

Luke 13:22-30

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[0 : 00] I want to tell you a story about a house.

It's not my story, it's a story that Jesus tells. I'm not even sure if we can really call it a story, but we all like stories, so let's call it a story.

And Jesus talks about this house in the passage that we read just a few moments ago. I want us to think about this house that Jesus talks about.

And we're going to kick off by meeting the owner of the house. Notice in verse 25, a reference is made to the owner.

Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door and so on. So Jesus speaks of this house and he identifies or makes clear that there is an owner of this house.

[1 : 05] And we want to know who he is. That's an important part of the story. But as we've read the verse, it's a little bit annoying because the owner isn't named.

I wonder if this central character in the story, the owner of the house, maybe he's anonymous. Maybe we're not to discover who he is or what his name is.

As I was thinking about that, I was reminded just on Newsnight a couple of nights ago, I was seeing an interview with Anna Burns, who is the author of the novel that has just won the 2018 man Booker Prize, the milkman.

She's from Northern Ireland. And the central character in her novel is anonymous. We're not told who she is or certainly what her name is. And I wonder, is that what we have here in this story?

The central character, the owner of the house is anonymous. Well, let's investigate a little further to discover if that is indeed the case.

[2 : 11] And what we can do as we investigate is we can follow the anticipated dialogue. Jesus, as he tells the story, he invites his audience to imagine this anticipated dialogue that will take place between the owner of the house and those outside the house.

And as we follow the dialogue, we are given a clue as to who the owner is. So let's do that. Then in verse 25, at the beginning, we're told that the owner of the house gets up and closes the door.

Then we're told that those left outside, and Jesus makes clear that they are the very people who are listening to him at that moment. Because he says, once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside.

So he's not just speaking about some nondescript group of people. He's saying, you folk who are listening to me now, you will be there on this future occasion. You'll be there.

You'll be outside the house. And you will speak to the owner. You will call to the owner. And then what will happen? Well, Jesus tells us, or tells them and us, that the owner will respond.

[3 : 31] Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, sir, open the door for us. But he will answer, I don't know you or where you come from.

And then, in this anticipated dialogue, those outside identify the owner by the language that they will use, that Jesus anticipates them using.

Notice what these people are said to say when this happens. Then you will say, there in verse 26, then you will say, we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.

They're speaking to the owner of the house. And to the owner of the house, they will say these words. We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.

Now, imagine the scene as Jesus is in this encounter with those who he is speaking to. Who is doing exactly this in this encounter?

[4 : 32] Who is the one teaching in their streets, eating and drinking with them? Well, it's Jesus. And so, it's very clear that the owner of the house is Jesus.

So, we've clarified that. We've established that in terms of the story that Jesus tells of this house, that he is the owner.

What we want to do now is to move on and discover what the house represents, this house that he speaks of. And this one is, I think, a little easier to establish because Jesus is quite explicit on this matter.

We're going to read verses 28 and 29. And as we read these two verses, focus on this matter of what the house represents. And you'll see clearly how on two occasions, it's made clear what the house represents.

So, let's read the two verses. There will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth, that is, of those who are outside the house. When you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the house, or as Jesus puts it here, in the kingdom of God.

[5 : 43] But you yourselves thrown out. You yourselves remaining outside. People will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the house, in the kingdom of God.

And so, the house of which Jesus is speaking represents the kingdom of God. It represents the kingdom of Jesus. Now, this has a present dimension.

Namely, that body of men and women and boys and girls who are subject to King Jesus and who seek to live as citizens of the kingdom.

We are already members of the kingdom of God. And so, there is that present dimension, but it also clearly has a future dimension.

And in what Jesus says on this occasion, he is particularly looking forward or envisaging that future dimension where all of God's people across time and space, from north and south, from east and west, will be gathered as citizens of the kingdom of God in the new heavens and the new earth.

[6 : 58] Now, that is some house. The new heavens and the new earth, the cosmos, as the residence, as the house of God's people.

Now, this is a house that you really want to be in. I don't know if I really need to sell it to you. Who wouldn't want to be in Jesus' house?

But let me sell it to you, if I can use that language, by describing the house, or at least highlighting three features of the house, that Jesus pinpoints in what he has to say here.

