

Matt Henry
Luke 13:22-30
21 Aug 2022

“Open Door Policy”

God’s grace and peace to you...

The whole point of an open door is for people to walk through it. It’s an invitation for people to offer suggestions and new ideas. In the workplace, the boss says, “My door is always open” and it means he or she is available and accessible—at least in theory. In a Dilbert cartoon, the pointy-haired boss says to his employee who has come to visit him, “Thanks for the suggestion, Asok. I’m going to ignore it because you’re not important to my career and I don’t like doing extra work.” Asok replies, “I’m confused. Why do you have an open door policy?” The boss replies, “How you can leave if the door isn’t open?”

Friends, God has an open door policy, and fortunately, it’s to get people in, not keep people out. In Luke 13, Jesus is asked another compelling question, “Will those who are saved be few?” Now Jesus answers but in more of an indirect way. He says many will try to enter and not be able so this teaching is not specifically directed at believers. Don’t be thinking, “Have I walked through, or do I walk through it when I die?” No, this door we have already walked through because we profess Christ as our Lord. Then who is this teaching aimed at? It’s for people who are marginally affiliated to Christ—they know of Him, but they

don't know Him. They've never made a commitment to follow Him or trust Him. They stay on the outside. They never enter in. They put it off. They maintain distance. For whatever reason, they just haven't taken that step of faith. Can you think of people in your life who might fall in that category? The open door is about them.

Let's talk about what we know about this door. There are some conditions and specifications to this door. We can't widen it. I wish we could. It'd be great if the door were not narrow. But the door is narrow. In the same manner, there's just one door. Everyone that is to be saved must go through the door. There's no other way.

At the memorial service yesterday for Marilyn Friedrichsmeyer, I learned how resourceful and creative Marilyn was in solving problems. She took an unorthodox approach. For example, there was a time when she was 11 years old or so and she wanted to ride her horse, Polly. She needed her mom's attention because the gate was locked. Mom was watching TV. So Marilyn, being a problem solver, went out to Polly the horse and bypassed the gate. Instead, she brought Polly the horse right through the door into the living room. Problem solved! Hey, there was just one door—and Polly and Marilyn walked right

through it. And you know what Mom said when she saw a horse coming through the living room. She said, “Don’t block the TV!” Must have been a good show.

There’s just one door. We can’t add more doors. That just goes against society that is pluralistic. But just as Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but through me,” it’s a very exclusive, limiting claim. Jesus sets the dimensions. Only one path leads to God. Only one door opens to Him. People may not like that. But I didn’t write the Word. I’m just telling you what the Word says. And get this, Jesus says one day the door will close.

We can’t prop the door open. And we can’t reopen the door once it shuts. That was one of the messages I heard as we were in the airport as they were encouraging all passengers to be on board, final boarding announcement. They said, once the door closes, it will not reopen. The message was clear—get to and through the door—now! It’s not enough to be at the door.

One Sunday after I preached on a text about a door, Angie Bokenkamp came up to me afterward and she said I have the perfect song for me. And at the time, I wished I had known about it, like Monday morning quarterback, all the good stories and illustrations come after the fact. But it stuck with me and lo and behold, three years later, here it is. Angie’s song. “One door and only one and

yet its sides are two. I'm on the inside, which side are you?" It's a children's song, but it's profound. There will be people on the outside.

Verse 25, "When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside, and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I don't know where you come from.'"

Knock, knock. (Who's there?) The Lord. (The Lord who?) Exactly!

When people don't know the Lord, the Lord doesn't know them. Now why doesn't the Lord know these people. Shouldn't He? The people seem to think so.

Verse 26, "We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets."

That sounds pretty close. But notice what it omits? Faith! Actual belief! What good is it if they got to the door and just kinda hung out there? That's a fire hazard when people block entrances, right?

A few months ago, we went to Sid's Garage at the Village and there's always a line there. We were waiting outside and finally we got close to the door. But the owner/manager had to come out several times and tell us not to crowd the door. The fire marshall would be upset. The best thing to not crowd the door is to just walk through it yourself, right?

Once the door is shut, the Lord will say to these people a stern and difficult message. He will impose a fire code of another kind. "I tell you, I do not know

were you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves cast out."

That was a surprise to religious insiders who identified and claimed A, I and J as their own. Why not them too? Because they didn't believe. This is the theme of reversal, one of those kingdom surprises. Some who are last will be first, some who are first will be last.

But the other surprise is from whence people come. On one hand, the Lord says, "I don't know where you come from"but on the other hand, we have people coming from east and west, north and south. What does that mean? It means it doesn't matter where you come from. The kingdom is available to all people in every place and situation in life. Because of the one cross of Christ, people from all directions of a compass, are able to enter.

So we see that the narrow door is wide open! And now is the time for people to join us on the other side. To walk through that door. It's not anything to put off, because now is the day of salvation. Kinda like last week when Quinn and Jamie, said, "Hey, we need to be baptized." OK, well, now is the day of salvation. What are you going to do with that? We'll teach, because that's

appropriate. But since when does an open door require jumping through hoops? You just have to know where to go...for us, that means showing up at the font, showing up at the table because that's where Jesus is.

I mentioned planes, now let me discuss Italian trains...in Italy, you never know when the door is going to close. Sometimes they blow a whistle, yes, but other times, it just closes. They leave when they want to. So sometimes we ran to trains just to get on. One of the more stressful moments in the trip was being at the train station and looking at the board of departures. They assign a track, a platform, so you know where to go. The trains move up, and whatever is at the top is first to go. And when departure is imminent, it starts to flash. Well, our train was listed, but there was not track assigned. And it moved up and up, still no assignment and a whole crowd of us was waiting. We didn't know where to go! Then it started to flash and only then, finally, did it give us the track number—five! So we ran in a mob to get on that train. And we made it—but it would have been a lot less stressful to get on like normal. So it is spiritually with this door. Don't put it off because while we made the train, I'm sure there were some who did not. We don't want people to miss this train.

Paul quotes Isaiah when he says, “Now is the day of salvation” Isa 49:8/2 Cor 6:2. It’s right there, right now for people. No more putting it off. And don’t make it any harder for people.

At one church, I knew an usher who had a habit of only unlocking one door. But there were four doors that led to the outside and they all looked the same. There was no way anyone could know which one was open and which one was locked. No signage. So I suggested we unlock all four doors, especially for first-time guests to feel welcome. Plus, no one likes being locked out; it says “not welcome”. And he responded, “They should know which door is unlocked.”

It's that kind “we know better” attitude that the people had on the inside and it didn’t go well for them. Friends, let’s make sure the door is as open as possible. Let’s be open door people—open with our faith, open relationally to others.

When we walk through that door, what’s on the other side? A meal. We will recline at the Lord’s table in the kingdom. And another surprise is that the Master will serve us, his guest. That’s a complete reversal too, but that’s what’s in store. That’s why we have the Lord’s Supper as the foretaste of the feast to come. Let’s make sure as many people as possible people get in on that. God has

an open door policy. Whoever you are, wherever you have come from, we get to say, “Don’t let the door hit you on your way in!”

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Head (what?)

How does one enter through the narrow door?

Who and what are the main characters in this parable:

The narrow door?

Master of the house?

People standing outside, knocking?

People on the inside?

What excuse do people on the outside give?

Heart (so what?)

Do you have any doubt about which side of the door you are on?

Why wait, especially when we don’t know how much time we have?

What will the feast in the kingdom of God be like?

Hands (now what?)

Where is God leading you to live out your faith in your home, work, and community?

How does discipling others help them enter through the narrow door?

Whom do you know that is close to the door, but not actually through it? What do they need?