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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA
APRIL 16, 2006
PASTORS MARK & WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR WENDA FRY: Undoubtedly many of you sitting
2 here today have had a door slammed in your face.

3 Maybe it was a relationship that you had hoped would
4 work out, but didn't.

5 Maybe it was a job opportunity that you thought for
6 sure was the right fit for you.

7 Maybe it was a scholarship in graduate school, or as
8 you were getting your education, and you didn't get it.

9 We know that you know about closed doors. Maybe
10 you've even gotten your fingers slammed in a car door, or
11 caught in some door. Ouch.

12 I remember when that happened to me when I was a
13 kid, in the car door.

14 So we know that you know about the pain living this
15 side of the grave and that's why we have been praying that
16 you might see an open door today and walk through it.

17 Jesus in the Gospel of John refers to himself as a
18 door.

19 He says, "I am the door of the sheep, and all who
20 came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not
21 listen to them. I am the door. Whoever enters by me will be
22 saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The
23 thieves came to kill and destroy, and I came that they may
24 have life and have it abundantly."

25 Then in the Book of Revelation, at the very end

1 there is this verse.

2 "Listen. I am standing at the door knocking. If
3 you hear my voice and open the door I will come in to you and
4 eat with you and you with me."

5 ("Can't You Hear Me Knocking")

6 PASTOR MARK FRY: The name of that song is "Can't
7 You Hear Me Knocking" by the Rolling Stones.

8 One of the funner things I got to do in the last
9 year is I got to be in the fourth row at the Rolling Stones
10 concert.

11 They didn't play that song, but what that verse says
12 is I'm standing at the door knocking. Can't you hear me
13 knocking?

14 I'm standing at the door of your heart, and so we
15 want to have some fun with that today, because we believe in
16 a God who doesn't kick down doors, but he does roll stones
17 away.

18 And there is an old church painting that a lot of us
19 have looked at maybe subconsciously.

20 We have a copy of this in our church office and it
21 hangs behind a door and lot of people have seen that, but
22 they have never really understood it.

23 So what I want to do is shine a little bit of light
24 on it.

25 The artist that painted this, his name is Solomon.

1 It's based on that verse from Revelation.

2 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

3 You might recognize it's an artist's rendition of
4 what Jesus may have looked like.

5 And if you look closely at that you'll notice that
6 the door and the whole frame is in the shape of a heart.

7 This artist from the 1800s wanted people to
8 understand some symbolism in his gift to us as a Christian
9 community, and the rest of the world, that the door, if you
10 will, is shaped like a heart.

11 And Jesus, you will notice, is standing there
12 knocking, wanting in.

13 But if you look ever so closely at it you'll notice
14 that there is no door knob on Jesus's side of the door.

15 It's on the other side of the door; on our side of
16 the door.

17 In other words, he stands and knocks, but he's not
18 going to come barging in.

19 We have to open and let him into our hearts so that
20 we might walk in confidence in a relationship of love and
21 trust.

22 And you'll also notice, this is intentional in the
23 artist's gift to us, that the garden on the side of the door
24 where Jesus is is in really rough shape.

25 He needs help, once we come through the door, once

1 we let him into our hearts, he needs some help, because the
2 garden needs a lot of spring cleaning and work.

3 It needs a whole lot of pruning. It needs a whole
4 lot of hope, and it needs a whole lot of rain and nourishment
5 so it might grow.

6 Jesus wants in, but he must be allowed in. He's not
7 going to kick down the door.

8 He wants access to the human heart. He doesn't
9 force himself in. He doesn't kick down the door.

10 Some people have that mistaken notion of God kicking
11 down doors.

12 He's a God of relationship and access. He's a
13 revolving door.

14 A revolving door of access that we need to always
15 keep going, and ourselves always going, letting him into our
16 hearts and us into his world to help.

17 So what we want to do today, we don't believe in a
18 God who kicks down doors, but we do believe in a God who
19 rolls away stones.

20 And so we want to have some fun with that today, and
21 I mentor a young man, and he has become a very dear friend to
22 me.

23 He's just a cool kid and I was honored about a month
24 ago when I saw him, he was reading a book about Jim Morrison
25 of The Doors.

1 And I thought that's a sign from God that we need to
2 talk about doors, and so you'll notice all the doors around
3 the worship center.

4 People have been painting these, they're beautiful,
5 they are going to keep them up for a while.

6 You can see some of gorgeous art work, the doors
7 hanging down from the ceiling, and we want to have some fun
8 with The Doors.

9 Since my mentor friend likes The Doors, we are going
10 to play some old songs by The Doors, and we are going to
11 hopefully shine some light on those doors with you today.
12 Here is the first one.

