said to people, "Come and see." Indeed they have been. But what happens next?

You could say, "Well, that's the Vicar's job, as that is what we pay him to do." Well, I partly have that role, but my most important part is to join you at the table of the Lord and then send you out the door so you can share and others may come to believe.

Like Thomas, you have the keys to coming in and going out.

Doors. To open or not to open is more than a question; it is a life-giving choice.