

Truth Known Too Late, Part 2

Luke 13:25-30

Jesus wants these folks to imagine themselves in a place they really don't want to be. Starting in verse 28, "In that place," what place? That takes us back to verse 25. That place is standing outside the door. So, "In that place," standing outside the door, shut out, "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." We tend to think that phrase, weeping and gnashing of teeth, is one concept, as referring only to sorrow or sadness or, or a deep sense of remorse and regret, it is that, it's definitely that, but it's a little bit more than that, because of that phrase, gnashing of teeth.

That imagery gnashing of teeth was taken from the Old Testament, and in the Old Testament, without exception, to gnash one's teeth is always an expression of rage: Deep, bitter, inconsolable, unpassifiable anger. William Henrickson writes, he says, "The weeping is that of inconsolable, never ending, wretchedness, and utter everlasting hopelessness, but the

accompanying grinding or gnashing of teeth is that of frenzied anger, unmitigated rage."

So, this is a picture of the place of judgment, which we know is going to finally culminated in, in the lake of fire, in eternal hell. But even at the point of death, people enter into judgment, and they enter into this condition of remorse, and anger, rage. Adding to the suffering of hell, any external suffering of pain, is this internal torment, as the soul of the damned fluctuates between feelings of remorse and feelings of rage. That's the internal thought life. That's what it feels like on the inside, being regretful and angry all the time. They're filled with sorrow and regret, but also a bitter, seething, out breaking, anger, and they will never get over the fact, that God has subverted all of their expectations.

They're remorseful as the truth hits their conscience, and they're raging because they're sinfully angry about it. Several reasons for this vacillation, oscillating between remorse and rage. I'm gonna give you several of them here, number one, first, there's a remorse and a rage in the sin of spiritual presumption. Spiritual presumption. Look at it there, Jesus said

"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but you yourselves cast out."

Being expelled from the company of the patriarchs. That was the very ground of their identity as Jews. Being denied this reunion with the fathers, along with the progeny of their ethnic and national heritage, this is the ground of their identity. This is their spiritual privilege, but they took that privilege and turned it into presumption. They thought, we're good. And so it is a mark of divine justice, executed against them by God, for the sin of spiritual presumption, that what they expected, God has removed.

They treated the responsibility to follow in Abraham's faith as unnecessary for themselves. They treated the need to imitate Abraham's obedience as unimportant. They chose to rely on their physical connection to the patriarchs, their association with an ethnic or national identity, instead of what those patriarchs lived for. What they demonstrated in their lives of faith. So, to ignore their testimony while trading on their ethnic identity, this is the height of spiritual presumption. They are getting what they deserve. And that's a

first reason for the judgment, first reason for remorse and rage.

Second reason for remorse and rage, there's secondly, remorse and rage in the sin of self-righteous presumption. Spiritual presumption, then self-righteous presumption. Jesus said, there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see all the prophets in the kingdom, but you yourselves cast out. Being expelled from the company of the prophets shouldn't surprise them, but it does. After all, they're the ones who honor the prophets, building their tombs, right? Making them, making all those tombs pretty, magnificent, glorious. Think of that.

They're the ones who pour over prophetic writings, all the rabbi's studying very hard, come to teach them every Sabbath day, during the week as well. Paying attention to all the details of Scripture. Doesn't that earn them some right, some merit? Regarding honoring the prophets, Jesus said in Luke 11:47-48, "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your father's killed. So you are witnesses that you, and that you consent to the deeds of the fathers, for they killed

them, and you build their tombs." They're self-righteously presumptuous. Not obeying the words of the prophets, but honoring them superficially, externally, thinking they can honor the prophets that they killed, thinking they can honor the prophets by their works, while their obedience tells that they don't listen to a word the prophets are saying.

So, remorse and rage in their spiritual presumption, number one. Self-righteous presumption, number two. Third, there's a remorse and rage in the sin of ethnic presumption. Jesus said, there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see that people are going to come from the east, and the west, and from the north, and the south, and they're reclined at the table in the kingdom of God, but again, they themselves being cast out. The Jews, they, they could not abide this.