13

14 "There's a killer on the road
15 His brain is squirming like a toad
16 Take a long holiday
17 Let your children play
18 If you give this man a ride
19 Sweet memory will die
20 Killer on the road"

21

22 PASTOR WENDA FRY: In the last week of Jesus's life
23 he knew that there was a killer on the road.

24 And I thought it would be good for us on this Easter
25 Sunday to look back just a couple days at his last week, and

1 in particular Good Friday.

2 So if you have a Bible out there, I invite you to
3 turn to John, Chapter 12, and we are going to look at the
4 plot to kill Jesus.

5 Jesus knew that his time was at hand, and he knew
6 even as he sat at the table with his disciples that day, he
7 knew that there was one who was going to betray him, and the
8 rest would all run away in the garden when Judas kissed him

9 So he knew that there was a killer on the road, and
10 he had seen the religious leaders in fact plot to kill him.

11 Just look at that again, beginning at John 11, Verse
12 45:

13 "Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary
14 and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him, but some of
15 them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done.
16 So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of
17 the council and they said, "What are we to do? This man is
18 performing signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone
19 will believe in him and the Romans will come and destroy both
20 our holy place and our nation."

21 "But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that
22 year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. You do not
23 understand that it is better for you to have one man die for
24 the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."

25 "He did not say this on his own, but being high

1 priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die
2 for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather
3 into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on,
4 they planned to put him to death."

5 But Jesus had insisted from the very beginning that
6 that was his purpose in coming to earth, was to die; was to
7 be killed; and to be raised on the third day

8 And in fact he told his disciples that, but they
9 never really got it.

10 But that in fact was what he insisted on from the
11 very beginning; that he had come to die.

12 I like this quote from Dorothy Sayers, she's a great
13 Christian writer, has a book called "Christian Letters To A
14 Post-Christian World".

15 "Whatever game he is playing with his creation,"
16 she's speaking of God now, "he has kept his own rules and
17 played fair. He can exact nothing from man that he has not
18 exacted from himself. He has himself gone through the whole
19 of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family
20 life and the cramping restriction of hard work and lack of
21 money, to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat,
22 despair, and death. He was born in poverty, and died in
23 disgrace, and he thought it well worthwhile."

24 PASTOR MARK FRY: And to tie that picture of Jesus
25 knocking at the door, we want God to come in in different

1 ways maybe this year, to shine some light on that, how God
2 might come into some of our defeats, our despairs, our
3 deaths. That he might come in and change.

4 It's amazing to me to think that God is taking care
5 of my needs, and he wants to take care of my deeds.

6 And that's, again, that revolving door; that we
7 always are going to have those needs, and we are always going
8 to have those deeds.

9 But, again, Jesus wants that for us, because he
10 loves us so much and, again, it's like another one of The
11 Doors songs.

12

13 "Hello, I love you.

14 Won't you tell me your name

15 Hello, I love

16 Let me jump in your game"

17

18 PASTOR MARK FRY: That's amazing, because that's
19 exactly what that quote has from Ms. Sayers.

20 He has jumped into our game. Whatever game he's
21 playing with his creation, God has jumped into your game.

22 He has not kicked down the door, but he wants you to
23 open the door, to be in relationship with him.

24 He has jumped into our game, he has entered into our
25 lives, our deaths, our struggles, our despairs, our

1 depressions, our defeats, and he wants what is best for us
2 and what is best for his world. The garden needs a lot more
3 help.

4 And some of us, I'm afraid, have been fooled. There
5 is kind of a mentality that says it's not a relationship, but
6 rather it's just an occasional thing. The next Doors song
7 talks about that, I think.

8

9 "Love me two times, baby

10 Love me twice today

11 Love me two times, girl

12 I'm going away

13 Love me two times, girl

14 One for tomorrow

15 One just for today

16 Love me two times

17 I'm going away"

18

19 PASTOR MARK FRY: I think, sadly, some people have
20 that notion of church, or of Jesus.

21 They just show up in his presence twice a year, and
22 we kind of do that, we say that to the baby Jesus at
23 Christmas, and then we say it to the resurrected Jesus at
24 Easter, is just love me twice, that will get me through.

25 And if that's your pattern, that's again maybe the

1 heart, maybe there is a knocking there that the relationship
2 is not working.

3 It's like a marriage. Jesus says I want to marry
4 you, and any marriage has conversation, it has an ongoing
5 commitment.

6 It's a relationship. It's not just a see you next
7 year, same time, same channel.

8 God doesn't want us just to love him two times. He
9 wants to love us with all of his heart in this marriage
10 relationship. A living relationship.

11 PASTOR WENDA FRY: That's another reason that we are
12 so glad you have to come Bethany today, because actually at
13 Bethany we've walked through a new door.

