

A Spacious Place

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Preacher: Chic Lidstone

[0 : 0 0] Thank you again for your warm welcome, Isabel and I, I really enjoy our time on Lewis and Harris. We went down to Tarbet on Tuesday night, loving the island, but it's people who make the island, isn't it? And loving the people that we're meeting.

I talked about the sugar a while ago in a church in a Drossan. And we dropped one of the bags of sugar and it went all over the floor. So somebody said, oops, there goes a small African nation. Maybe we could have the first slide up please. Thank you.

Welcome. All right, thank you all this morning. We read from 1 John 14 verses 1 to 11. And this morning I want to do kind of an overview of the last verses of John chapter 13 through to John chapter 14. Now I know you're going through John at the moment on Sunday mornings.

So this might be part of your series. It starts on the next slide please. And at verse 30 of chapter 13, Jesus was going to betray, Judas was going to betray Jesus. And it says he went out and it was night. It was darkness. Then we read chapter 13, the end of chapter 13 and 14. And Jesus says at the very end of chapter 14, come now, let us leave one translation I think the ASV puts it arise, let us go from here. And then the way I kind of felt between those two verses and it was night. And Jesus saying arise, let us go from here. There's a story in Jesus unpacks the place where we start from as Christians. This is where we go from. It was night. Everything closed in. Couldn't see what they were doing.

And then the Lord speaks and brings comfort. And he says this is where we start from. So it was night. And then Jesus says in verse 31 of chapter 13, when he was gone, when Judas had gone, Jesus says now is the son of man glorified. And God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the son in himself and will glorify him at once. Then he says, I won't be with you any longer. Then he says a new command I give you to love one another. And Peter in verse 37 says, no Lord, that's not going to be, I'll lay down my life for you. This is not going to happen. And I can imagine Jesus smiling.

[3 : 4 6] No, Peter, you're not going to lay down your life for me. I'm going to lay down my life for you. You've got it wrong. 180 degrees. Glory. Jesus talks about glory, about the son of man being glorified, about God being glorified. And God will glorify the son in himself and will glorify him at once. Glory, glory, glory. What is this glory? In John 17, Jesus talks about glorifying the Father and the Father glorifying him. What is this glory?

This glory is a revelation of who God is. Glory is when all the wraps are taken off and we see God for who he is. God comes in glory and we think that's all the kind of shiny power. But the glory of God also is his sacrifice and his willingness to give himself for you and me. Philippians 2, that wonderful hymn, how Jesus emptied himself of everything so that he can be lifted high. His glory is who he is and his glory is that he would give himself, that the Son of God would give himself for you and me. That's glorious in a way which we don't really fully grasp. But Peter completely misses it. Completely just, but just doesn't realize what Jesus is saying. His brain can't compute it. And he's saying, no, no, that can't be. Surely that can't be. I'll lay down my life for you, Lord, rather than you dying, rather than you going away. And Jesus says, no, Peter, you've got it completely wrong. Then that passage we read, verses one to 11, where Jesus says, in my house there are many rooms, the Father's house are in many rooms. Of course, we've stuck in chapter and verses. Chapters are a relatively new addition to the Bible and verses even more so. So in the context of Peter completely missing it, completely getting it wrong, misunderstanding

Jesus as he did in other places, Jesus says, it's okay, Peter, my Father's house is a large house. My Father's house is a gracious and it's a spacious place. Peter projected onto Jesus, who Peter was, Peter projected onto God, what his understanding was, if we go to the next slide, please. Peter thought, this is who Jesus has to be like, because this is what I'm like. There was a guy 1855 to 1916 called Percival Low. He was an astronomer.

I think some of us have heard about Low's telescope. It's a famous telescope. Well, Low was a man, he studied Mars through his telescope. And he saw canals on Mars. And he thought, oh, there must be life on Mars because there are canals taking water from the polar caps down to the middle and fertilizing Mars. And that's kind of where the original idea about life on Mars came from, because there are canals on Mars. Therefore, there must be life on Mars. Therefore, there must be intelligent beings on Mars. Later on, when telescopes develop better and optics and glass was made better, they realized that actually Percival Low was talking a lot of rubbish. There were not canals on Mars. In fact, some people even went on to suggest you can see the picture of his mappings of Mars on that circle to the left. And then to the right, you can see the mapping of the back of the eye. Percival Low was projecting his own eye onto what he saw in Mars. Oh, dear. We now know better because we have sent a rover to Mars. We're sending signals back from Mars.

