

WEEKLY SERMON

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Opening the Doors of Love

Archaeologists marked out the lost foundations of Whalley Abbey in stone. They left out doors. The Abbey Church, despite not having any walls, is a closed space. Many in the early church had the same view of the Good News. It was for a defined few with the borders set in Jewish history. There were ways to clamber over, but not for the many.

This can be our experiences too, in church, work, family and social circles, or even our own hearts. Pre-defined ideas of who is in and who is out, create in us invisible walls with no doors. When we say at church that we want to see new members, what we can really mean is members like us. We value things the way they are and don't want any change. Opening the doors means to let change in.

Peter knows this because he has been through this opening up. This rock has wept opening visions of the new creation, the kingdom of God. He has to change what he knows of himself, and be freed by God's forgiveness. When Peter lives in this vision, then Cornelius and his whole household, are washed with the Holy Spirit.

Like Peter, like Black Rod on the doors to the House of Commons, Jesus now sends us, His disciples, to open the doors that were once closed. Can you hear Him? Knocking three times on your own heart. What visions fill your dreams, and what dreams may come? Even the places that we cannot go to, are not locked to Him. Jesus goes amongst those thought dead and locked away and brings them back into the light.

In the week that we saw the moving image of the crown placed alone on a table, we are reminded that Christ is crowned on His way to the cross. The pain, the sense of loss to come, those pre-visions of grief are the very moment that Jesus declares that God is glorified. The cross is glory because of love. Before the Archbishop of York arrives for our open-air Eucharist on Friday 27 May, the outline of the old Abbey will once again have doors. Love bursting through so that we can all glorify God, not just those able to clamber over. A church without walls, but with constantly open doors, now that is a vision!

Rev Adam Thomas, Centre Director of Whalley Abbey

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