14 We have walked through a new door and we have a new
15 vision.

16 And that vision is about doing life together and
17 sharing our lives in Christ.

18 It is about, as Mark said, it's about a relationship
19 with God, and with others, and the world that Jesus came to
20 save.

21 So, here's our vision statement. "Guided by
22 Christ's example, we seek disciples, live with love, and
23 reach beyond ourselves. More than a vision, it's Bethany's
24 way of life."

25 We believe strongly that God is asking us to make

1 disciples in this place.

2 We believe strongly that God is asking us to go
3 outside of the Bethany walls and reach beyond ourselves.

4 We believe strongly that we need to develop, as a
5 people of God, as well as individuals, develop our
6 relationship with God, with others, and with the world.

7 It's sort of a balance, and you'll see that in the
8 east lobby there is a circle sculpture, and in the west lobby
9 there is a triangular sculpture.

10 And those are just a couple of shapes that remind
11 the people that come to Bethany often that we can learn from
12 the things that happen in our lives. That's the learning
13 circle.

14 And we need to hold our relationship to God, and our
15 relationship to others, and our relationship to the world, in
16 balance. That's what the triangle reminds us of.

17 So we are going to share our values today with you
18 on this Easter Sunday, because this is what we believe is
19 important; that we are the aroma of Christ to God.

20 One of the things Mark is known for saying is that
21 our body odor matters to God.

22 I love that, because, you know, really, there is
23 nothing worse, is there?

24 Is there anything really worse than body odor?

25 Well, there are a few things, we know that, but it's just a

1 tough smell.

2 It's a unique smell, but Mark is known for saying
3 that our body odor, as the body of Christ, matters to God.

4 And in fact the scripture says that we are the aroma
5 of Christ to God, and his nose is quite sensitive.

6 When you read in the Old Testament, you see that his
7 nose is very sensitive.

8 Relationships are important. It's not necessarily
9 about weekly worship; it's my relationship to God on a daily
10 basis.

11 It's my relationship with other believers, and it's
12 my relationship with people who have not got a clue who Jesus
13 is and what he did when he rose from the dead. So,
14 relationships are important.

15 Account for your discipleship. We are challenging
16 the disciples at Bethany to be accountable for their own
17 discipleship, to do their own praying.

18 Yes, we pray with them and for them, but to do their
19 own praying.

20 To grow in their financial giving. We are really
21 challenging disciples to be accountable.

22 The growth in giving is something that we talk about
23 a lot, and that is growth in our percentage giving to God.

24 The Bible asks that we give ten percent, but we ask
25 that the people that come to Bethany to grow in that.

1 Maybe they are giving ing five percent. Maybe they
2 can grow into seven percent next year, and eventually to a
3 tithe, which is what God asks of each and every one.

4 Reaching beyond ourselves. Asking for guidance. We
5 believe really strongly, Mark has been reading a book called
6 "Hearing God" by Dallas Willard, and it talks about the fact
7 that God speaks to us, and that we aren't the only ones that
8 hear God.

9 The scriptures are clear about that, that you can
10 ask God to speak to you, and he will.

11 He'll tell you what to do. It might not be in an
12 audible voice.

13 It might come through someone else that you've
14 talked to maybe at work or something like that, but he does
15 still speak to us and you can ask that you might have ears to
16 hear him.

17 We know that we need to make disciples, because that
18 is what Jesus commanded us to do in Matthew 28, just before
19 he ascended to the Father.

20 So that is something that we are becoming more
21 intentional about here at Bethany and we wanted to tell you
22 about that today, because there are some new friends here
23 today, as well as some members of the household, even though
24 you've heard some of this.

25 And then transforming your life, not that you would

1 transform it, but that you would open the door of your heart
2 to Jesus transforming that, because that's what he wants to
3 do.

4 He wants to touch you, and that's what he said to
5 Thomas after the resurrection. He said touch me. Put your
6 hand right in my side, and believe.

7 So he wants to be a part of your life. He wants to
8 reach out and have you touch him.

9

10 "Come on, come on
11 Come on, now touch me, babe.
12 Can't you see that I am not afraid
13 What was that promise that you made
14 Why won't you tell me what she said
15 What was that promise that you made
16 Now I'm going to love you
17 Til the heavens stop the rain
18 I'm going to love you
19 Til the stars fall from the sky
20 For you and I"

21

22 PASTOR WENDA FRY: That is what Jesus is saying to
23 each and every one of you today.

24 I'm going to love you. I am going to love you until
25 the heavens fall from the sky.

1 "People are strange
2 When you're a stranger
3 Faces look ugly
4 When you're alone
5 Women seem wicked
6 When you're unwanted
7 Streets are uneven
8 When you're down
9 When you're strange
10 Faces come out of the rain
11 When you're strange
12 No one remembers your name
13 When you're strange
14 When you're strange"

15

16 PASTOR MARK FRY: The body of Christ is never going
17 to be perfect.

18 It's always going to be a little bit strange, and
19 it's always going to have some funny smells.

20 But if we let Jesus I think have new access to our
21 hearts, in different and healthy ways, that we won't be
22 strangers and then we won't see life the same way.