Now we know what Mars looks like. Peter was projecting onto God what he thought God should look like. Now we have one praise the Lord Jesus who has come and says, No, this is what God is like. But don't we project our brokenness. We project our frailties. We project what we think God should look like unto God. As somebody once says God made us in his image and we have returned the compliment. So we project onto God a brokenness our misunderstanding. We project God onto God our sinfulness the way we handle the way we deal with people the way we think it should be. And that's what kind of Peter was trying to do. And Jesus came to say, No, no, no, no, no, it's quite different. In fact, it's almost 180 degrees different. Stop projecting onto God what you think God should look like and start listening to what God has revealed himself that he is actually like. That's an accurate picture. But it was dark. Judas had gone out. It was night. Cataclysmic events were about to happen. World shaking events were going to happen. The Son of God himself was going to die. Can't get darker than that. So I don't think we should be too hard on them.

[10:04] But then the next slide, please. We go across to a new chapter, as I said, chapters came into being round about 1220 AD versus round about the 16th century. So Jesus goes on to say in the context of Peter's misunderstanding, it's okay, Peter, my house, my father's house is big enough. It's gracious. And it's spacious. Jesus says, Peter, it's going to be okay.

And it was in the end. My father's house is a gracious and a spacious place. It's a welcoming place. You can go to a large house, can't you? But it can be awfully cold. They can have the central heating on, but it can be awfully cold. Have you ever watched Keeping Up Appearances and Mrs. Bouquet and how her neighbor comes in? It's all very nice and all very laudidar.

But she's so unwelcoming that her neighbor always spills a cup of tea or something because she's so nervous because she's just so unwelcome and feels so awkward. That's not what the father's house is like. The father's house is a welcoming place, a loving place, a gracious place. God revealed himself way, way, way back. Way back when he first appeared himself to Abraham. Read it sometime. Genesis 15, when God makes a covenant with Abraham. It's a very strange chapter, but a covenant and God's saying to Abraham, get some animals and cut them in two. And I'll make a covenant with you. In the Old Testament, they used to make a covenant. Kind of a contract, but it's more than a contract. And they said, we're going to agree something together, right? You take some animals and cut them in two, then we'll walk together through the broken animals. And the idea is if I break the contract, then see those animals. That's what will happen to me. Or if you break that contract, see those animals. That's what's going to happen to you. So Abraham, Julie, cut the animals and put them to the side. Then he fell into a deep sleep. And there's a smoking pot went between the pieces. A theophany, they call it. And God was saying to Abraham,

Abraham, I'm going to make a covenant with you and your people for all generations. And if you or I break this covenant, I'll take the hit. Abraham didn't go through the smoking pot. God went through between the pieces. God says, if you break the covenant, I'll carry the consequences. That's the loving father we see being revealed in John 14. Peter, you have got it so wrong, boy. But it's okay. I'll carry the consequences. What God is like that.

I know of no other God. I know no other God. Thank you very much. But I was asked the other day, you know, why are, why are, why don't we follow Allah? Well, why is different gods?

[13 : 42] Because they don't even come close. They're made in the image of man. They're the projection of our brokenness. Whatever they are. God is a revelation of this loving, gracious God.

No other God is like that. He says, you break my covenant. I'll take the consequences. The father's house is a gracious and a spacious place. You don't have to spend your life fearful of God. You got to get yourself right with God. I'll talk about that in a minute. But you don't have to spend your life cowering in the presence of an angry God. Because God is a gracious, loving father. Okay, if you don't accept his love and grace, there are consequences. If you don't accept the covenant relationship, which he has given to you, given for you. Jesus says, look at me. This is what the father's like. Look at me. So they say, show us next slide. Where are you going? Well, no, hang on a minute. I think I've run on a bit. Thank you. Pardon. Let's miss that bit out. The father's house is a gracious and a spacious place. We talk about downsizing. You've had your family, the house is too big, you're rattling around in it. So you downsize. God is not downsizing his house. God does not do downsizing. His house was large enough for \$3 billion 60 years ago. Now it's more than large enough for \$8 billion or whatever it will be. The father does not downsize.

And what a tragedy for the father's house to have room for everyone and for those rooms not to be filled. What a tragedy for 3 billion people in the world. Not even to know that the father is a loving heavenly father. What a tragedy that they have no way of knowing the name of Jesus. What a tragedy that they have no access to a church, a vibrant community of Jesus followers. And this is part of what OM is about. Along with many other organizations, we are passionate for what we call the least reached, those people who have no way of hearing about Jesus. And so OM, there's a map everywhere it's read OM have got people. You've got 4,500 people across the world at the moment, reaching the least reached, reaching people who have no way of hearing about Jesus. Reaching people for the father to say the father loves you.

