

Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 19th April 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility.



Don't Miss The Door

Luke 13:22-30

Proximity to Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus. The door is narrow — not because God is stingy, but because only one thing gets you through: genuine relationship with the King.

INTRODUCTION: REVIEWING YOUR LIFE

In our family we have a tradition where we go ‘around the table’ at birthdays and talk about the great attributes that we see in the life of the person we’re celebrating. Last Sunday we celebrated the birthday of our son-in-law who was turning 30-something and his son, our eldest grandson, who turned 6 – their birthdays are 2 days apart. It was great to see our 6-year-old smiling away as he’s starts to grasp all the warm accolades he was hearing from his grandparents, his parents, his uncles and aunties, and increasingly his younger siblings and cousins. It’s a very warm tradition.

These times have become powerful in our family because when we know that our time is coming up, we ask ourselves, *“How am I actually living? Not what I say about myself - but what do others see, and what will they say?”* In Luke 13, Jesus gives us a moment like this. A checkpoint. A stop-and-look-at-your-life moment.

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REVIEWING OUR SERIES

We're in a series called **King & Kingdom Come** as we journey through the Gospel of Luke in four blocks over the course of two years; we're deliberately breaking it up so that we don't rush through it, and so that we have time to consider all the richness that this long Gospel contains. We're coming towards the end of our second block, so your Luke journals should have some good thoughts in them by now.

We began this second block in late February when Caleb opened it in Luke 9:51 which says, ***"He [Jesus] steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"***. This moment marked a major turning point for Jesus, initiating a long travel narrative (often called *the travelogue*) that takes us from Chapter 9:51 to Chapter 19:27. In an Aotearoa sense, Jesus is on a hikoi, purposefully moving towards a destination that His Father has set for him. Every town, every village, every conversation is a step toward the cross. And on the road, he keeps asking the same question, *"Are you really with me, or are you just walking in the same direction?"*

Throughout the wider travelogue Luke gives us several checkpoints to keep us locked in, and today we come to the first one since we began this wider section, Chapter 13:22-30. This is a key checkpoint moment in Luke's Gospel - a moment to stop and take stock.

LUKE 13:22-30: THE NARROW DOOR

This passage reminds us in Verse 22, ***Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.*** Luke gives us a reminder of the wider context so that we don't forget where Jesus is and what He's doing. This helps keep the whole travelogue connected.

While in recent weeks we've become accustomed to Luke identifying specific people, he now speaks in a more general tone. Verse 23 says, ***Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"*** Perhaps the person asking this question is starting to realise that the general assumption held at the time, that if you were born a Jew you would experience God's blessing, might not be the case. Perhaps the penny is starting to drop that Jesus'

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repetition that all are invited but that not everyone accepts the invitation is ushering in a new concept.

Luke then describes Jesus' response in a very Luke-ish way in Verses 23b & 24, **He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to."**

Jesus doesn't answer the original question, He redirects it. He's not interested in giving a theological headcount. He's interested in **them**. Jesus is essentially saying that they're asking the wrong questions, that speculating about others is like spiritual evasion. Jesus' answer makes the question personal ... *"Stop analysing the crowd and start analysing your heart."*

The narrow door isn't a reference to how hard it is to get in, it's a reference to how specific the way is. There's only one door. Not a door for religious people, not a door for nice people, not a door for people who grew up in church, and there's not a special VIP door for people who know the right worship songs and who look good on a Sunday. There's only one door. And His name is Jesus.

In an interesting choice of words, Luke uses the Greek word *agonizesthe* when talking about **'making every effort'**; this is the word we derive the English word *agony* from. It means to strain, to contend, to press in urgently. Its original meaning had an athletic flavour to it, an example His audience would recognise - like a wrestler having to make great effort.

This isn't Jesus saying you can earn your way in, it's Jesus saying: *'Don't coast. Don't assume. Don't think that just because you consider yourself a good person, you're going to make it into the kingdom of God.'* Jesus is saying that there is a specific way to enter, and they [we] need to be proactive in choosing the narrow door.

