

From the Pastor

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I wonder if you have ever heard of a famous painting called *The Light of the World* by the English painter William Hunt. He painted it in 1852, as an expression of his personal conversion to Christ. It shows the large wooden door of a country cottage, which is located on the edge of a forest, far away from other houses or towns. Around the door weeds have grown up, and the landscape looks abandoned, uncultivated, and hostile. It is nighttime.

In the darkness, the full moon forms a halo around the head of Christ, who is standing in front of the door. He holds a lantern in his left hand, and with his right hand he is knocking on the door. Hunt was part of the school of painters, who were interested in complex symbolism. In this painting, the cottage symbolizes the soul, the door is human freedom, and Christ is the light that brings hope and meaning to the darkness within. It's a painting profound in meaning in many of its details.

First of all, it seems to be weird to have a stranger wandering the woods at night carrying a light. Usually, the light would come from inside the place of residence, and the strange wanderer would be seeking relief from the darkness outside. And yet another detail is even more eloquent: no doorknob or handle can be seen on the outside of the door. This implies that the door can only be opened from within. Christ is knocking on the outside, patiently waiting to bring his light into the house, but only those on the inside can let him in.

And that's how it is in all of our lives. God surrounds us with his good gifts and his love, but he will never force his way into our hearts. He simply knocks, invites, and waits patiently for us to open the door. Somehow we can imagine through this painting that the opening of the door means our personal and free invitation to let the light of Christ enter the house of our soul. And Christ's light will lead us to true happiness.

God made us to be happy. God wants us to be happy. And, in and through the Lord Jesus, He provides us with a formula for life that casts aside the mistaken notion that we can be happy "on our own." It is the mistaken notion that we can substitute our own formula for God's; the mistaken notion that we are the sole authorities on the subject of life-enrichment; the mistaken notion that our happiness is unrelated to the happiness of others. Prime Minister Winston Churchill said it once very well: "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."

+ Father Roger