

Lyla appeared at my front door, visibly worried, asking to use my phone. She had stepped out to pick up the mail at her house across the street from the parsonage, and Stacey, her two-year-old, had pushed the door shut, locking Lyla out. I gave her my phone, grabbed a couple of board books, and stood outside the front window of their house, trying to keep Stacey occupied while Lyla called her husband, who didn't answer. Eventually, she reached a locksmith. While we waited, Lyla periodically tried to get Stacey to open the door. Finally, in desperation, she yelled, "For God's sake, Stacey, open the door!"

In today's account of Jesus' resurrection in Mark's gospel, the three women, on their way to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body for burial, cry out, like Lyla, "For God's sake, open the door!" They wonder aloud, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb?" Of course we (who know the end of the story) know that, when the women arrived at the tomb, the stone was already rolled away from the entrance to the tomb; the door was already open; and a young man in a white robe, sitting at the entrance to the tomb, was waiting to announce to them the good news of Easter: that the door had been opened, that the crucified Jesus had been raised.

There were many who had done their part to assure that the door of that tomb was shut tight. The chief priests and scribes and elders, Judas, a crowd with swords and clubs, the council of Jewish leaders, the false witnesses, the high priest, the guards, Peter, Pilate, the soldiers, the passersby, the bandits on the cross, the centurion, and Joseph of Arimathea—each had had a hand in securing the door of the tomb. Even the women, who came to the tomb that Sunday morning, ready to anoint Jesus' body for burial, were preparing for a final sealing of the tomb, a final closing of the door.

No matter, though, how many participated in closing the door of the tomb! Because God, for God's sake and for Jesus' sake, opened that door. After Jesus was betrayed and arrested, condemned and convicted, struck and beaten, flogged and crucified, mocked and taunted; after he was taken down from the cross, wrapped in a linen cloth and locked in a tomb hewn from a rock, God opened the door of the tomb; God raised Jesus from the dead and restored him to life.

And not only for God's sake—and Jesus' sake—did God restore him to life, but also for the women's sake, and for Peter's and Judas's sake, for Joseph's, the centurion's, the soldiers', the bandits' sake, for the sake of the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, for the sake of everyone who put Jesus in the tomb, God opened the door of that tomb; God rolled away the stone; God raised Jesus from death and restored him to life. And for your sake and mine as well, God opened the door, God rolled away the stone, God raised Jesus from death and restored him to life.

That's why there is good news for you and for me today. God, who opened the door of the tomb, who rolled away the stone and raised Jesus from death and restored him to life, also opens doors that are shut tight in our lives. What are those doors, for you? What needs to be opened so that you can live?

Trixie called 911 when her wife Arabella had a heart attack and began giving her CPR until the ambulance arrived, but the doctors couldn't save her. Years later, Trixie is still depressed. She can't bring herself to attend a support group or see a counselor or go to church, since those things remind her of her loss. Trixie is locked in grief, the door of her heart shut tight.

Ken came back from Afghanistan with no visible injuries but a gaping internal wound: the loss of 11 buddies. He still has nightmares. Afraid of a diagnosis of PTSD, he stays far away from the VA. Ken is locked in fear, the door of his heart shut tight.

Amelia was sexually abused by her cousin at a family gathering when she was eleven. When she tried to tell her mother, she was chastised for speaking ill of a relative. She began a downward spiral of failing grades, isolation, and drinking. Finally, Amelia crashed her parents' car and landed in court, where she was sentenced to treatment for chemical dependency. Refusing to participate in the program, she spent her days with her eyes closed and her arms crossed over her chest. Amelia is locked in trauma, the door of her heart shut tight.

Is there a door in your life that is shut tight? Are there griefs or traumas or fears that overwhelm you? Are you struggling because you didn't get into the college of your choice? Are you avoiding the doctor for fear of receiving a diagnosis? Are you afraid to leave your dead-end job—or a dead-end relationship? Are you keeping a secret about a family member who is incarcerated or addicted or mentally ill, when you have friends who would support you? Are there memories that you want to forget but can't? Are there doors in your life that need to be opened?

No matter what door is locked in your life, the risen Jesus comes out of his tomb today to bring you good news, dear friend. God, who opened the door, God who rolled away the stone, God who raised Jesus from death and restored him to life—the very same God will also open the doors that are shut in your life, whether they are closed by anger or pain or fear or grief or suspicion or trauma. God will roll away the stone that prevents you from moving forward. God will raise you from the death you have experienced in body, or mind, or spirit. God will restore you to life. That is the good news of Easter, for you and for me and for all the world today: For God's sake, God has opened the door of Jesus' tomb, and, for God's sake, God opens the doors that are shut tight in your life. Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia! AMEN