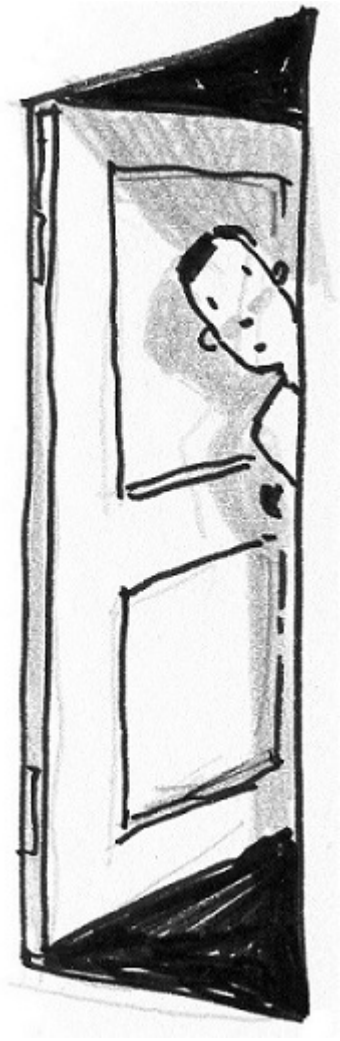
Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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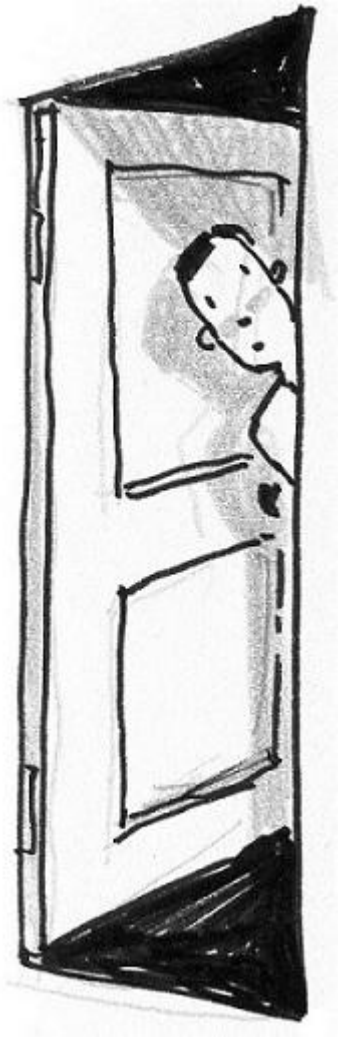

“Knock and the door will be opened” (Luke 11:10).

Mal 3:13-20b; Luk3 11:5-13

Years ago, in a bid to learn Spanish, I spent two months in Mexico. While my language skills did not improve, I was blessed to be immersed in a whole new world of food, social conventions and culture. I found the Mexican people to be uniformly beautiful and always helpful when I got lost or in over my head trying out my new vocabulary. I learned how to get around on crowded buses and how to keep ATMs from eating my debit card.

Most dwellings, even the poorest, had some kind of gated outer court – gardens and patios for some, and just open space for others — based on the European style of houses. And many if not most families had a dog, adding to the countless stray dogs roaming the streets. To knock at the metal outer gate of any home in the middle of

the night was to set off a riot of barking that would wake the whole neighborhood.

This comes to mind whenever I read Jesus' story about the man faced with unexpected guests who goes to a neighbor in the middle of the night to borrow some bread. Hospitality was so important the man was willing to bear the embarrassment of going out to borrow some food to offer his guests. But predictably the neighbor's household was closed, children and animals bedded down, everyone asleep. The "knock at midnight" creates an uproar.

The point of the parable – that God is always eager to receive our prayers, day or night, – is set against a scene in which someone reluctantly grants a neighbor's request under the most inconvenient circumstances out of exasperation. If ordinary people will do this, Jesus says, why doubt that a gracious God will always respond generously?

Jesus adds other imagery to affirm the same message: Does a father give a child a stone when he asks for bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? So much more, then, will your heavenly Father answer your prayers. Jesus invites us to go to God even at midnight, to rouse heaven if necessary, confident that love never sleeps and is always eager to respond to us in our hour of need, even when that is at the 11th hour.

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