

**JULY 2, 2017    BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**“BEHOLD”**

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*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. (Revelation 3:20)*

*Behold, I will do a new thing. (Isaiah 43:19)*

*Behold, I make all things new. (Revelation 21:5)*

Jesus stands at the door and knocks, inviting us to answer, to follow him, to do new things.

This word appears in the Bible 1,298 times. Behold is used in 48 of the 66 books. It is first written in the first chapter of Genesis and last appears in the final chapter of Revelation.

At Holston Annual Conference a few weeks ago, we were presented with this challenge to “BEHOLD!” To study this word, to live with this word, and to live INTO this word.

We were shown an 1854 painting by Holman Hunt, “The Light of the World.” A huge portion of us probably “grew up” with the painting. There seems to be copies of it in many of our churches. I certainly remember it from my childhood church.

I never noticed it before, but Jesus is knocking on a door that is very overgrown with weeds. It hasn’t been opened in a very long time. The image represents a reality of when someone is knocking on that door, and we often are very hesitant to open it. Maybe we’ve chosen to keep it closed for fear of what is on the other side. Maybe we are afraid of being changed—a fear of the unknown. Maybe we are afraid that if we put ourselves out there, we might get hurt. Maybe we just like living in our own little bubble and don’t want it disturbed.

Doors appear numerous times in scripture. In John 20, the disciples hid behind locked doors twice following the resurrection. Yet Jesus appeared to them anyway.

Doors are not an obstacle for God. They’re an obstacle for us. We’re the ones who let the weeds grow up.

In the Holman painting, the handle is on the inside. Jesus is never going to force himself on us, but he desires to have a relationship with us. Only we can open the door of our heart. We are the ones with a decision to make. God has made it known that He is with us and for us and so wants to have a relationship with us, however, the ball is in our court. We are the only ones who can open the door.

So I want to stop right here—where are you? Have you allowed Jesus to become your Lord and Savior?

I want us to talk church a minute.

It can also be a metaphor for our churches. We are to open the doors of our churches to those outside. Sometimes churches wait for people to come in before they welcome them. Most people see the church doors the way Holman Hunt painted it – with no door handle.

I have asked some friends to help me with an analogy.

When some folks are actually brave enough to walk into the door of our church – this is what they find. A warm fellowship focused on Jesus in the center. But the difficulty for us is that to let someone else in – we have to let go of a person we love.

Picture of the church – A Circle of Five holding hands.

We have to reorient ourselves – repent. Repentance is less about turning away from bad things and more about turning toward Jesus.

Jesus' invitations are many and filled with new and wonderful opportunities. Jesus invites us through the doors of our churches out into our neighborhoods, out into our region, out into the world.

Another Behold statement: “BEHOLD I will do a new thing.” How will we know if Jesus is doing a new thing if we are safely behind locked doors?

Remember, some of Jesus' harshest statements are not aimed at those who are bad or do wrong things. Jesus is toughest on those who do nothing – the parable of the talents in which a servant does nothing with the money he receives. The servant does not waste the money, he wastes the opportunity.

It was the folks who were invited to the feast but did not come because they were too busy – NOT because they were evil – that were left out.

It was the church at Laodicea – the lukewarm ones – the people who were neither hot nor cold that Jesus wanted to spit out.

The sheep and the goats. It was not evil ones who were cast out. It was the ones who did not welcome Jesus and invite him in.

I remind you that our own Methodist movement really began when churches shut their doors to a young Anglican priest named John Wesley due to his enthusiasm. It was at the point of facing closed doors that God led John Wesley to go outside the churches and stand on the only piece of property his family owned – his father's tomb – and proclaimed **THE WORLD IS MY PARISH**.

I call on you to open the door to the new thing – which is Christ himself. Open the door to the new thing that is a radical way of loving **EVERYONE**. Open the door to the least, the last, the lost. Open the door and follow Jesus into your neighborhood, into God's creation.

(NEW CIRCLE with Volunteers)

There is one more behold I hope that you will hold on to. It is found in Genesis.

*Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. (Genesis 28:15)*

Let's open the door because Jesus is doing a new thing and invites us to join him.

My challenge to you this day is to lay claim to our word today: **BEHOLD!**

Behold our God who knocks and desires that we open the door.

Behold our God who does a new thing and invites us to be part of the mission.

Behold our God who makes all things new – the weak made strong, the broken made whole, even the dead raised to new life.

Behold our God who never leaves us alone or abandoned, but is with us always – even to the end of the age.