For an ethnically presumptuous people. The Jews often picture the kingdom of God as enjoying a lavish banquet in the company of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, according to Isaiah 25:6, Isaiah said, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, a rich food full of morrow, of aged

wine well refined." Problem is, they thought only they would be at that table. Just Jews. This is a Jewish banquet. Fully kosher, no ham, Jewish expectations. They're set on an ethnic exclusion, that is, excluding all Gentile nations from sitting down at their table.

This is the predominant view, that they had no biblical warrant for it, this is the predominant view in first century Judaism. In fact, there are some rabbinical writings picturing Gentiles looking on from a place of torment, up to see in shame, at the sight of the Jews who revel in their feasting. Rabbinical writings trying to encourage the Jews in their ethnic presumption to despise Gentiles and see them as dogs suffering on the outside, while they themselves glory in feasting.

And Jesus comes into that rabbinic tradition and subverts it completely, turns it on its head. He's not being novel here, though. He's just appealing to what Scripture has taught, things that they have overlooked and ignored. Let me just wake you up a little bit with a bit of exercise. Go back to Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 43, we'll start there. Number of passages in succession

here in Isaiah, and a number of passages in other places as well.

But we have time for a few out of Isaiah. Show you a few passages that show God's clear promise about Gentile inclusion in the kingdom. And again, how did the Jews miss this? Isaiah 43, starting in verse 3, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior, I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Siba in exchange for you," Isaiah 43:4, "Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I'm with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the end of the earth," and that's where they stop.

They think sons, daughters, these are Jews. Jewish sons and daughters. We're talking about them being cast and dispersed all over the earth. Here God's gonna gather back the Jews. Great. Let's move on. Oh, but keep reading, "Everyone," verse 7, "Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory,

whom I formed and made." That's broader. They don't see that, and maybe in context, they would have ignored that broadness.

But they shouldn't if they keep reading Isaiah. Look at chapter 45, verses 5 and 6, "I am the Lord," Isaiah 45:5, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know." Now I equip you, Jews, that you may know, though you do not know me, you Jews, giving you covenants and promises, giving you Scriptures, giving you a history, though you do not know me, why? Verse 6, "So the people may know." People, that's broad. "From the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside me; I am the Lord, and there is no other." The Jews were pulled out from the nations that God might invest himself into them and reveal himself to them. Why? So they can be a cul-de-sac, holding all the blessings to themselves, so they can silo everything, and hold on to it forever? No. So they could be a conduit of God's truth, a light to the Gentiles.

That's what he's saying there. Let's keep reading, Isaiah 49, Isaiah 49:11 and 12, "I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come

from afar, and behold, these shall, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." Isaiah 59 verse 19, "So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the Lord drives." What does that anticipate? The Great Commission, that anticipates us, beloved, you and me, our work.

Go back to Luke 13, and let's just ponder this for a moment. He's previewing the fulfillment of all these passages, Jesus is, as the Jews are standing outside the door, and they're seeing the inclusion of the Gentiles. God's inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation, in the same spiritual privileges, the nation of Israel. This is evidence of the impartiality of God's grace, that he saves whomever he will.

This is them reflecting outside the kingdom, their reflecting on God's grace, that it's broad, that has a universal intent and universal reach. You know what, for them, it becomes a source of eternal remorse and eternal rage. Remorseful as their consciences tell them yeah, you ignored all that. Raging as they, they look at that, and they say, how dare God overlook

me. They despise the grace of God. That's what presumption does to you.

There's a fourth reason for remorse and rage. It's in the sin of human presumption. Jesus said, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth because it'll dawn on them in the end that, verse 30, "Behold, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last." Proverbial statement, summarizing everything. He's, what's happened in the previous two verses, behold, there are some who are last who will be first.

The Gentiles, those who were, Ephesians 2:12 says, "Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, without God in the world." And yet, because they heeded Jesus' warning, because they obeyed his command, they picked up the Bible written to the, to the Jews, and they said, huh, there's some promises for me too. They start striving to enter through the narrow door when it was open, and they turned out to be first, ahead of the nation of promise.

On the other hand, some were first who will be last, there are these Jews. As Paul said, in Romans 9:4 they have a priority among the nations, they do. They're Israelites, to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, the promises, and all the rest. And yet, because they did not heed Jesus' warning, because they didn't obey him as their Messiah, but crucified him instead, because they did not strive to enter through the narrow door when it was open to them, and the Messiah looks them in the eye and invites them in. So they turn out to be last, they lose, they fail to enter at all.