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The narrowness is about focus, not exclusion. It's not that God has made it difficult, it's that the way is Jesus himself, as Jesus says in John 14:6, ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***

Of course to an audience of Jewish Pharisees, teachers of the law, and predominantly Jewish people, this was a challenge to think about. To be fair to that audience, this wasn't a simple thing to dismiss. Their resistance was rooted in deep and serious conviction ... the Torah, the temple, the covenant, the promises to Abraham. They weren't wrong to take those things seriously. What Jesus was claiming was that He was the fulfilment of all of it, and that is a breathtaking ask of anyone formed by that Jewish tradition.

And here's the story from Verse 25, ***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.’ Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’***

As if the front end of this check-in isn't confronting enough, here's the kicker. Jesus gives a warning that He's been alluding to in so many of the stories we've been looking at recently: **Proximity isn't intimacy.** In making more allusions to His second coming that He started talking about a few weeks ago, Jesus paints a picture of people who will be shocked if they're locked out. They protest: ***“We ate and drank with you! You taught in our streets!”*** They're not lying. They were there. They heard the sermons. They were in the crowd when the bread and fish were handed out. They had proximity. But the owner of the house, the King, looks at them and says, ***“I don't know you.”***

That has to be one of the most sobering statements in all of Scripture. The owner of the house is not critiquing their success in life or their amazing LinkedIn profiles. He's not saying, *“You didn't try hard enough.”* He's not saying, *“You weren't good enough.”* He just says ... ***“I don't know you.”***

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In an age of social media, we can follow someone on Instagram for years. Over that time, we can know their voice, know their habits, and know their opinions. But if we walked past them on the street – they wouldn't have a clue who we are, because familiarity isn't relationship.

This is what Jesus is warning about. This isn't about fear tactics, it's about reality. Opportunity doesn't stay open forever.

And for those who don't want to enter into the rhythms of a personal relationship with the King by going through the narrow door, well, Jesus goes on in Verses 28-30, ***“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”***

These verses are again the coming together of common themes that we see throughout the other gospels; Jesus is overt about the width and scope of the kingdom of heaven – it's open to all - Jews and Gentiles, males, females, slaves or free, rich or poor (something Paul makes a big point of in Galatians 3:28). In fact Jesus blows His listeners out of the water when He says, ***“People will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.”*** This is Jesus quoting Isaiah and Psalm 107 — the great vision of a King whose table is set for people from everywhere. This isn't a small supper with a tight guest list. This is a feast. And the people at it will surprise you. The feast image is extraordinarily rich in Luke as it connects backwards to the banquet parables and forwards to the Last Supper, so while only given a few words, the significance of this image should not be overlooked.

The religious insiders assumed they were automatically on the list. The outcasts, the Gentiles, the people who didn't tick the boxes, they assumed they weren't. And yet as we're seeing time-and-time again in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus flips it: the last will be first, and the first will be last, not because God enjoys reversals for their own sake, but because the entry point — genuine relationship with the King, is radically available to everyone.

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The vision here is not exclusion, it's unexpected inclusion. The kingdom is not a club for people who've always been in. It's a feast for people who come through the narrow door, wherever they started from.

The question is never your background. The question is: have you entered?

In so many ways this whole passage is like a mid-point summary of everything that Jesus has been talking about up to this point. And in response to a question about numbers, He personalises it down to the one – do we know each other?

THE QUESTIONS TO AS OURSELVES

As we wrap this review up, there's a threefold invitation:

QUESTION 1: HAVE WE ACTUALLY ENTERED?

Do we recognise that the kingdom of God is before us – it was a big revolutionary question in a Jewish land at that time, and it still remains a big revolutionary question across the globe today. The question is not, “Have we been around Christianity?” The question is, “Have we personally, genuinely trusted Jesus — handed him our life, received His forgiveness, begun a relationship? If you haven't, today is a good day, because the door is still open.

QUESTION 2: ARE WE DRIFTING INTO FAMILIARITY?

