

# "The Doorkeeper, the Door and the Knock"

## Psalm 84:1-10

23 June Anno Domini 1991

Sermon for the Funeral of

Bill Pook

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, the Lord in Whom and through Whom is the doorway to eternal paradise in heaven opened, dear fellow members of Our Redeemer congregation, relatives and friends in general of our departed brother in Christ, but particularly, to the members of the family . . .

It is difficult for anyone who has attended worship services at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church not to know who Bill was. As a young man of 14 years of age, he was baptized into the Christian faith. Two years later, he was confirmed along with his beloved Clara. Bill was one of the people who helped dig out the area for the foundation and the basement of the church building. And then, at some time in the past -- long ago -- no one is really sure when -- he began to stand at the door and hand out bulletins to those who were coming in to worship the Lord.

Years ago he would come with his family, later, it would with beloved wife, and in these last six years he came to church all alone. He would arrive early, turn the lights on in the sanctuary, turn the overhead fan, read the bulletin, change the numbers on the on the hymn board, and stand ready at the door with bulletins in hand. This he continued even the last Sunday that he was on this earth. For you see, Bill was the doorkeeper of our congregation.

On this day when we have assembled to praise God and to give thanks to the Lord for Bill's life, his death, and the eternal life which he now is enjoying with those faithful Christians who have preceded him, we look not to ourselves for comfort, not to our good deeds for assurance, not to human reason answers, not to vain philosophies for theories. Rather, we look to the unchangeable and ever-abiding Word of God. Therefore, on the basis of selected verses of Psalm 84, I would speak to you this day concerning . .

"The Doorkeeper, the Door and the Knock". . .

"How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. . . . Blesses are those who dwell in Thy house, ever singing Thy praise! . . . for a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Thus far our text for this day.

The psalms are appropriate to be prayed and two Sundays ago, at the beginning of our Bible study,

we prayed this psalm -- Psalm 84. As it was being prayed, the verse about the doorkeeper reminded me of Bill. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." So, I wrote his name in the margin thinking that someday it would be used at just such an occasion as the one for which we are assembled this day. For you see, Bill was the doorkeeper for our congregation.

As many of you are aware, Bill was almost always at the door to the sanctuary in the church. He would be able to repeat the psalmist words because he not only believed them with his heart, but he followed His Lord's bidding by being in God's house for worship. "How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord." Bill's face was often the first one seen by visitors and members alike. For you see, Bill was the doorkeeper for our congregation.

If Bill was the doorkeeper, what of the Door? A door is used to get from one place to another place. A person leaves one place and enters another by going through a door. And the biggest and most important door that anyone will ever go through is the one that stands at the end of life. Today we are quite conscious of the fact that Bill has gone to another place. He has left this one place and gone to another. He has passed through the valley of the shadow of death and has passed through the Door at the end. But where did he go and where is he? And what of this Door? In one of our readings -- the one from the Gospel of John -- we hear about the Door. Do you remember it? "So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the Door of the sheep. . . . I am the Door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved,. . . .

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, there is a great separation between this world and the paradise that the Lord God had intended for all people to enjoy with him eternally. Every person is separated from God and would, at death, go from this world to everlasting death and torment in a place which is totally and completely separated from God and His blessings. But just as it was not the Lord's intention that people should sin and be separated from Him, so also it was not his wish that anyone should die eternally. In His grace and mercy He wanted to provide the Door which would lead from this fallen and decaying world to eternal paradise in His presence. For you see, Jesus is the Door to heaven.

We could not come to God, so God came to us. At just the right time God sent His Son, born of woman, born under the Law to live and die for everyone. The Christ's death on the cross paid for all sins for all people for all time. The punishment we deserved because of our transgressions were charged to Jesus and when He declared from the cross, "It is finished!" the sufficient, total, and complete payment had been made. That is why the congregation that Bill belonged to has been given the name Our Redeemer -- the word "redeemer" means that he brought us back. The word "our" in Our Redeemer makes it personal. And those who believe and trust in this Jesus -- the only Savior -- are saved. He said it himself, " I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me." For you see, Jesus is the Door.

The Lord, however, does not force people to believe in him. He wants all people to be saved, but He does not force it. During this earthly life, people are capable of resisting God -- of telling Him "no" - - of not worshiping Him -- of staying away from His Church -- of resisting the attempts of people trying to speak to them about the Good News in Christ -- people are capable of dwelling in the tents of wickedness and not in the courts of the living God. Jesus, when looking upon the city of Jerusalem, showed us his compassion and love and desire. With tears in His eyes He stated: "Oh

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"

Perhaps the situation might be illustrated in another way. Imagine a little boy kicking a rock down a deserted main street on a Sunday afternoon. There is no one out and about. So, picking up the rock he throws it at the big picture window in one of the stores on main street. Just as the rock leaves his hand, the boy sees the store owner watching him. The boy can't get the rock back, his aim had been true, and the rock crashes into the window. the boy runs home, into the house shutting the door behind him, down into his bedroom shutting the door behind him, and into his closet shutting the door behind him.

The store owner knows exactly who the boy was. The owner grabs a couple of items, locks up his store, and heads down for the boy's home. He knocks on the door and the boy's mother answers. The store owner asks to see the boy . The mother goes and gets the boy out of the closet and brings him to the owner standing at the door. The owner says, "Hello young man, I brought you couple of gifts - a new fishing rod, a reel, and a tackle box filled with what you need. I know that you don't deserve them, but I really would like you to have them. Here, they are all yours!"

The boy is face with a dilemma. He knows that he is guilty. He knows that the store owner knows that he is guilty. Both know that the boy deserves to be punished. But here is this owner, who has every right to make the boy pay, here he is offering theses undeserved gifts. What does the boy do? He slams the door in the face of the owner and rejecting both the gifts and the giver of the gifts. He runs into the closet in his bedroom and shuts the door behind him. Soon there is a knocking on his closet door. What is to be done? Should he remain sitting in the darkness and ignore the knocking? Or, swallowing his pride and admitting his guilt, should he humbly accept these undeserved gifts and thank the owner?

In the other reading, Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." The Lord knocks at the door of our hearts in order that we might have all of the blessings and benefits that He has earned for us. You may keep the door to your to your heart shut, but Jesus is knocking. He wants your attention and even today (and especially today). He is knocking. Sometimes the knock is quiet -- a temporary sickness which reminds you of your fragile human condition -- perhaps a more serious condition which makes you think that your sickbed may be your deathbed. Sometimes the knock is louder -- like last Thursday when a brother died, like last Thursday when a father died, like last Thursday when a grandpa died, like last Thursday when a doorkeeper walked through the Door. Sometimes the knock is heard when a pastor brings a simple message of God's inviting love to a group of people assembled at the funeral of a loved one. And let's face reality. Perhaps for some, today will be the last knock. The Door is standing in front of you. He leads to eternal life and salvation. Will you turn your back to Him as He knocks?

Truly, it would be better to follow the example of Bill. The psalm declares what Bill believed and did while he was here on this earth, as what Bill understands and is experiencing right now in heaven: "How lovely Thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. .... Blessed are those who dwell in Thy house, ever singing Thy praise! .... For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

The Apostle John was given a view into heaven. Through the of Revelation, we also gain a glimpse into Paradise by listening to his words. John wrote: "After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up hither.' " Last Thursday, the Lord spoke to Bill, "Come up hither," and Bill did. No longer is he a doorkeeper on this side of the Door. "Blessed are those who dwell in Thy house, ever singing Thy praise!"

Today you have heard of the Doorkeeper, the Door, and the Knock. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Amen.