

THE PULPIT.

No. 52.

Closing Year's Appeal.

Preached at Onondago and Albion, on Dec. 30th, by the pastor,
Rev. Wm. M. Reid.



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TEXT:—"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 sup with him, and he with me. Rev. iii. 20.

These words form a most fitting close to the many appeals, the warnings, the exhortations given to the seven churches in Asia. The words "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches" are repeated to each separate church, (Chap. ii: 7, 11, 17, 29; Chap. iii: 6, 13, 22.) These words come down the ages with a deep, divine

meaning, to every church and every individual. If any man hear this voice of divine love and mercy let him hear it now. It is each of us here that is reminded, that the Babe of Bethlehem, the Lord of Glory, stands at the door of our hearts pleading to be admitted to help, comfort and sanctify. We have not a more touching illustration of the attitude of divine love in the whole Bible. Here the heart or soul of man is spoken of as a house. This house was once the dwelling-place of God. When sin entered God was driven out. Like Nehemiah of old with the temple at Jerusalem, God thus wishes to come in and repair the ruins and dwell in us and we in Him.

How this can be is a mystery, but it is a fact which we can experience as we do the union of our soul and body though we cannot explain their vital relations. The picture presented here in the text is at once sublime and yet most affecting. We are reminded a great change has taken place in the soul of man, made in the image of God. At first, when sinless, the soul longed for fellowship with God and felt incomplete without His gracious presence, when His voice in the Garden of Eden brought joy and peace to the human heart, which opened to the whisper of His love as the flower opens to the light of the sun and drinks in the dew of heaven, but now it is otherwise. The natural heart hides from the presence of God as our first parents did, and is afraid; yet while men refuse to hear the voice of Jesus read or preached, still He comes to them and pleads with them to open the door of their heart and let Him in.

In order to explain this text let us ask ourselves three questions, I. Why does Christ thus stand and knock?

(1). Because it is His method. Some may ask, "Could He not break down opposition and force His way through the doors of the heart?" Yes, He could but this would be neither reasonable nor natural. We cannot compel love, whoever tries to force one to love them fails. Love begets love—"We love Him because He first loved us." When we know and realize something of the love of God in Jesus Christ and think how He thus stands and knocks to show us His infinite love and long-suffering patience, a love not our own is felt in our heart and it opens to Him and He comes in to save and to bless us. We must remember that in this matter God is not dealing with a lifeless, inanimate piece of clay or with an unconscious irrational animal. God in Christ here speaks to man, made in His own image, a morally responsible free-will agent who has got the power to keep this door shut or to open it at His gracious loving call. The bar is always on the inside of a door, so it is here in a moral and religious sense. "If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him." Again we read, "If any man willeth to do His will He shall know of His teaching."

(2). From the words of the text it is indicated how very intimate Jesus wishes to be with us. He says, "I will sup with him and he with me." Jesus was made known to His disciples after His resurrection in the breaking of bread. His name is called Emmanuel, God with us. We as Christians and as friends know each other better by sitting at our tables and partaking of the good things of this life. At Christmas and New Year times this custom is more particularly enjoyed when families meet and hearts are warm and joyful. Here our Saviour wishes to have intimate fellowship with His people. Thus there are many reasons why Jesus thus stands and knocks at the door of a heart entreating us to let Him in to bless us and make us a blessing.

II. How does He knock?

God has an infinite variety of ways in which He speaks to men.

(1). In a general way, He speaks through the voice of creation and providence to those who will hear. Each day speaks when we see the light come and go. "Day unto day uttereth speech" (Ps. xix: 8); not merely in the storm and the flood, the earthquake and the whirlwind but also in each day's mercy, in our own preservation, in the fading leaves, the changing seasons, decaying trees and ruined walls; all have a voice telling us how short and uncertain our life is and urging us to hear the voice of the Everlasting Father knocking at the door of our hearts.

(2). But God comes nearer and speaks more definitely and particularly to nations, churches and individuals. During this year that is fast hastening to its close, God, for example, has knocked at the heart of Russia in the death of the Czar; within the last few days a knock loud and clear has been heard in Windsor Castle in the sudden and tragic death of the Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John Thompson, which speaks, not only to the throne of England, but more particularly to every inhabitant of the Dominion of Canada. This voice has been heard in the Church in many ways but especially at Knox College, Toronto, in the death of Professor Thomson in the prime of life and in many respects the prime of scholarship. Thus and thus God knocks and men are aroused. Reason and judgment say it is wise to love and serve God in our daily life, and conscience says it is right but in many this voice is soon dulled by indifference and the clamor for space and power and they move on as if it were of no consequence to them, whether they attend to the voice of God in these things or not.

(3). God has spoken louder still when He comes and knocked at our own door. Hopes have been blighted, plans upset, many dear to us have been laid aside by sickness and some have been removed by the messenger of death; in all these things sore and hard to bear the Saviour has been knocking at the door of our hearts saying the same to us as He says to the Laodiceans in verse 19 of this chapter, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, behold I stand at the door and knock," and once more in His gracious word read and preached God has been speaking to us here to-day. In the great and gracious promises all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, in clear and terrible denunciation against sin, and the loving invitations and the intreaties of the Gospel, in the frequent exhortations and appeals of pastors, parents and Sabbath-school teachers the Saviour has been knocking everyday.

III. When does Jesus thus knock?

In childhood, in youth, in middle age, now, to-day. Some one here to-day has often heard it, for these many years and Jesus has followed you through your many wanderings, it may be into this church, and here and now speaks to you once again. No one can tell how soon this loving voice may be hushed and give place to the loud, hollow, awful voice of death. Before the great clock of time shall have struck the last hour of this departing year some one here may pass into eternity. Many who began this year with us are now gone and we are left and the Saviour now stands and knocks with a voice too clear and startling to escape the deafest ear, the most seared conscience and arouse perverted reason and stubborn will.

When man hears this voice and knows who it is that knocks it is for him to say whether or not the door is to be opened and the Lord of Life and Glory let in. He said when on earth, He could do no mighty works at Nazareth because of their unbelief. May this not be said regarding the work of salvation in any heart here to-day. There is no repentance in the grave. They at whose heart the Saviour has knocked unheeded shall knock in vain at the gate of heaven. They who would not open the door of their heart and let Christ in to sup with them must some day see others going in to the marriage supper of the Lamb and they themselves in their folly and madness shut out. Some excuse themselves by saying their heart is so unwilling and try to make it a more fit abode for Him, and without Him fail every time because He says "Without me ye can do nothing." We must not try to do His work. We do not wait till we get well before we call the physician, we must not try to do what Christ alone can do for us. His presence in our heart will soon make it His dwelling-place. Let our prayer to Him ever be and He will answer it

"Oh, make our hearts worthier Thee."

Let us all give the Saviour a more unreserved welcome into our unworthy hearts to enlarge and illumine them. When we do this our weak faith will be made strong, our cold lukewarm lives warm and fervent in His service. When He draws us day by day nearer to Himself, nearer to each other in loving fellowship till at last our union with Him shall be complete, when we sit with Him and He with us at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Amen.