Three things about the house. The first thing that I think strikes me about what Jesus says is that this house is a place of belonging.

Notice what is said of all these people who gather in the house, who gather in the kingdom of God. There in verse 29, people will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

[8 : 06] Very particularly focusing in on the language of how these people will take their places at the table, at the feast, in the house, in the kingdom.

Everyone who enters the house discovers that they belong in the house. Maybe when they were outside looking in, they weren't sure if they belonged.

Maybe they were unsure as to whether they would be welcomed. Maybe they enter the house very tentatively, wondering if they will be rejected. But what do they discover? They discover that when they go through the door, when they enter the house, they belong.

There is a place for them at the table. They take their places at the banqueting table. This is a place of belonging.

They are expected and they are welcomed by the owner of the house. As I was thinking about that reality, that characteristic of this house, the thought that came to mind was when I was at the wedding on Thursday.

[9 : 15] Many of you were at the same wedding. We still have the lovely flowers as a legacy of the wedding on Thursday. When I was at the wedding on Thursday, when it was time to go for the dinner.

We were approaching the dining hall where dinner was being served. You've been there. You know what it's like. You're approaching that area in the hotel. You're looking for the seating plan to work out what is your table.

You find it and you're looking for your name. That was the point that we were at. As I approached the seating plan, there was a guest alongside me.

As a joke, I said to him, I said, this is always the bit where I get nervous. What if my name's not there? What if I go to the seating plan and I'm looking for my name and it's not there? Can you imagine the walk of shame? 180 degrees and you make your way in the opposite direction because there's no place for you.

[10:20] You thought there was. You thought you'd been invited, but your name's not there. Well, that will never happen in this house.

When you come into this house, when you make your way into this house, you belong. There is a place for you. All those who gather from north and south, from east and west, from every continent, from every people, from every tribe, they belong.

It's their house. There is a place set for them. A little name there. And there's their name. It's their place. It's their seat. They belong in the house.

This house is a place of belonging. Now, Jesus is principally looking forward to an end time banquet.

But I think there is a present day application. Maybe in different ways we could apply it, but let me apply it in this way. For all those who trust in Jesus, as we'll be thinking about a little bit later as we consider this story.

[11:29] For all those who trust in Jesus, there is a place at His table to remember His death in the here and now. Not only a place at the banqueting table when Jesus returns, but today, gathered at His table, there is a place for His people.

It's a place of belonging. But another feature of this house that I want you to notice is that it's a place of feasting. There in verse 29 again, people will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

And this language that Jesus is using, as we've just noted, is the language of the end time messianic banquet prepared for God's people when Jesus returns.

Jesus speaks about this banquet or He alludes certainly to this banquet when He instituted the Lord's Supper with and for His disciples.

Notice the language that Jesus uses in Matthew chapter 26 and in verse 29. This is just as He is or just has instituted the Lord's Supper.

[12:45] He says this, That banquet that is to be celebrated on Jesus' return.

This house is a place of belonging. It's a place of feasting. Of course, we belong to the kingdom of Jesus in the here and now and kingdom life in the present.

It provides a foretaste of that banquet. And what a wonderful picture of God's house, of God's family. A place of feasting, of celebration, of joy.

Is that the reality that we experience? Is that the reality that we communicate to others looking on? Believers, Christians, they are the people who celebrate.

They are the people who rejoice. They are the people who feast. I want to be part of that. So this house, as we describe it or highlight some of its features from what Jesus says, is a place of belonging.

[14:02] It's a place of feasting. But let me just say one other thing about this house. And I think we could describe it as a full house. Or certainly a well-populated house. Again, there in verse 29, we're told about those who will gather and find themselves resident there.

People will come from east and west and north and south. There's plenty room for everybody. This reality, what Jesus says here, I guess in part answers the question that was posed by the inquirer. We haven't even touched on that. But this whole story begins with a question. There in verse 23, we read, Someone asked him, Lord, are only a few going to be saved? And we don't know where that question was coming from.

You know, was this somebody who imagined, well, I'm okay, but I don't imagine many other people are. Or was this an anxious inquirer imagining that, well, he probably wouldn't make it into the house either.