Listen, sinners hate this turn of events. They hate it when their expectations are disappointed. They hate it when, what they presumed to be true is subverted on them. They despise that. God's grace does exactly that. It subverts human expectation, human pride, human presumption. God comes in and he loves to upend, to subvert those who are proud, and in particular, the spiritually proud, the religiously proud. Again, folks, I say, think carefully about yourselves. There may not be too many today who are prone to rely on ethnic heritage. What about other ways you may be guilty of sinful presumption,

spiritual presumption, self-righteous presumption. These sins are so subtle, that they can insinuate themselves into our lives, in our thinking with, hardly with any notice.

If we're not constantly examining ourselves and fighting daily against pride, against self-righteousness, and self-interest. You take pride in your knowledge, your theology. Do you come and listen to sermons with a critical censorious spirit, trying to figure out all the things that the preacher got wrong that doesn't align to true theology? Or do you listen in humble gratitude, seeking what the Lord would want you to hear, and listen to, and obey with earnestness? Are you casual in your thoughts about Christ in his Church? Do you elevate your family, and your personal goals, and ambitions over Christ's will for building his church? Do you love son or daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, more than him?

Do you think like a Pharisee and live like an antinomian? Because that, after all, has become the American Evangelical way. Well, if Jesus, if what Jesus says here fails to awaken the fear of God in you, then pray and ask the Lord God to have mercy. Because you're not without hope while you have breath.

There's still time to repent at this moment, and believe, and strive. For those of us with faith, I know if you're anything like me, Jesus' word send shivers down your spine as you imagine yourself being locked out.

And yet, even as we tremble, we immediately fly, as all Christians do, to the refuge of the cross, to apply the balm of the Gospel, where all fears and uncertainties are washed away, in the objective truth of what Christ accomplished on the cross. Of what God accomplished in Christ, and secured when he raised him from the dead, and elevated him to sit at his right hand. We rejoice in God's justifying grace. It doesn't have anything to do with our own feelings.

May the Lord comfort us in the gospel, amen. As we close, I'd like to speak with you who might be stirred from spiritual slumber. Any of you who may be starting to sense the fear of God that's awakening in your heart, and we'll call this point three, I just want to encourage you to, number three, seek hope through the narrow entrance. Seek hope through the narrow entrance.

I'll just give you a list of reasons, you can have hope. First, since Christ has commanded us strive to enter through the narrow door, that means the door is still open. I'm still reading this, it's still true. The door is open. See, this as an invitation and you, being invited by a king no less, therefore waste no time, run to the open door. Number two, since Christ prophesies of a judgment and it's still future to us, many will seek to enter and will not be able, that means the opportunity to strive is still before you. So strive.

Look at the contrasted language in verse 24, between the command and the warning, the command is, strive to enter, it's in the present tense, it pertains to present time, now. Those who obey the command in present time, now, they're not in danger of being shut out of the kingdom, isn't that good news. By contrast, the warning is in the future tense, many I tell you will seek to enter, that's future. Will not be able to, that's future. So the warning pertains to future time, those who refuse to strive now will in the future seek to enter, but too late. So Jesus' prophecy of judgment, it hasn't happened yet. Therefore, take the opportunity to strive now.

Number three, it's a word of encouragement, find hope in that narrow open door. Even though, number three, Christ has previewed what is going to happen for those who refuse to strive, a future of vacillating between remorse and rage. He has planted a kernel of hope in the beloved grammar, follow the grammar here. And I have to unpack it for you, and I rejoice to do this, even if you, at the end, will lament.

Verse 28, "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," future tense verb, you can see the, will, there, right? So you know, that's future, it's in the indicative mood. Greek verbs have something called mood. It's telling us about the relative certainty of something, the mood, the Greek mood is. So Jesus uses the indicative mood that presents what he's saying as settled fact. In that place, excluded from the fellowship of the banquet, outside the kingdom, it's an established fact, weeping and gnashing of teeth will ensue. That's going to happen. He changes from that certainty of what will happen then, to the subjunctive mood, which introduces some uncertainty.

