

The Open Heart.

Text: Rev. 3:20

Suggested Hymns:

1, 303, 733, 18, 7

1) Why Is the Open Heart Necessary?

2) How Is the Heart to be Opened?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Revelation 3:20, 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 dine with him, and he with Me.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The rays of another bright Christmas are appearing on the horizon. Stores and houses are being decorated. Your home will receive special attention. But how about your heart? — The Advent call is, ***“Behold, your King is coming to you!”***¹

This message and all the glorious blessings of the season require *An Open Heart*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Why Is The Open Heart Necessary?

An open heart is necessary because Christ expects an open heart. That is why He is standing at the door and knocking. When the announcement is proclaimed ***“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you’*** then Zion is to throw wide open her portals. The Guest is at the door.

Christ stands outside the temple of our hearts, willing to enter and consecrate them, if we will but open the door.

An open heart is necessary because only the open heart will receive the priceless blessings of the season.

Consider the blessings of the message. The Christmas Gospel. Luke 1:28–33, ²⁸ ***And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”*** ²⁹ ***But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting***

this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

And Luke 1:35, *³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*

And to the shepherds in Luke 2:9–10, *⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*

And why did this happen? The answer is in John 3:16, *¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

It is all, so superhuman that we pilgrims and strangers on a dark earth can hardly realise the blessed contents of these good tidings of great joy.

If this message really sinks into your heart, then worry is at an end; then all tears are dried; then — what a glorious Christmas, what a glorious life!

The open heart is not merely to receive a message, but a glorious person, Christ Himself. Our text says, *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 dine with him, and he with Me.*

Christ is the fulfilment of prophecies, the God-man, Saviour. Walking through the dark valley with Christ in your heart He says, *“I will come in,”* with My omnipotence, with My redemption, with My peace. The hymnist writes, *“Life and salvation He doth bring.” “The end of all our woes He brings.”²*

The open heart is assured most blessed communion with the Saviour. *“I will ... dine with him, and he with Me.”* This quiet, intimate, loving fellowship with

Jesus, our Saviour and King, transforms our poor earthly lives into one glorious feast.

What a pity if these glorious blessings were to find your heart dark, bolted, and locked!

2. How Is The Heart To Be Opened?

Christ in the text finds the heart closed. By nature every heart has a closed, locked, and barricaded door. There are some hearts which at one time were the temples of the living Christ, but have by carelessness, by disloyalty, by disobedience, have driven Him away and bolted the door against Him.

With such cold and dark hearts there might be spark and tinsel, superficial happiness, and excitement at Christmas, but no joyful, spiritual experiences which alone satisfy the craving, yearning human soul. We read in Psalm 42:1-2, ¹ *As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.* ² *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*

God alone can open the closed door of the human heart. He has to come, to stand, to knock, and call

We read in explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

Martin Luther wrote these words in a hymn,³

Lord, open Thou my heart to hear,
And by Thy Word to me draw near;

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:18, ¹⁸ *Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.*

The Saviour uses various means to open the heart.

He knocks. The Law comes to the door with the power of a hammer to pound and to crush. The Law shows us our sin. We read in Jeremiah 23:29, ²⁹ *"Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks*

the rock in pieces? To emphasise the crushing power of the Law, God knocks with human experiences, as sorrows, bereavements, sickness, when the conscience is aroused and the soul awakened to listen to the patient Visitor who seeks entrance.

He calls us. Our text says, ***“If anyone hears My voice.”*** The Gospel is effective. God says in Isaiah 55:11, ***“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”***

It is the Lord who opens the hearts as we read in Acts 16:14, ***“Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.”***

God’s merciful providence has brought you to this Worship Service today. On this First Advent Sunday the gracious King is coming to you to enter and dwell in your heart. His Word rings in your ear. You have it in your church and in your home. Let the Word of Christ dwell among you richly. This happens through Divine Services, family devotions, and Prayer. Let Jesus come in to dine with you, and you with Him.

Our text says, ***“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”***

This text portrays the power of the Gospel to invite and convert. Most of us treasure the beautiful painting of Jesus standing at the door of the believer’s heart and knocking.

Saving faith is not a decision the believer makes to open the door to the Saviour. Jesus told His disciples, ***“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”***⁴

The Laodiceans fell away from faith on their own, but the Saviour took the initiative to bring them back. Not only does Jesus ***“stand at the door and knock,”*** but His ***“voice”*** is what leads us to open the door.

St. Paul reminded the Ephesians that this voice of truth at the door to their hearts brought them to faith. We read in Ephesians 1:13, ***“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.”***

I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me describes the fellowship that begins and continues. During their lifetimes, those who respond to the Gospel's knocking will enjoy having Jesus as a dinner guest in their hearts.

The picture of Jesus and the believer dining together does not suggest the Lord's Supper, because in the Lord's Supper only the believer partakes. This is instead a happy picture of those who are "at home" with Jesus during their lives on earth having Him in their hearts.

Of those who were grafted to Him by faith, Jesus said, ***"I have called you friends."***⁵ Jesus made this promise to all believers written in John 14:23, ***"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."***

The Advent call is ***Behold, your King is coming to you.*** Let us welcome the King with an open heart.

And this is the Advent message, as written in Psalm 24:7-10, ***⁷ Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. ⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.***

⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. ¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.

Friends, Christ is standing at the door of your heart now. No matter how cold and indifferent you may have been in the past, no matter how guilty and unworthy, open that door. ***"If anyone,"*** no matter how vile he be, ***"hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."*** ***"That Christ may dwell in your heart through faith."***⁶

Let us conclude with the words of the Hymnist,⁷

Enter now my waiting heart,
Glorious king and Lord most holy
Dwell in me and ne'er depart,
Though I am but poor and lowly.
O what riches mine shall be
When Thou dwellest, Lord, in me! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 21:5

² Hymn 18, 1, 2

³ Hymn 498

⁴ John 15:16

⁵ John 15:15

⁶ Ephesians 3:17

⁷ Hymn 7