

## OPEN THE DOOR TO GOD

### Acts 2:42-47

#### Intro

The presence of God can do amazing things.  
We look in the scriptures and we see this to be true.  
We look out into the world and we see this to be true.  
We look at our own lives and we see this to be true.  
The presence of God is a mountain moving influence in our lives.  
This morning's passage speaks to how the presence of God, when it is welcomed into

The lives of those who call themselves believers, allows great things to be done. These verses speak about what took place after Peter stood up and spoke on that first Pentecost when the breath of the Holy Spirit came upon the believers who were gathered in Jerusalem. What we quickly come to see is that what they did was treat each other as family, regardless of whether or not they were actually related by blood.

Now I know for some of us, as soon as I bring up the word 'family', a negative image is conjured up. Unfortunately, in this sinful world that we have created family does not necessarily mean a safe and loving environment.

However, in this particular case, that is what is presented. And in this presentation the early church sets for the rest of time the template for how believers in particular and the church in general are called to live with each other: we are called to live as a family. That is the door that God is knocking upon in our lives, both individually and collectively. God is knocking upon the door imploring us to hear how we do need each other, and how we absolutely need God.

The scripture reads this way.

### **Acts 2:42-47**

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

<sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

### **"Open the Door to God"**

The rain was slapping hard against my window on Friday morning. The water was coming down so fast that it was overflowing the gutter and pounding on the driveway. And then there was the wind. It sounded as raw as it actually felt. Yeah, it was a classic storm.

As I sat there listening to all that stimuli I was snapped back into my childhood over in Berks County, Pennsylvania. As my brother and I grew older (and bigger) there was a recognition that having the two of us in the same bedroom was...difficult. So, being the oldest, I got moved upstairs...to the attic. Now, it was a walk up attic but it was by no means finished. It was a space for me to call my own.

Can you figure out why I snapped back to that space? Because when the rain would fall, it would be loud, and when the wind would howl, the plastic that covered the two windows at either end of the attic during the cold weather months would snap back and forth and whistle like crazy.

I remember laying there as a kid, just listening, in a strange way feeling like there was some sort of orchestrated rhythm, thinking about...well, everything, but almost always circling back to the people who were a part of my life, hoping that they were safe and warm and dry. I would think about my brothers and parents just one floor below me, my classmates and teachers from school, all the different church folks from the adults who helped to guide me to the friends that I ran hard with, and then I would start to picture all family and friends from other parts of the state and country (because in my kid brain, why wouldn't all of us be experiencing the same storm that I was being enveloped by at that particular moment). Just a kid, laying in a bed with the rain pounding a few feet from his head, thinking about so many different people.

As I think back on it, those thoughts were, in so many ways, simple prayers for my family and family extended.

A similar thing happened on Friday morning.

But I wonder (and worry) about how often those sorts of thoughts come to our minds, let alone the thoughts of our kids.

Here's where I'm going with this: the world we have created and fostered is bombarding each of us and our families with new images of how we should be connected to one another. We are connected via social media, and we need to make sure that everyone is entertained even if that means that we are disconnected from each other even when we are in the presence of one another.

Everywhere we look there are newer and more efficient ways to 'stay connected' with an ever revealing reality that with each succeeding generation, we are becoming farther and farther isolated from one another.

This sort of lifestyle stands in stark contrast to the example that we have set before us in the passage from Acts.

It is there that we have before us the phrase, "They devoted themselves", not only "to the apostles' teaching" but also to "fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." The people of God in the church of Acts devoted themselves to "fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." The people of God allowed themselves to become genuinely concerned about their brothers and sisters in Christ and as they did that, what do we hear took place?

We hear that “many wonders and signs were being done” and that “their numbers increased day by day.” They heard God knocking at the door in regard to how they should live with each other, with their families, and they were willing to open that door. When they opened that door the loving power of God was able to flow in freely and help to bless those families of faith in ways that they probably had not even dreamed of.

To put it very simply, the blessing of God becomes so much more profound when the love of the Almighty is able to flow in freely, as opposed to just trying to make it in through the cracks.

However, in order to have that happen, we need to recognize that we do need one another; that we need God; that we need to open the door to God.

Now I get that you can't put the genie back in the bottle in regard to how society and technology move. That's unrealistic.

But that doesn't mean that we coalesce to it either.

Opening the door to God through how we need to interact with one another is an example that we, as the church, need to set for our own families. This is an example that we, as the church, need to set for the greater world. We need to set the example of how we should live with each other, and not just beside each other.

Look, I get that these devices that are in almost all of our pockets can be all consuming.

But what's being consumed? Are we in control of what is consumed or is the lust for more and more stimuli consuming us?

Too often we fall into the latter category which drives us, by default, into a place a deeper and deeper isolationism where we are focused on our wants, and absolutely on how we present ourselves to the online world as opposed to actually developing and fostering ways to connect to the real one, the one that I was reminded of as face after face swept through my mind as the rain fell hard against my window and the wind howled it's haunting harmony.

God is knocking on the door to bring us to a more connected way of living with one another.

Think about it, what does it say to the secular world if one the greatest images that the church gives is that of a group of people who could care less about anyone besides themselves? Survey after survey shows us that when the unchurched think of the church, one of the thoughts that comes to mind first is that of a group of people who talk about love and then don't show it, to each other or the world outside their doors. There are way too many churches where this assessment is way too close to the truth, if not spot on.

That is why we need to recommit ourselves to actually communicating with each other, with God, as opposed to just sharing the social niceties of, “how are you doing”, “I'm good, how are you”, “I'm good, thanks for asking”. We need to allow ourselves to actually be vulnerable so that when we ask those, “who are you doing” sort of questions, we're actually looking for a legitimate response and more than that, we're willing to give one.

Because here's the thing: in that vulnerability God is knitting us together and that makes us so much stronger.

In the book of Ecclesiastes it states it this way in chapter 4 verses 9 through 12: "Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken."

You, that other person (that other family member), and God.

When you allow that sort of connection to exist, well, that is when things like what is described in the passage to Acts begin to take place; that is when our family becomes more than just the people we live with or spend time with because of our blood-line or societal connections; more than just the people we sit at the dinner table with; more than just the people we happen to see at church on Sundays.

So how do we start to do that? How do we open the door to God? How do we become that triple-braided chord? Once again, I think the passage in Acts gives us a wonderful stepping off point: they devoted themselves to prayer.

A few weeks back I talked about how prayer needs to become a more integral part of our lives and used table grace as the example of how we can bring prayer into our homes and into our lives.

Well, we're going to do that here this morning.

Why? Because in doing it we are allowing God to enter into our lives in new and powerful ways.

You want to have a stronger family? Let God into your family life (and yes, I mean beyond just Sunday mornings). A triple-braided chord is not easily broken.

You want to make your church family stronger? Let God into your communal life so that we are able to move beyond the stone skipping across the surface and are actually able to begin to dive into each other's lives and care for each other. A triple-braided chord is not easily broken.

Do you want to be supported? Then we need to allow God to abide in all that we share with each other. A triple-braided chord is not easily broken.

God is knocking. Let's open that door and show to the world, just like the early church was able to do in the days of Acts, what can happen when you allow God in.

So, as I said, we're going to pray here this morning. I wasn't able to draw up the sort of rain storm that got me headed down that path...but I think we can still find our way.

Let us pray...

**After Sermon Prayer**

Holy and gracious God, You are knocking, imploring that we might open the door of our lives and allow Your transformative loving grace to enter in as it did in the days of the early church. Lord, help us to trust in You by showing to the world that we need each other and that we need You. Amen.