

## ***Ready to Open the Door – Luke 12:32-40***

**Rev. Matt Nieman**

**August 10, 2025**

One night this past week, Laura and I were settling into bed at the end of the day. And I said to her, “Well, here we are again. Weren’t we just here? These days and nights seem to go faster all the time. It seems like we just got out of bed for today and here we are again ready to sleep.”

The days do go by quickly—sometimes faster depending on the stage of life we’re in. When we’re really young, days seem to just creep along. And maybe there’s a semblance of that late in life, too—when work has stopped and family is gone.

The middle, though, is when the days seem to rush by in a flash.

When life is active, busy, and filled with tasks, and thereby when the days seem shorter, it’s easy for them to be absent of intention. And intention for what, you ask?

Maybe we find it in this text from Luke today.

Jesus’ message to the gathered masses is instruction for how to live as disciples. In light of busy lives, full of career work, family tending, homelife maintenance, and caring for our neighbor, Jesus offers advice for how to do all this while at the same time following him.

“Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from a wedding, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.

The days of our lives, whether busy, boring, or both, are opportunities for us to open the door for Jesus, so that others

might know him and so that his ideals and passions are enacted through our own actions.

Opening the door for Jesus to walk into the lives of others happens in ways as varied as the people he issues this call to.

Mason Warren told me about an incident that he and Thomas Hoolihan had in north Knoxville this week. Mason was helping Thomas with a project of some sort, and as they were walking down the street a woman approached them. She evidently was naked from the waist down and told them that she had just returned to earth.

There was clearly some mental illness on display. What did the two of them do? They opened the door for Jesus as they listened with empathy to this woman's story, treated her with dignity, and later approached a law enforcement officer to check on her well-being.

Opening the door for Jesus happens in the ways that are reflective of our own personalities, but also convey the welcome, hospitality, love, and justice of Christ.

If you've been reading or seeing the coverage of what's happening in Gaza in the Middle East, it's impossible to not notice what's happening to the civilian population there. In the aftermath of the war between Israel and Hamas, innocent people in Gaza are starving. It's a humanitarian crisis. And no matter the grievance—legitimate grievance—that Israel has with Hamas due to the Oct. 7 attacks, it shouldn't preclude governments in the region—Israel or otherwise—from strategically and diligently providing food and medicine to the residents there. That's opening the door to Jesus.

Every time you welcome a stranger into our midst here is a time when you're opening the door to Jesus. Every time you hold

firm in your determination to advocate for a child's well-being, you're opening the door to Jesus. Every time you refuse to lash out to another who's offended you somehow (like I barely succeeded in doing this week not with somebody in the church), you're opening the door to Jesus' peace and forgiveness. Every time you dedicate time to growing deeper in your journey with Jesus, you're opening the door to him entering your life.

Let's not pretend this is easy. Amid our busyness, it's incredibly difficult to always open that door. We've got other things to do, our own agendas to complete.

As disciples, though, it's a mandate for us. And here are three keys to making it happen. Jesus speaks of them here in Luke 12.

First, Jesus says to be dressed for action. In other words, be prepared for Jesus to be at that door--always. In that whole quest to figure out when Jesus will physically return, we don't know. Scripture says that not even Jesus knows the hour it will happen. But whether it's Jesus physical return or his appearance through his spirit in our lives, we're always to assume that he's right on the other side of that door.

Much like the Israelites in the Old Testament who were called to be ready for their deliverance in Exodus by having their waists' girded up, we also should be dressed for action—prepared for Jesus to be here.

Second, Jesus says we are to have our lamps lit, or be attentive to the presence of Jesus at the door. Unlike our modern era, in the ancient world, to have light in a house involved work. For instance, oil needed to be replenished in a lamp for it to stay lit. This is a call to ongoing attentiveness to the things that have to be done for Jesus to appear.

The table has to be set, so to speak, for Jesus arrival, the pieces in place that make for the possibility that Jesus can get through the door. We should be attentive to the details that go along with that.

And finally, like those waiting attentively for the master at the door in Jesus' parable, there's a requirement that we be focused on the possibility that he's waiting to get in. There are so many distractions around us in our lives. A disciplined focus on this—a committed discipleship—is needed for us to open the door when Jesus is behind it.

Being ready to open the door is something each of us can do despite our varied gifts. But first, it requires the belief that Christ is there, waiting to get in. We all yearn for that to be true, if we don't believe it already.

Minister and author Frederick Buechner says that what brings people back to church Sunday after Sunday is "the hope that somewhere out of all the words and the music and silences of this place, and out of a mystery even greater than the mystery of the cosmos itself, a voice that [we] would know from all other voices would speak [our] names and bless [us]." The nearness, the presence of Jesus.

Diana Butler Bass, who is a renowned commentator on the church, culture and the trends as they relate to each other, wrote in Day1.org wrote about this nearness of God (just outside the door) versus the distance of God.

"Where is God?" is not really a child's question. It is a question many people are asking right now — one that often arises in the wake of troubling events. ... Where is God in the midst of this mess? ...

“For centuries, most religions taught that God was in Heaven. There existed a three-tiered universe with God at the top in Heaven with angels, us muddling about here on Earth, and Satan and demons below us in Hell always presenting the possibility of eternal punishment. Heaven was far away and the God who lived there an inaccessible divinity — a King, Ruler, Master, Judge, or Father. That God needed mediators, such as Jesus, Mary, and the saints, the church, prophets and preachers, sacraments, dogma, commandments, rules, and rituals, to communicate with us that we might learn and do what is good, right, and holy. The distant God served as the cornerstone of much of western religious life and provided untold millions through the ages with meaning and comfort.

“Yet there were always troublesome implications to it all: Was God only watching us, like a spiritual voyeur? Was God a puppet master, making us do all these things to conform to some mysterious divine plan? Was God a judge, ready at a moment’s notice to punish us? Was God a disappointed parent whose love we sorely tested?

“Over the last few decades, more and more people have concluded that such a divinity is absurd, looking either powerless or like a monster. ...

“For it seems clear: a distant God will no longer do.”

Jesus used the language of this parable to convey the nearness of God. He’s just on the other side of the door, waiting for all of us to let him in.