For those of us who have done that at some point, we need to continually ask ourselves about the regular ongoing effort that we're making to maintain a live-giving and active relationship with Jesus, so that it doesn't quietly drift into familiarity without intimacy? Jesus invites ongoing, deepening relationship, not just a one-off transaction. Is our faith alive, or just, familiar?

QUESTION 3: ARE WE INVITING OTHERS TO THE FEAST?

The feast in the kingdom of God has empty seats. People from east, west, north, and south are coming. Some of them are sitting next to you right now, or are sitting next to you at work, or in your whānau, or in your neighbourhood. Many of us know the narrow door and we know what's

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on the other side. They might not. Because the feast is unmatched in its significance, Luke would be asking us about who we're inviting to enter through the narrow door.

CONCLUSION

Through all the passages we've been looking at over the last 5 chapters of Luke, Jesus is making one thing clear ... the kingdom of God is real. The feast is being prepared. The King is not distant or reluctant; He's walking toward Jerusalem right now, making it possible for you to come in.

The door is narrow. But it is open. And it opens right into the presence of the King.

Don't let anyone say Jesus wasn't clear. He told us exactly where the door is, exactly how to find it, and exactly what happens if we wander past it. This is not a complicated message, but according to Jesus it is an urgent one.

I started this message with a family tradition — going around the table, speaking into the life of the person we're celebrating. What makes that moment powerful is not just the words. It's being known. Really known. Known by the people who've watched me live, who've seen me at my best and your worst, who can say my name and mean something by it.

That's the picture Jesus is painting here. Not a courtroom. Not an exam. A table. A feast. A King who, when you walk through that narrow door, looks up and says, *"I know you. Come in."*

So let me ask you, honestly, not about the person next to you, not about your past, but about you: if you sat at the table with Jesus today ... would He say, *"I know you?"* Because one day, that won't be a hypothetical question. One day, every one of us will stand before Him. Not wondering if He's real. Not debating theology. Not comparing ourselves to others. Just one question: "Do we know each other?"

The door is narrow. But it is open. And it opens ... to Him.

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Reflecting on Sunday 12th April March 2026:

One week after hearing the reminder that Jesus is for all and that decisions about Him matter urgently, are you actually responding to Him in a way that shows repentance, trust, and visible fruit — or have you drifted into proximity without decisive obedience

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

- **The birthday table test.** If your closest friends and family went around the table and described how you're actually living your faith (not what you say about it), what do you think they'd say?
- **Proximity vs. intimacy.** In what ways can we be "near" Jesus — church, community, Christian culture — without actually *knowing* Him? Where do you see that temptation in your own life?
- **The drift question:** Grant asked whether our faith is "*alive or just familiar.*" What are the warning signs in your own life that you're drifting from relationship into routine?
- **The empty seats.** Who in your whānau, workplace, or neighbourhood needs an invitation to the feast — and what's one practical step you could take this week to extend it?

If you'd like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we're better together** and **no perfect people are allowed.**

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. If you're looking for something deeper to work through that sits alongside this series, we recommend ***The Gospel of Luke* by N.T. Wright (New Testament for Everyone series, SPCK/Westminster John Knox)**. In particular, Wright's accessible commentary places the narrow door passage within the big-picture story of Israel, the kingdom, and Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Written for a non-specialist audience, it's warm, narrative-driven, and culturally engaged.
<https://www.fishpond.co.nz/Books/Luke-for-Everyone-Enlarged-Print-Wright-N-T/9780664268831>
2. Click here for an article that reviews John Bunyan's work: **Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners** which is Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, written when he was serving a twelve-year prison sentence for preaching. This article links Luke 13:22-30 as a foundational passage for Bunyan's book.
<https://www.1517.org/articles/gospel-luke-1322-30-pentecost-11-series-c-2>
3. Here's a short devotion/reflection from the Lectio Divina community called, Strive to Enter Through the Narrow Door.
<https://lectiodivina.com.au/?p=27951>