We don't know. But the question is there. Lord, are only a few people going to be saved? Well, Jesus doesn't answer the question directly, but in these words, the implication is clear that there are going to be lots of people in the house.

[15:15] People from all over the world. Of course, the scandalous aspect of what Jesus is saying here is certainly scandalous to the ears of the Jews who would have been listening. Is that Jesus is clearly saying that the house will be full of Gentiles.

From north and south, from east and west, from all the nations of the world. They would gather and make their way into the house and be part of the kingdom of God.

It's a full house. All are welcome. And that includes you. Whoever you are. Wherever you've come from. Whatever you've done.

Whatever circumstances you find yourself in. Well, let's explore a little bit more this story about the house. What if the owner, we've identified the owner.

What if the owner won't let you in? Now, that would be a sad state of affairs. But what if that happens?

[16:21] You see, when we read what Jesus says, we might be concerned that that could happen. Notice what Jesus says in verse 24 about the house. He says, make every effort to enter through the narrow door.

We'll think about that in a moment. But then what does he say? Because many, many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Many will try to enter but will not be able to.

And we don't really expect to hear that. It's not really what we're looking to hear. Jesus saying that many will try and enter but they won't get in. It sounds very forbidding, even disturbing.

Is Jesus saying that many will strive or make every effort to enter through the narrow door and yet ultimately fail and not make it in?

No. I'm not given to shouting, but if I were, I would shout at this point. No, no, no. The key to understanding what Jesus is saying here is to notice when the many will be left outside.

[17:33] Many will be left outside, but notice when this will happen. It's in the future. When in the future? Well, in verse 25 we're told, Once the owner of the house, who we've already identified as Jesus, once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, at that point and from that point forward, many will indeed be left out, will not be able to get in.

But that day has not yet come. That's all you need to know. We don't need to know when the owner of the house will decide to close the door. We know that he will.

We know that the day has been established, but we don't know when that day is what we do know. And really all you need to know, for the good of your soul and your eternal destiny, all you need to know is that the door is open today.

It's wide open today. It's open for you. If you come, you will be welcomed. You will get in.

Listen to what Jesus himself says, assuring us on that front, as his words are recorded for us in John 6 and verse 37.

[18:55] In John 6 and verse 37, we read as follows, All that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. What Jesus is saying to you and me today is he's saying, if you come to me, I will welcome you. I will receive you.

I will let you in. I will embrace you. I'll direct you to your place at the banqueting table. I will not drive you away.

Another thing just to mention, for those of us who, by grace, know what it is to have been welcomed into God's house, to become part of God's family, is that we have the opportunity and the privilege and the duty of inviting others to join us in the house.

But while I emphasize that the door is open, we must acknowledge this very solemn truth, that the door will be closed.

[20:11] We don't know when, but at the appointed time, the owner will get up and close the door. The language Jesus uses is so simple, so ordinary, such domestic language of an owner getting up and closing the door.

And yet it is profoundly solemn. That day is coming when the door will be closed. But today is not that day.

Today is the day of opportunity. Today is the day of salvation. And when I say today, I'm not being poetic or trying to be dramatic. I really mean today. Today is the day when that open door is open for you.

If you as yet have not entered into the house, if you have as yet not embraced Jesus as your Savior, then today is your day of opportunity to walk into the house.

To walk into the house through that open door. But in all that we've said so far, we still haven't tackled what we might call the heart of the story.

[21 : 18] How do you get into the house? And Jesus here uses language that can also seem a little forbidding. Then in verse 24, you might say this is really the heart of what he has to say.

He says this, make every effort to enter through the narrow door. At different points in these few words, there are words or there is language that can be taken as being, as I say, quite forbidding. The language is also, I suppose, a little bit cryptic. Where is this door? And how do I get through this door that Jesus speaks of? Well, let's notice two details given by Jesus in these words.

First of all, Jesus says that the door into the house is a narrow door. Again, that very adjective is forbidding. Why a narrow door?

Why can't it be a broad door? Why can't it be a large opening to make it easier to get in? Why a narrow door? It does make it sound as if it's very difficult to get in.

[22 : 25] But that is not what Jesus is saying. It's narrow in the sense that there is only one way to pass through the door.

Let me put it this way. The door is repentance and faith shaped. It's the shape of the door. And the only way you can get in is by repentance and faith.