23 People are strange when you're a stranger, but in
24 Christ everybody is beautiful.

25 And I don't mean we know they aren't going to stink,

1 because stinking thinking still happens.

2 But faces look ugly when you're alone or lonely, or
3 disgruntled, or your heart is hard.

4 And women seem wicked when you're unwanted, but
5 sometimes it's our own issue.

6 Streets are uneven when you're down. When your
7 strange, faces come out of the rain. When you're strange, no
8 one remembers your name.

9 One of my biggest frustrations is that people are so
10 offended that I don't remember their names.

11 And this is not to justify it, but about five years
12 ago I had a stroke and I have horrible short-term memory of
13 names.

14 I don't know why, but when people get in my face
15 about that, and it's often, there is that expectation, and
16 that's so strange to me.

17 But I don't hold them in disregard for that. What I
18 really am saddened by is that they don't maybe realize or
19 they are forgetting that God knows their name.

20 That's more important than Pastor Wenda or I do. I
21 know a lot of people in nursing homes that don't even know
22 their spouse's name.

23 Maybe that's another door that God is trying to
24 knock on and enter in our lives, is to understand that, and
25 maybe in some small unhealthy environments everybody knows

1 everybody's name, but not in the kingdom of God. God knows
2 everybody's name.

3 I just drop that out. In Christ you are no longer a
4 stranger, but you still might be kind of strange.

5 I am. I've got my quirks, as Wenda would tell you,
6 we have lived together now for 27 years. We have been
7 married 27 years this year.

8 PASTOR WENDA FRY: It was good that you added that
9 married part, I think.

10 (Laughter)

11 PASTOR MARK FRY: Yes.

12 PASTOR WENDA FRY: I was wondering if you were going
13 to do that.

14 PASTOR MARK FRY: Yes, I did throw that in. Anyway,
15 God knows that we are stinky and occasionally it's going to
16 get smelly, and he's on this dung duty all the time, and
17 he'll clean up whatever messes we make. It's not about us.

18 We are all going to dump on one another, and life
19 has dumped on some of us, but you're no longer a stranger.
20 God is knocking. Can't you hear him knocking?

21 PASTOR WENDA FRY: You don't need to be a stranger
22 here at Bethany either.

23 We've tried to present the values and the vision for
24 you today.

25 It's a place where you can be real, where you can

1 dump if you need to, the donkeys obviously felt comfortable,
2 and we want you to feel comfortable here at Bethany and to
3 come back.

4 This is a place where we can be real together, and
5 that's why today we're inviting you to maybe walk through a
6 door.

7 I don't know exactly what your situation is in your
8 family or in your individual life.

9 But maybe you've shut the door on Christ and his
10 love for you today. I don't know.

11 I said at the beginning that we know that you know
12 about closed doors, and it's quite possible that some of you
13 have shut the door on that.

14 Prayer ministers, go ahead and take your place at
15 the doors.

16 PASTOR MARK FRY: Another thing that is really
17 awesome is I know people are back, they have been gone, and I
18 want to offer to you prayer ministry; that maybe now is the
19 time to kind of make it a revolving door again, to understand
20 that you're back, and that you're where God wants you to be,
21 and that would be really awesome.

22 I know some people have been gone for winter and
23 they are back now. We would love to pray with you.

24 That's what we want to do. Maybe God is knocking on
25 your heart, so we want to shine a little light in there. So

1 happy Easter.

2 PASTOR WENDA FRY: This is something that we really
3 value at Bethany, is that we can pray with and for each
4 other.

5 If you have never had that opportunity to be prayed
6 for, and maybe there is a door that has been slammed on you
7 in your life, we invite you to go to one of the doors and
8 leave that at the cross of Christ this morning.

9 And as we sing this next song, you can stand, or you
10 can sit, or you can go to prayer, or if you want to come up
11 and go to prayer on your own, that's perfectly fine, too.

12 Before we close, let's pray together.

13 God, thank you so much for the open door of the tomb
14 today.

15 Thank you for bursting through that door. We know
16 that you do not burst down our doors, unless we invite you.

17 So today we ask you to help us to open that door and
18 let you come into our hearts and sit with us and eat with us
19 and give us new life and new hope.

20 Lord, thank for this Easter Sunday and the open door
21 of the tomb.

22 Grant us new life today, Lord, in each of our hearts
23 and thank you for being forever faithful for us.

24 In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

25