

Keys to the kingdom

One of my children made this for me.

Can any of you guess what it might be? The reason it was made for me?

I am notorious for losing my keys. I am one of those who places them here...there...everywhere...but usually NOT where I need to have them when I am leaving. One of my most known phrases is short and simple and full of panic: "Where are my keys?"

Even if you are not one who misplaces your keys, do you ever hold your keys in your hand and ponder what having keys truly means? If we all did this more often, I think we would hold onto them with more respect and awe.

This small piece of metal communicates that we have a place where we belong, we have purpose, and we have possibilities.

When I read in the recent UPC times the brief and moving story of the **Seventh Habitat Home Dedicated**....my eyes paused on this sentence: "On Saturday, December 11, the Seid/Datu family received **the keys** to their new home in West Seattle's High Point neighbourhood ,"

This family has keys that you gave to them.

As people from our community gave of their time and their funds, to ensure that a family had a home that they could afford – you all opened up even more than just the door of a house. You, who provided a means for another family to have sustainable shelter, opened up a door for the grace of Jesus Christ to flow forth.

You opened up a door that said, "Yes, the kingdom of God is here." You opened up a door that said, "Yes, the God on high is at work in this world through his people bringing hope out of despair; bringing light into darkness; bringing community out of isolation." You opened a door – for a new beginning.

And, **you closed a door to the darkness that says "there is no place for you. – you don't matter."**

By giving keys to this family. You shut a door on injustice.

The practical work of Habitat for Humanity is (and I quote from the Mission State)"

to work in partnership with God and people everywhere, from all walks of life, to develop communities with people in need by building and renovating houses so that there are decent houses in decent communities in which every person can experience God's love and can live and grow into all that God intends.

As I have envisioned people throughout our community stepping through an open door --key in hand-- to live into the hope that they belong and have a place in God's Kingdom because of the commitment of people such as you in this world who believe a decent house matters --

there is a powerful and, yes perplexing verse that has burned in my mind: Matthew 16:19.

In Matthew 16 -- When Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is (Jesus favourite name for himself)?" the light suddenly turns on for Simon Peter..."Oh, my...you are the One...the anointed One...the Messiah, the Son of the LIVING God."

And, Jesus affirms Peter's confession to say, "Yes! And, on your confession of truth – that the Son of the Living God has come and the Kingdom of God is at hand --- on you and through you, Peter and those who follow you...I am going to build a community – a new people – that death cannot swallow up – and

In Matthew 16:19 --

¹⁹I will give you the **keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' *Jesus tells him: this daunting message – Your "no" on earth is a "no" in heaven; and your "yes" on earth is a "yes" in heaven.*

At the heart of this verse is a message that we dare not miss – Jesus, our LIVING Lord, has invited us to be *keybearers in his world!*

As we live in response to God's Word in our lives and as we confess that Jesus is Lord, we are invited to trust that God is now working from heaven by working **through** us, his people on earth.

And, **God works through us, by his Spirit, to unlock barriers for his grace to flow into the world.**

We confess Jesus is true as we help someone step out of the cycle of poverty and into the hope of a new day.

And as we step out, **to act for** justice and **to stop** injustice, we bring the keys of God's kingdom -- we open the door for grace to flow in, bringing healing and restoration.

Does this feel overwhelming? – who me – how can I be a keybearer and bring hope and new beginnings when the problems swirling around us seem too daunting and overwhelming?

Jesus knew, as he walked this earth, that this would be one of our struggles.... Self-doubt and questioning...

So, over and over again, Jesus communicated that *who* we are, in our unique offerings and personalities and gifts is simply all he needs to work in his world.

Don't we see this most vividly in the earthy story of the feeding of the 5000? In the gospel of John, chapter 6 – we are told that there is a huge crowd following Jesus and Jesus asks the big, global question – Where shall we buy bread for ALL these people?

And, Philip responds with the thoughts that are often in our head when faced with a global issue – “It is too much...it is too overwhelming...I am only one person...we can't meet this need” --- What Philip says is: “ It would take a year's wages to give everyone only a morsel?” (We can't even provide the band aid for the gaping wounds)

But Andrew brings forward a boy who has offered his lunch – five loaves and two small fish.

And, Jesus takes that boys lunch (which from Andrew's – and our eyes we might think won't make a difference) --- Jesus takes the loaves, gives thanks to the God on High and distributes bread and fish to everyone so that all had enough to eat.

This boy's small act of faithfulness opened the door for God to work mightily.
(Pause)

Jesus invites us to be "keybearers" who trust that our small acts of faithfulness open the door for God to work mightily.

Our "yes" to hope and reconciliation and new beginnings is a "yes" in heaven. Our "no" to injustice and oppression is a "no" in heaven.

When we offer another person a "key" we don't only open a door, we offer them an opportunity to live and grow into all that God intends.

We offer them an opportunity to live in the light of God's Kingdom.

**Our "yes" to Habitat for Humanity's work in our world has a resounding "yes" throughout Heaven.
Thank you for opening the door for the grace of Jesus to flow forth mightily.**