

THE BIG IDEA: An open tomb closes the door on impossible.

The Take-Off

Have you ever spent time anticipating a visit to a particular place only to show up and see this?

["Sorry! We're closed." sign]

Isn't that the worst? And they have the nerve to say sorry? Because we all know they don't really mean it, right?

Recently, Wendy was craving some Hershey's Ice Cream and so she swung by and picked me up and we drove up to Richfield to one of the only places we know that sells it by the scoop and they were closed.

Hey, Mr. Manager man. Sorry doesn't cut it!!

And it's even worse when you've got the kids involved, isn't it? A minivan full of energy and excitement that turns into a minivan full of weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth all because of that sign!

All because of one word - closed.

I mean, even the sound of that word is unpleasant, isn't it?

It's one of those words that you only enjoy if you're the one saying it, right?

You're working the last shift before vacation and as you lock the door and turn the sign to read closed, someone walks up. In that moment, you're good with closed, aren't you? It's all about which side of that sign we're on, isn't it?

What about the church?

Is it possible that for the vast majority of the people who need us actually see us as being closed?

According to some recent research by The Barna Group, the answer is yes. Listen to these findings:

- when Americans aged 16-29 were asked what words or phrases best described Christianity, a mind-blowing 91% of non-Christians said that the first thing that came to mind was "anti-homosexual"
- before we get all cranked about the actual word and the issue behind it, can we just agree that when 91% of the people who we want to reach with the gospel use "anti-" anything to describe us, we've got a problem
- even in the church, for 80% of 16-29 year olds that was the first word they thought of
- other words and phrases were just as telling: "judgmental," "hypocritical," "too involved in politics"
- in a word, "closed"
- and even for those who claim Christianity, in that demographic, open feels closed, because the church seems to be known more for what it opposes than for what it supports
- maybe this sign sums up how many even in the church feel?
- ["Sorry! We're open." sign]

So, what's the point? The point is that you're in a place this morning that celebrates what God opens more than what man might close, and the open, empty tomb of Jesus is just the beginning of the open life of freedom God desires for each one of us.

Let me introduce you to the greatest opener the world has ever known...

1. God is an opener

- a. If you're any kind of concert goer, then you know what the opening act is
- b. It's the band, singer or act that is paying its dues by working the crowd out of its fog so that they're primed and ready for the headline - much more famous - band
- c. But every now and then, the opener steals the show. [needtobreathe stealing the show]
- d. That's exactly what God does: his opening act on that early morning changed everything!
- e. Look at how pivotal that open tomb of Jesus is:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 - no resurrection, all is lost
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:20 - resurrection, everything is changed
 - c. The first act is the opening act for everything else
 - d. It means that our faith isn't a closed one, but an open one
- f. That opening act set the tone for so many other openings!
- g. Here are just a few of them:
 - a. Our eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4; Psalm 119:18)

- b. God's hand (Psalm 145:16)
- c. Our minds (Luke 24:45 - to the truth)
- d. New roads (Isaiah 43:18-19)
- e. Closed doors (Revelation 3:8; Matthew 7:7)
- f. Hard hearts (Acts 16:14; Ephesians 1:18)
- g. Prison cells (Acts 5:19; 16:26)
- h. Of course, this all just begs the question, "With all this open stuff, why do I still feel like I'm closed off?"

2. What we can all learn from a couple of yahoos

- a. I don't want to speak for you, but there have been times in my life when I felt like I was on the outside looking in on some kind of Jesus party that I couldn't seem to access
- b. Like this morning, all this open talk, but you're here and you feel stuck. Everything is opening for everyone else, but you're experiencing none of it.
- c. I want you to know that God sees you, and he included the story of two yahoos right in the thick of the Easter drama that felt exactly the same way you do.
- d. We find them in Luke 23, and they've got a front row seat to the biggest event in history.
- e. Unfortunately, while Jesus is opening the door to the salvation for the world to walk through, these men are watching the final moments of their lives slip away.
- f. In the middle of openings and beginnings, they're experiencing closings and endings.
- g. They can relate to you, and God recorded their story so you would know that He can relate to you.
- h. Listen to the story...
- i. [Video of Two Thieves]

The Landing

When every option seems closed to you, the cross and the resurrection opens the door to so much more than you deserve.

It seems impossible that God could love us so much that he would endure so much in order to win us over?

But an open tomb closes the door on impossible, and now, here, in this moment, the only question is: will you open your life to the God who opened everything to you?

Revelation 3:20 tells us exactly what Jesus would do if he showed up in a church like ours. He'd simply say, "Hey! I'm here, and I want to be with you, I want to love you, walk with you, open every door for you. But first, you've got to open a door, too. Let me in to your heart. Your dirty, messy, far from perfect heart. If you'll do that, I'll come in and we'll open the door to the rest of your life, the best of your life."

Let's do that now.

Let's close our eyes and allow each one here to really hear that invitation, and at the same time, on the count of 3, let's respond.