In that sense, it's narrow. There's not a multiplicity of ways of getting into the house. There's only one way. And again, I repeat, in that sense, it is a narrow door.

The way through the door into the house is by repenting and believing. This is what Jesus repeatedly taught and urged upon his hearers. We find him using that language time and time again.

He's only just spoken about repentance in this very chapter. In verse 5 of this same chapter, I tell you, unless you repent, you too will perish.

[23 : 31] You must repent. That was his message time and time again. If you are to get through the door into the house, you need to repent.

You need to recognize that you are a sinner. You need to confess your sin. You need to turn from your sin. And you need to receive God's forgiveness. You need to believe in or trust in Jesus as your Savior.

That's the shape of the door. And in that sense, it is a narrow door. It's the only way into the house by trusting in Jesus, repenting of your sin and trusting in Jesus.

As I was thinking about this, the picture that came to my mind, I don't know if this will prove helpful or not to you, but the picture that came to my mind was that little children's toy.

I'll try and describe it for you. You know, a kind of plastic box with different shaped holes, you know, a round hole and a triangular hole and a square hole.

[24 : 34] And then you've got circles and triangles and squares and you need to put them through the right hole. Now, if you get the right shape into the right hole, it's very easy.

It's not difficult. It's a very simple thing to get the shape into the box. But if you're trying to get the wrong shape into the hole, then you can't do it.

It doesn't work. It's not that it's difficult. It's just that you need to go in the right way. And that's what Jesus is saying here when he says that the door is narrow. He's not saying that it's restrictive.

It's not saying that he's trying to keep people out. He's not saying that it's really difficult to get in.

He's saying that there's only one way to get in because it is a repentance and faith shaped door to use that kind of picture.

So it's a narrow door. That's one of the things that Jesus says about it. But he says something else that is also just a little bit forbidding in terms of the vocabulary. We're called. Jesus addresses his hearers and he addresses us and he says to us, make every effort to enter through the narrow door.

[25 : 47] And you say, well, what does that mean? What are the implications of that? Is it possible for somebody to make a real effort, a genuine effort, a sincere effort, but that sadly proves to be insufficient?

After all, Jesus is saying you have to make every effort. And maybe you're thinking, well, I have made some effort, but maybe it's not enough. Maybe it's not of the standard of effort that Jesus is demanding when he says, make every effort to enter through the narrow door.

And then, of course, another concern might be that if we do make every effort and make it in, does that not sound like we've earned our place?

You know, we made an effort. That's why we got into the house. And all these people who didn't make it, well, that's their problem. They obviously didn't try hard enough. We made every effort and

we're in. So, we deserve to be here.

Well, it may sound like that is what Jesus is saying, but clearly that is not what Jesus is saying. We need to remember who Jesus is speaking to as he urges his hearers to follow his instructions.

[26 : 57] He's speaking to Jews who reckon, many of them, perhaps most of them, certainly the religious Jews, he's speaking to Jews who reckon that they're already in the house.

As far as they're concerned, it's their house. They're inside. They don't need to get inside. They're in already. You know, other people, other sinners, they might have to try and get in the house, but not them.

We're in the house. We own the house. It's our house. That's who he's speaking to. You see, the people he's speaking to are guilty of complacency and presumption.

And to them, Jesus says, make every effort. He's saying to them and he's saying to us, don't presume, don't delay, don't dawdle. And in some ways, we're a bit like those Jews 2,000 years ago, especially those of us who have been brought up in the church and have had the privilege of Christian families and Christian instruction.

We can imagine, well, I'm in the house. I belong. I don't need to get into the house. I don't need to make every effort. I'm in already. And Jesus says, whoa, be careful. Don't presume.

[28 : 06] Don't presume. Make every effort to enter through the narrow door. You need to repent as well. You need to trust in me as well. Make every effort to enter through the narrow door.

Entering through the narrow door is not difficult, but it does require focus and giving the matter the priority and urgency that it merits.

Make every effort. Don't give up until you're in. Have you? Have you entered through the door into God's house?

and be aware of the consequences of not coming in while the door is open. We've already commented on the picture of these people outside clamoring to get in.