He says, when you see Abraham and the others in the kingdom, but you yourselves cast out, that verb translated, when you see, that's not the indicative. When you certainly see, that is, you all are there and you're seeing it. Instead, he says, with a subjunctive mood, instead of when you see, which seems to indicate certainties; he says, like you indeed will see but you're cast out. The actual idea is, should you see, perchance you might see, you may see. There's a sense of uncertainty that they might be the ones seeing, in that place, weeping and gnashing of teeth will ensue, done deal, indicative mood; it's happening, that's certain, and you might be there to see it.

Communicates potentiality about the outcome. It allows some uncertainty about the future, on a spectrum, ranging between what's possible in the future, and what's probable in the future, subjunctive mood leans toward probability, because he's speaking in plural terms here to this whole crowd, and he knows in probability, many of them will be seeing that site. But there are some who won't. So when he moves through the grammar like this, he conveys uncertainty about the future, and a sense of subject, a subjunctive mood, conveying a probability about

the future. He knows that some will repent. You know, if some will repent, latch onto that. That's hope.

What about me? Why not me? The door's still open. Opportunity to strive is still before you. Hope is clear, in the command itself, it's clear in the warning, it's clear even in the grammar, and the details of the grammar that is lost to our English eyes.

Fourth, notice in verse 29, the table, it will be full, that ought to give you hope, as well. The love, and goodness, and kindness of God is on full display, by inviting any guests in the first place into his kingdom, but also by the impartiality that's on display when he invites them from the four corners of the earth. Every ethnicity included, every language included, every tribe, tongue, and people.

This is hope. This universal concern of God, this impartiality, a magnanimous generosity, reveals this master of the house, he's an extremely gracious host. So it's when we hear that, we bank on his nature, that he is good, and he is

generous, and he is kind, and he's impartial, and he is hospitable, and he is inviting. We bank on that. And we believe in it, and we wholly trust in it, and we act out on it in faith. So since many will dine at his table, why not you?

Fifth, and finally, notice how much room there is for those who strive to enter, verse 30. That is how much hope there is in the fact that Jesus says some will enter. Yeah, some Gentiles whom the Jews perceived to be last, will be first. Good news of hope for the Gentiles. Vice versa, some Jews also, whom the Jews perceived to be first, they will be last. They won't make it through the narrow door. But Jesus said some, not all.

So whether you're a Jew, whether you're a Gentile, whatever you are, there is hope for you. Go back to the question asked by that unnamed questioner, verse 23. "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" Did Jesus ever answer that? He did. He ultimately answered the question, not in the way the guy expected, but he ultimately answered. What's the answer? Many will seek to enter but too late, and they will not be able to enter. That's one part of the answer. But verse 29, as we said, promises there are going to be many, many, many people who hear

the invitation. People coming from east, west, north, south, that narrow door is a shining beacon of hope.

The narrowness of it doesn't, doesn't drive them away, it compels them to strive even more. They're striving to enter, they rejoice in the privilege they've discovered that there is a door, that Jesus has invited, that God has, has amazing grace. Beloved, what about you, now is the time to strive to enter. Now is the time to embrace a life of striving against all sin, against self-centeredness, against blinding pride, and all worldliness.

Now is the time to obey his voice, come to him, because you've been invited by a king. He says in another place, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden." Who are those? Those who have awakened to the heavy burden of their sin, selfishness, and worldliness, and defilement with a, with a troubled conscience. Is that you? Do you labor? Are you heavy laden under a guilty conscience? Jesus says, "Come to me and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart. You'll find rest for your souls, for my yoke

is easy and my burden is light." That's how Jesus describes striving.

It's wearing his easy yoke, its shouldering his light burden. It's the rest he's promised to us, and you enter into it right now, while we're in this life, while we strive against sin, and all that holds us back, it is struggling, but it will one day be consummated in the fullness of rest, where there's no more striving, no more straining, no more struggling. But nothing but joy evermore.

Let's pray. Father, we long for a time that is not yet. But we rest in the knowledge that you are the sovereign God and you know what's best. You're all wise, your providence rules over all things, and by your decree, you will sovereignly bring everything to its predetermined end. We trust you wholly.

We love you so much. We thank you for this great salvation you have revealed to us in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. May you awaken many to faith, may you stir many out of slumber into striving, and may you encourage all those who are striving.

PILLAR OF
—TRUTH— 

We thank you for that open door, though narrow. It is you, Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except through you, the open door. It's in your name that we pray, amen.