

I borrowed my son’s car over the holidays, and after awhile I needed to go home. I realized he had my keys and thus my house key. So at first I worried I wouldn’t be able to get in. But then I looked at his key ring and saw that he had a key. We have an open door policy – each child is welcome home any time. It’s okay for them to make themselves at home, and they usually do. Many times they come in and go straight for the refrigerator. You can too, if you come over to our house.

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus had an open door policy. Mostly Jesus walked into other people’s lives. We are going to continue our study of Luke until Easter – to see what Jesus did, how He lived His life. Then after Easter we’ll spend another eight weeks or so studying the parables so that we can see what Jesus taught about God and Himself.

We all like to know the inside scoop, don’t we? You know those “behind the scene” shows that come on after the 6:00 news? Access Hollywood, Extra, and Entertainment Tonight; somebody must watch those shows. Luke portrays an inside view of Jesus as he visited and interacted with people; he likes to tell us about people’s emotions and concerns as Jesus entered their lives, and Jesus continues to come into our lives today in the same way.

The question is – are you open to His visitation?

Today’s passage shows Jesus’ perspective about that very topic. The setting is Jesus coming into Jerusalem – the triumphal entry and he stopped on a hill overlooking the city. Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish faith and His people, the ones expecting the Messiah. And so the citizens of Jerusalem are like His family. What are family relationships like in the nation of God? Let’s read it. READ Luke 19:41-44

Honestly, it’s hard to read that Scripture. Luke is the only one who tells it. It’s sad because of the deep anguish of Jesus because people ignored God’s visitation, an event that could have led them to peace. Instead, He issues a warning, “Don’t miss God’s visitation! If you do, it won’t go well for you.” God’s visitation has the purpose of rescuing us, something God cares about more than anything, and that is the thesis of Luke’s gospel. We will keep it in mind over the coming weeks.

What are those truths that we need to recognize? The New Year is a perfect time to ask those questions. As Christians, of course, we want to be open. What do we need to see so we do not miss Jesus? To understand that, let’s look at Psalm 1, which was read a few minutes ago. It’s important to see the connection between the Old and New Testaments because it’s all the same story, God’s story.

Psalms, as you know, is a book of prayers; it’s another inside story of the life of the human soul. Do you read the Psalms? These prayers express the moods; the joys and sorrows believers have toward God. The Psalms also have a great deal to say about those people who do not believe in God. Psalm 1, though, is a little different because it is not a prayer. That seems strange that a book of prayers would be introduced by a Psalm that is not a prayer. The first Psalm would certainly have the most important place of honor, so it must say something we need to know.

Psalm 1 instructs us about recognizing the presence or visitation of God. It says humans who see God and who order their lives according to God’s Word – they are enviable. Those who hang out with God are to be envied, because their state of being is recognized as intensely positive.

Psalm 1 says, “Happy is the person who is religious.”

Some in our culture says accursed is the religious person; *organized religion has a lot to do with why the world is so badly messed up*. In fact, on February 7, 2008 that very statement was printed in a letter published in Dear Abby’s column.¹ She thought it was an important point but the Bible says it’s exactly the opposite.

Psalm 1 says, “Happy is the person who is religious.” You, if you embrace a lifestyle that is governed by the Bible, you are greatly blessed right now, right here, in this life. In fact, the first verse of Psalm 1 can be translated “O for the happiness of that person who delights in God’s words day and night!”

Are you experiencing that happiness? That happiness occurs through our choice of an open door policy with God.

This idea is in many places in the Bible. Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” (Rev 3:20) Jesus is completely willing to respond to an open door.

Jesus says, “Ask, seek, and knock” and God will not turn you down (Lk 11:9-10).

Jesus desires to gather us near to Him as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings (Lk 13:34).

Are you starting 2009 with an open door policy? If so, the Bible says you are enviable; you are happy. That does not mean “blessed” like you are going to be given something by God in the future. Happiness is deeply rooted in the soul; something lasting; it’s not just momentary pleasure. Do you think of your faith as having that result?

Perhaps this idea needs to be communicated to our culture, for which depression is a major struggle. I’m going to suggest that you take a day this week and go about your daily tasks with this thought in mind: “I am happy because I am religious.” Once one of my doctors even asked me, “Why are you so happy? You seem at peace.” I answered, “Because of my faith.”

Now, this Psalm adds something else. This lifestyle, it says, calls for resolution, courage, and stamina. The person who has an open door policy with God is called to maintain moral integrity when surrounded by evil. This person must resist the anti-God sentiments of the culture. Happiness is not a passive condition. It takes constant thought of steering away from one path

¹From: <http://nwseelsorger.blogspot.com/2008/02/organized-religion-reason-for-worlds.html>, accessed 12/31/08.

and living in the direction of another. The religious person is thoroughly absorbed in the Lord’s Teaching. This person diligently loves and embraces the Lord Jesus Christ.

It’s not a lifestyle of drudgery that you struggle with alone, rather, God is involved. Evil people think that God is far removed and indifferent to humans. They do not trust in God or fear him nor do they feel accountability to God or God’s laws. That may seem like a place of freedom but it’s not; it’s a place of weakness.

Living the open door policy with Jesus has benefits: We are like trees planted by streams of water, that is, we enjoy the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. We nourish others with the fruit of faith; we are well-rooted and stable when adversity comes, helping others find life. Bottom line is, we thrive, despite circumstances because we are watched over and known by God, and we help others see God.

Take the story of St. Patrick that I told the children. He lived Psalm 1. It was difficult for him to stand against a culture that didn’t believe. He had great resistance at first when he returned to Ireland and began to preach. But God made him fruitful. He baptized 100,000 people into the faith and started 200 churches. A poem came out of that religious movement that said “Be thou my vision; be my wisdom and my best thought – all day and all night.” We still sing those words 1600 years later.

But it’s not like that for those who cut God out. When trouble comes, they are blown away. Eugene Peterson says it like this, “God charts the road you take. The road they take is Skid Row” (v. 6, The Message).

So what does Luke want us to understand? Luke wants to convey to us the visitation of Jesus brings incredible love and fruitfulness to our lives. God maintains a special relationship with those who recognize Him. Under God’s personal care and guidance, God shapes our lives and sustains our destiny.

This is Luke’s message. Closing the door on Jesus severs the ties that hold us to God. That led Jerusalem to their great loss.

As we begin this New Year, are you ready for your visitation? Our happiness is absolutely dependent on our open door policy, our embracing the ways and the work of Jesus. If we don’t say *yes*, like Jerusalem we miss our visitation.

AMEN