

## “Jesus: The Door to a New Life”

John 14:5-7, Revelation 3:20

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A great French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre once said, “Life is C between B and D.” It means that Life is Choice between Birth and Death. He argued that “We are our choices.” In and through life, we constantly make decisions and choose a choice every time we wish to move forward. For example, let me share a couple of facts in life. First, there are many places that we wish to go. These places could be different degrees of schools or colleges for young fellows here for your higher education or could be a bucket list for older people for traveling around the world. Or these could be reverse! No matter how old you are, you will have your own wishes to do and to be in the future. Second, nobody wants to stay stuck in the present but move forward. If you feel that you don’t want to go any places, no dream to be or to do and no hope that you want to pursue, you might need some help to get back on the right track. Life moves you forward. Lastly, you want to live your life with meaning and purpose. In a sense, life is like a seed. Once it is planted and sprouted on the ground, it automatically grows, grows and grows until it becomes a tree. Likewise, when we are born, we are to grow and become someone that we wish to be. But we are not merely like plants and other animals. We human beings are a God’s unique creation that we can make our own decisions and choices to accomplish life goals and to fulfill life purposes. Indeed, Life challenges us to be bold and requires us of making choices. ***How can we know and make good choices in life?*** In today’s Scripture readings, Jesus gives us a clue for life and an answer. I invite you to listen to him and find a meaningful wisdom and spiritual insight for your better life choice.

In the first Scripture reading, Jesus said to Thomas that “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except ***through me***.” Jesus identifies himself as the way for a new life. He invites us to come, be in His way and find the truth and life. What does it mean that Jesus is the way? It is an invitational calling asking us to respond to him by making our choice! There are many ways in life and choices are ours. Jesus calls us to come and begin a new journey with him. Why don’t you replace the way with an image of a door if the way sounds abstract? Jesus’ words, “No one comes to the Father except ***through me***” remind us that Jesus himself is the door. What does it mean that Jesus is the door?

Let me share three different images. First, Jesus is the door only opened by your choice. Our lives are filled with doors and Jesus waits for you to allow him to enter in your hearts. To open the door is totally up to your choice. Do you know the ABCs of faith? I thought it was meaningful. It means that you must *abandon* your old life, *believe* God's promises are trustworthy, and *commit* to a new journey.<sup>1</sup> The maturity of faith is not automatic but rather you need to make an intentional choice and repeat it every moment in your daily living. Hold onto the door and open it to begin your new spiritual maturity.



An English artist William Holman Hunt (1827–1910) is the well know painter for *The Light of the World* (1851–1853). It is an allegorical painting based on our Second scripture reading, Revelation chapter 3, verse 20. Jesus is standing at the door and knocking. Jesus says, “If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.” One interesting point in this painting is that the door has no handle, and can therefore be opened only from the inside. The door is painted and symbolized as an overgrown and long unopened door. This represents our shut mind and unwilling attitude to the divine presence in us. If we want to invite the divine in our hearts, we should open the door and let Jesus come in first. The door is a metaphor of an adventure for a new spiritual journey.

Second, Jesus is the door to the blessing of grace. John Wesley, our Methodism founder understood grace as God's active presence in our lives. This presence is not dependent on human actions or human response. It is a gift—a gift that is always available, but that can be refused. Wesley illustrated our relationship with God using a house metaphor. He talked about three levels of grace. He first compared *prevenient grace* to the *porch* in front of the house. It is divine grace that precedes human decision. This God's grace stirs up within us a desire to know God and empowers us to respond to God's invitation to be in relationship with God. John Wesley was an Anglican priest and found himself in great despair. He did not have the faith to continue to preach. When death stared him in the face, he was fearful and found little comfort in his religion. He cried out to God praying, “Lord, help my unbelief.” In this cry, we Methodists learned of Prevenient grace, in which the Holy Spirit enters into our heart. When we experience *prevenient grace*, God has invited us into the house, but we haven't yet accepted the invitation. We are still standing just outside the door. Then, *Justifying Grace represents the door*. When we respond to God's

<sup>1</sup> John Ortberg, *All the Places to Go* (Tyndale House Foundation: 2013) p.10

invitation and open the door into God's house, we are right with God and have assurance that our sins are forgiven. ***Sanctifying Grace is the house interior.*** It is the grace that guides us when we're inside the house, helping us mature in faith and live a holy life. Sanctifying grace is not merely a place to explore and stay for temporary period, but we are invited to **dwell in** the house of the Lord. The authentic love and Christian faith is not an emotional rush nor feeling on the assurance of salvation. Moreover, it is more honor and privilege to live in God and God in us.

Lastly, Jesus is the door to a new life. Jesus' life, death and resurrection were all about tokens of God's love, because God loves every one of us. Jesus Christ came to us as the door to a more fulfilling and meaningful life. Therefore, God wants us to open the door and begin a new and fresh life for enriching our lives with Christ Jesus. What does it mean to have 'a new life'? A new life does not mean that you choose God to come into your life. It works the other way. God doesn't come into your life. That's backwards. You are entering into *God's life*. When you open the door, you enter into a new space. Likewise, when you accept Jesus, you choose to be *in* the life of God. God offers us God's own life and invites us to enjoy it by entering and dwelling in it.

Thomas Long, a professor at Emory Divinity School gives us his insight. He says, "The life of God is not far away from you. The life of God has come near to you. Indeed, the life of God is sitting right next to you, speaking to you now."<sup>2</sup> In other words, Jesus is like a way or path where the trail starts, the trail that leads us into the joyful and loving life of God. In the same way, Jesus is the door that invites us to begin a new journey. We don't have to make our own way to reach the destination. Instead, we need gladly to choose and follow Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way to life and to eternal life as well.

Where are you in your spiritual journey? Let's be in God's life and choose Jesus as our spiritual way and the door for the destination of eternal life. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Rev. Dr. Thomas Long's sermon note, "The Start of the Trail", June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 [http://day1.org/3823-the\\_start\\_of\\_the\\_trail](http://day1.org/3823-the_start_of_the_trail)