And it is a solemn picture that Jesus paints. The owner of the house will reply to those who did not make every effort to enter through the narrow door, to those who were indifferent and unconcerned and careless.

[29 : 19] And then the door has been closed and there's no way in. What will Jesus say to them? I don't know you. Where you come from? Away from me, all you evildoers.

And there will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth, anxiety and despair. despair. The reality that the door is closed and there is no way in.

And so be careful not to be among those who find themselves outside on that day. Well, let's recap. Jesus is the owner of the house. Jesus is the one urging and inviting you to make every effort to enter through or enter into the house through the narrow door. And then this is another amazing reality that Jesus is also the door of the house.

Now, Jesus doesn't say that on this occasion. He doesn't explicitly speak in those terms, but we know the language that he uses on another occasion. We've already shared it with the children.

[30 : 28] I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved. And what does that mean? Well, the big picture, I suppose, if we take a step back, is that this door to God's house was closed to sinners.

We couldn't get into the house. We weren't welcome in the house. We were miles from the house. We weren't even in the same neighborhood. We were far, far away from the house. We were separated from the house by our sin.

The door was closed. But Jesus came to deal with our sin. He lived a life of perfect obedience in our place. He died on the cross in our place and bore the punishment due for our sin.

And by doing that, he opened the door. In that sense, he is the door. And also, as we've seen already in the sense that we need to repent and believe in him to get into the house.

It's striking that in the very introduction to Jesus telling this story, Luke tells us that Jesus was heading to Jerusalem. Notice there in verse 22, Then Jesus went through the towns and villages teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.

[31 : 46] Why was he going to Jerusalem? What was the business that he had to attend to in Jerusalem? Well, he was going to Jerusalem to die for sinners and open the door of the house for us, for you.

How amazing is that? This is the gospel. This is the good news that Jesus has opened the door and the door is opened and he welcomes us. He bids us come in as we would trust in him.

Well, let me finish telling the story or part of the story by drawing your attention to its enigmatic ending in verse 30. What does Jesus say as he ends his story or as he ends his instruction using this picture of a house?

We read there in verse 30, Indeed, there are those who are last who will be first and first who will be last. What Jesus is saying is that on that day there will be surprises.

There will be big surprises. I remember a few years ago, oh, I don't know, six, seven years ago, it was a Sunday morning, we'd been at church and we headed back home and we walked into the house and if you know the manse, there's a little family room just to the left as you go in the front door and we looked and there was somebody sitting on the couch in our little sitting room and I kind of recognized him.

[33 : 17] I thought, I know this guy and John was next to me and he was whispering away, he says, it's Gavin Ray. You're thinking, who's Gavin Ray? Shame on you not knowing who Gavin Ray is.

Gavin Ray, great footballer, played for Rangers, Dundee, Scotland. Gavin Ray was sitting on our couch in our sitting room. What's he doing there? We didn't say that but we did think it.

It's a long story, I won't give you all the details but I'll tell you it was a surprise. We didn't expect him to be sitting on our couch in our house. Well, in this house on that last day there will be big surprises.

There'll be big surprises concerning who's not there and there will be big surprises concerning who is there. That's what Jesus is saying here.

Lots of the people who imagine they'll be there will be outside banging on the door and perhaps some who wouldn't imagine that they would ever be allowed in will find themselves there because they knew what it was when the opportunity was granted to them to tentatively but to sincerely put their trust in Jesus and so find a place and belong in the house.

[34 : 32] Well, let's not be overly concerned about what the surprises may be. Let's be more concerned about ourselves. What about you? Will you be there? Will you be in the house?

Will you be seated at the banqueting table with God's people with all of God's people from west and north from south and east with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob?

Will you be there on that last and great day? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the reality that you are a welcoming God.

We thank you that you are a sharing God. you share your house with the likes of us. You welcome us in and embrace us and feed us and provide for us way beyond our deserving or imagining.

We thank you for the door that is open. We thank you for your son, Jesus, who is the door into your house and into your family. We thank you for who he is and we thank you for what he has done on our behalf.

[35 : 35] And we pray that by your spirit you would help us to be ever trusting in him, repenting of our sin, receiving forgiveness for our sin and resting in Jesus and in his work on our behalf.

And we pray these things in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. ZenAnd Amen.