

# **“Knock, Knock, Knocking on My Door”**

November 20, 2022  
York United Ministries  
Padre Rev. Andrew K. Lee

## **Prayer for Illumination**

Holy God, through the generations, you have spoken to us. You have sent voices crying out in the wilderness. You have sent the words of an overjoyed new father and an expectant mother. You have sent the assurance of a condemned man on a cross. Quiet in us any voice but your own that, by the power of your Spirit, we might hear the words you speak to us today. **Amen.**

## **Scripture Readings**

### **Luke 23:39-43**

<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” <sup>40</sup> But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? <sup>41</sup> And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” <sup>42</sup> Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” <sup>43</sup> He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

### **Revelation 3:20-22**

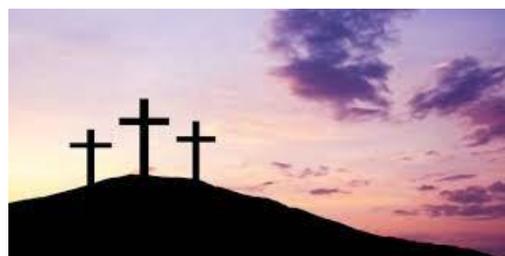
<sup>20</sup> Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you with me. <sup>21</sup> To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup> Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

This is the Word of God.  
**Thanks be to God**

## < Children's Time >

Good morning my friends who are young at heart! I've just returned from a long trip to send off my father, who left my family. My family and I were pretty serious about the meaning of life and death. Coincidentally today's lectionary suggests a well-known pictorial scene. Look at this picture -

You know what it is; at least you saw it at some point in your church life. Yes, the Three Crosses.



They are for Jesus, who died on the cross, and the other two are for the two criminals. The passage from Luke today describes the scene: Jesus was in the middle, and the two were on his left and right sides. After the crucifixion, the three were shivering from the pain of the piercing. Being overwhelmed by the pain and fear, one of them cursed Jesus. "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" His voice was desperate and must've sounded hysterical, wanting to mock him. But the criminal who was on the other side stopped him and scolded him, "Do you not fear God? Jesus has done nothing wrong!" And then he faced Jesus, changing his tone; "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom."

When hearing it, Jesus declared, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." See, he was saved at the very last moments of his life and became the last person who was saved by Jesus during Jesus' ministry on Earth. The criminal grabbed the last chance of being saved. Although he was one of the luckiest guys, his life itself must've been distorted and in pain. What a pity on him that he tasted the kingdom of heaven just before his

death. Couldn't he join and taste the kingdom of God in his life? How lucky and wonderful we are that we know and enjoy the kingdom of God in our life.

My friends, today, I hope you feel the grace and express our gratitude to God that we are called to know and serve God. Knowing God's grace and expressing the gratitude for it could be as hard as remembering the gratitude of our breaths that inhale oxygen every second. But think about the mystery of life, breaths, and deaths, and the eternal salvation that Jesus prepares for us in paradise. With that hope, I bless you that you live out God's Words today. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **<Reflection>**

Good morning my friends, King City United. Thanks to your support, I was able to visit my hometown and close my father's final curtain of his life. Due to the COVID restriction, nobody was able to see him or be with him while he was in the Intensive Care Unit in the hospital. The rule was strict, and even my younger brother, who was taking care of my father, was not able to see him. I was frustrated and desperately asked the doctor to see my father in the ICU. Luckily, the very next day, the doctor asked my brother and me to come to the ICU to sign some documents, so we rushed into the unit. Because the doctor was late, we dared to approach my father's bed. There, a tiny old man lay with a high pressured oxygen mask. "Dad, your first son is here!" He recognized me and shed tears. Actually, I prepared the stole and robe for his baptism. He supported many churches and my ministry, but he was too shy to be baptized in front of a church congregation. I remember he one day asked me a question. "Do I have to

give more money to church if I get baptism?" "No, dad, it's not about money!" My brother and I smiled but understood him because he was a businessman. He postponed his baptism until then, and his own son was about to give Christian baptism in the hospital. Pressing down my emotion, I said to him, "Dad, I'm now going to offer you baptism with water. Would you accept this?" My dad nodded. After some essential questions about the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the master of his life and death, I offered baptism with the holy water that I had prepared. After several meaningful quality times of departure, he left us. I was the only one among the family members who witnessed his death. I closed his eyes.

Looking back on his life, perhaps my dad seems to come to God from time to time. Or at least he was desperately waiting for God's mercy and blessing of redemption for a long time. And that redemption may have been achieved or confirmed by the baptism in the hospital.

People easily think they are strong, know everything, and that death is far from them; however, wisdom shows us that we are always standing on the edge of life and death. People recognize the fact that we are vulnerable and limited, and death is quite near to us. This wisdom becomes real at the end of life, so Bob Dylan sings about our desperate longing.

Mama, take this badge off of me  
 I can't use it anymore  
 It's gettin' dark, too dark to see  
 I feel like I'm knockin' on heaven's door  
 Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door  
 Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door<sup>1</sup>




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<sup>1</sup> Bob Dylan's song, titled "Knocking On Heaven's Door."

"Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door!" A person is facing the last moments of his life, and this song, the lyrics, includes our calm but desperate heart to go back to our original home, heaven. We understand the mixed feeling of fear and hope for the next chapter of life beyond death by knocking on heaven's door.

But you know what? It was not us who knocked on heaven's door but God who knocked on the door of our hearts. Today's passage from Revelation directly writes down God's voice;

"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you with me."<sup>2</sup>

We think we choose God; we think we come before God; we think we knock on heaven's door. Our endless, persistent, and desperate efforts to go back to our original home appear in the request by the criminal who was crucified beside Jesus Christ. "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

However, as we know God more, we gradually understand that, in fact, God chose us first; God is continually knocking on our door throughout our life.

It is the same when it comes to prayer; we think we pray to God, and God is listening to our persistent and continuous prayer. It is not wrong to think this way; however, something is happening and being achieved not only because of our continuous prayer but because of God's persistent sincerity.

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<sup>2</sup> Revelation 3:20.

God is knocking on our door; Jesus is knocking on our door to our heart, our door to our mind, our door to our soul. God continuously calls us to come to God's side. We call this continuous calling from God, God's sincerity. But the thing is, we humans are so stubborn that we do not answer, we do not respond, and we do not open the door. Jesus is waiting for you, knocking on your door; Jesus is just in front of your door, but you haven't let him in for a long time.

My dad may have thought he knocked on heaven's door on the bed in the ICU, and yet, God had been knocking on his door for a long time, and God saved the soul at the very last phase. Human beings commit sins, and the world seems to be full of sins. Humans are hopelessly stubborn and do not turn around from their sins. But they are supposed to perish in the long run. For these hopeless humans, God comes to us continuously. God does not give up on us.

We think we are "knock, knock, knocking on heaven's door," waiting for God's permission to come in. But, now we know it; we confirm it. God is knocking on your door sincerely and without pause until the end of your life, waiting for your response in order to invite you to eternal life.

Be aware of this truth, and trust God, who wants to enter your heart. Brothers, sisters and friends, in the moments of awareness of this truth, let's lift up our hearts to God as the first step of our response. Let's open the door, the door of our hearts and spirit. Let's trust God, who is knocking on our hearts persistently until the end of our life. God wants to be with you. Now let us pray silently and be present fully in front of God.