

THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM

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SCRIPTURE: John 10:1-5, 7-10.

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know not the voice of strangers Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheepfold. All that ever came before me who testified not of me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Except a man be born of water, and the Spirit, he can not ENTER into the kingdom of God.

In previous sermons we have said that the natural man has within him none of the life of the kingdom. Man in his natural, unregenerate state, is an enemy to God. His physical body is subject to death; he has within himself no power to lay hold on immortality and eternal life. He is to a greater or lesser degree a creature of sin, and because of sin, he cannot tolerate the perfect presence of God. Because of these conditions, he is an heir of death, not of life. He is helplessly subject to the devil's kingdom of death, and would be forever, were it not for the atonement made by Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the door to the kingdom. By him and through him we enter into the kingdom of God. Entering the kingdom in some respects is a simple process, but in some other respects it is a mysterious and by no means a simple process. Entering the kingdom is not simply taking a few steps from where you are to where you ought to be. It is more than stepping through a door from one kingdom into another. As we explained in a previous sermon, the inert soil of the mineral kingdom has no power to change itself into the materials of a higher vegetable kingdom; and the vegetable kingdom similarly has no power to change itself into the material of a human body which is a still higher, or animal kingdom. The life of the higher kingdom must come down into the lower kingdom, and this higher life must transform, change, and transmute the substance of the lower kingdom into the substance of the higher. Otherwise the inert matter of the lower kingdom can never be endowed with the life of the higher kingdom. Unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Entering into the kingdom of God requires a new birth, a new life, as well as a new allegiance.

Jesus Christ is the door of the kingdom, because it is by and through him -- and him only -- that we enter in. There is no other name given under heaven whereby men may be saved. Man cannot save himself. One man cannot save another. The devil offers only death. We can enter God's kingdom only through a new birth. There can be no salvation, except as the life of Jesus -- the life and power by which he arose from the dead -- shall enter into us to save us from our sins, to grant us forgiveness for those sins, to bring us the resurrection of the body and eternal life. The Book of Mormon, speaking of Christ as the only Savior, says "The way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel: and he employeth no servant there; And there is none other way, save it be by the gate, for he cannot be deceived: for the Lord God is his name. And whoso knocketh, to him will he open...."(II Nephi 13:11) Jesus is the only Savior, the only door.

"No man cometh to the Father but by me." Every man who wishes to enter the kingdom must pass his inspection, must come in by him.

We need Jesus Christ as the door to the kingdom for three reasons. First, because only through him can we receive the new birth which will bring us the life of the kingdom -- his life -- and because without that life we still belong to the kingdom of death, the kingdom of the devil. We do not have to wait for death in order to receive the life of the kingdom. That life must live in us now -- not just after the resurrection. We may have it now, if we will come in by the door. Then if we have the life of the kingdom now -- in our mortal bodies -- on this earth -- that life will continue with us in death, and will raise us up in a new body to dwell in the kingdom of God eternally.

Secondly, we need Jesus Christ as the door to the kingdom because we cannot come into the kingdom laden down with sins. No unclean thing can enter there. No unclean thing can enjoy the life of the kingdom now. Only in and through Jesus Christ, and the power of his atonement, can our sins be forgiven, blotted out, taken away, and remembered no more. Unless our sins are forgiven and taken away forever by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, we should find it intolerable to stand in God's presence or to occupy anywhere in his glorious kingdom where sin cannot come.

Third, we need Jesus Christ as the door to the kingdom because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom. Therefore, it is only through the power of his resurrection that we may hope to have spirit and body reunited in a new and immortal body, so that we may dwell in that kingdom eternally. Because Jesus lives, because he has conquered death and entered the kingdom, we too shall live, and shall dwell with him.

The door of the kingdom is open to all men who will comply with the terms of admission. Jesus has prescribed the way in which men may go through that door. He has said that except a man be born of water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom. He has said that no man cometh to the Father but by me. He requires that men should first have faith in him as Savior and Redeemer. He requires that men should repent of their sins, then forsake them and do them no more as proof of their repentance. He requires that sins be forgiven and remitted through baptism in water by one having authority from the King. This baptism is a symbol of a new birth -- of the death and burial of the old man, and the resurrection of a new man, whose life and allegiance belong to God and Christ. After the baptism in water, man is then ready for the baptism of the Spirit, as under the hands of the elders he is endowed with the Holy Spirit which is the life of the kingdom.

Many men do not see the necessity for coming in through this door. They want to climb up some other way. But even the great Shepherd himself came in through this door as an example to us, the "shew unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example. Jesus commanded that we should enter in at the strait gate, warning also that "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life eternal, and few there be that find it." A door or a gate broad enough to admit every man in the world on his own terms would not be a door at all. The door to the kingdom is strait -- that is narrow restricted. There is not room for a man to go through it laden down with his sins, or with his own opinions. No man can go through it, or enter the kingdom in his own strength, but only in the strength and in the life of Christ.

Let us remember too that an open door communicates, but a closed door shuts out, By the open door we may enter the kingdom, if we comply with Christ's requirements, and if we know him as our Shepherd, and he knows us as one of his sheep. But on the other hand, the closed door shuts out. If we try to go through the door with out sins, to prey upon the sheep, or to gain an advantage for which we are not willing to pay the price of complete self-abnegation, and unswerving loyalty, the closed door will keep us out. When Jesus said, "I am the door," his hearers probably had in mind the picture of the shepherd who actually made his body the door of the sheepfold, by sleeping across the narrow opening to the sheepfold, guarding the sheep with his very life and body. We invite you again to accept Christ as your Savior, to come in by the door which he has provided, for he has said, "I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of heaven, which is broad as eternity; and whoso cometh in at the gate, and climbeth up by me shall never fall."