

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity (second service)

1 Kings 6:11-14, 23-38

Acts 12:1-17

I opened our service this evening with that line that we have just heard choir sing at the conclusion of Martin Shaw's lovely anthem, which proclaimed, "the Lord hath delivered his people, alleluia!"

And both readings this evening present us with images of doors and locks, and deliverance - freedom.

And I think what is important for us to take away this evening and tomorrow in our prayers is that we need to negotiate doors, boundaries and portals carefully.

Our Old Testament reading was part of that incredibly long narrative that describes the building of Solomon's Temple, and we hear in precise detail the dimensions, attributes and materials used in the construction of its doors.

There are at least two sets of doors in our second lesson as well: those that are blown apart by the angel so that Peter can escape prison, his wrists loose from their chains - and also of course that door that, having escaped, Peter had to pound at to get the attention of anyone to let him in!

The last bit of that second reading is frankly farcical. Peter has escaped from prison, and he gets to the door of the house where all of his friends and fellow Christians have been praying for his release fervently, and when he finally reaches safety and freedom, they don't let him in! He is met by confusion and

farce, until at the end somebody has the presence of mind to open the door and let him in.

Our first reading is a presentation of doors of beauty, in terms of the age. Beautiful, precise architecture, precious metal, glory.

Our second reading is a little more honest in terms of the way in which we actually manage our boundaries. All of us end up imprisoned, one way or the other, either by our own actions, habits and sins, or by the actions, habits and sins of others.

And sometimes the church can be clumsy and unhelpful too: keeping our doors shut when we are surprised by God's mercy. Debating how and why and when, rather than opening up the door and letting God's family in.

But in all of this is the same God we worship: the God who motivated Solomon to this extraordinary act of physical worship: the God who can, and longs to, free us from our own bonds, tap us on our side and wake us up, and before whose mighty presence the gates open of their own accord, for "the Lord hath delivered his people, alleluia!"