The father cares for you. Jesus has given his life for you. He loves you. It's almost a basic human right. We hear about human rights these days, don't we? I think one of the most basic human rights or the fundamental human right is to know that God loves you. And that Jesus gave his life for you. If that's not a human right, I don't know what is. And so many people are denied this right to know that Jesus loves you. And it's our responsibility to tell them. I was a lot of talk about rights these days. Or it's my right that you do this and it's my right. What about responsibilities? We carry responsibilities. And it's our responsibility that people should know that God loves them. So OM, amongst with many other organizations, you've got 4,500 people across the world somewhere in the least reached places. But you know what? God is speaking in incredible ways at the moment. In Nepal, in 1970, there were hardly any Christians. Now they're nearly one million. I met some Afghani believers some month ago. And you know what? There's a church in Afghanistan. There are believers in Afghanistan.

And there are now 50 churches of Afghan believers, not in Afghanistan meeting, but around the world. I know a couple who are Somali. Somali, Somalis are a Muslim nation, 100% Muslim nation. But they're not. Somali couple did a podcast on why Jesus is the way, the truth in the life about four months ago. Population Somalia, there are 25 million Somalis in the world. This podcast has been viewed 1.5 million times. And Somalis don't watch things on their own. They watch as families or groups. So this 100% Muslim nation or 25 million people, 1.5 million have heard that Jesus loves them. Wow. Wow. God is moving in our world. It's astounding. And I could go on and on and on. Time doesn't allow. Have a look at the book table. There's some magazines to take. And if you want to find out more, then sign up please and help yourself to the book. The books are free. That's what OM does. We give away books. We have the next slide please. The largest floating book fair in the world.

[19:50] This is the Logos. It's just completed the tour of North Africa and the Middle East. Gone to Libya, Bahrain, Djibouti, all the way from along the North African coast. Middle East Arab nations. And down in Madagascar, the bottom of Madagascar. Hundreds. And I mean hundreds. That's not an exaggeration. That's dialing it down. Hundreds of thousands of people who would never hear about Jesus have been on that ship in the last six months.

Hundreds of thousands. And met Christians. And got books, educational books, but also Christian books. That boat is doing an incredible job. Millions upon millions have been on that ship over the last many, many years. I mean now got another ship, a Wee ship, which is in Thailand at the moment and is going to sail up the Mekong Delta. So folks up the Mekong Delta in Thailand, in Vietnam, and Laos and Cambodia, the least-reached parts of the world can hear about Jesus. Can we have the next slide please? I think it's a video. I think we've got a video now between... This is just a quick overview. This is a commercial break. Then we'll get back.

Over three billion people have never heard about Christ's love for them. Never. And their number grows by around 60,000 per day. Almost 22 million a year. That's the population of Singapore, London and New York combined. These are families, communities, entire groups of people who are living without the knowledge of why they were made and how much they are loved by God. And many of them have no choice in the matter. There's no church, no Bible, no Jesus follower among them. As followers of Jesus, it's up to us to share God's hope and love. Since 1957, OM has been on a mission to introduce Jesus to those who don't know Him. And that legacy lives on today. We are a movement of workers from more than 120 nationalities, all of us driven to share God's love with those who don't know Him. When people put their hope in Jesus, His love can spread like wildfire. And when that happens, lives are transformed, vibrant Christ-centered communities are born and generations are changed forever.

Our vision is personal and our reach is global. We equip and connect believers to take part in God's mission in every place, sharing His love with every person. As a mix of traditional missionaries, marketplace professionals, artists, pastors, teachers and more, we use our God-given skills, passions and gifts to do the work that every Jesus follower is called to. We wake up each day with the confidence that the God of the universe is with us. This emboldens us, empowers us and keeps us moving forward. There is no place too far, no task too difficult and no individual we will not try to reach. Because there are three billion reasons we cannot stop. Why we will not stop. The need is great, but our God is greater and He's called all of us to do this great work together. How will you be a part of His life-changing movement?

So we overview about what OM is doing, but more importantly why we are doing it. We go because the Father's house needs to be filled. I said that the Father's house is a gracious and a spacious place, which it is. But we have got to be careful because the door is narrow. Jesus says the way is narrow, but yet it's a spacious place. How do we equate these two together? Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me. We read that. The door is narrow, it's only Jesus and faith in Him.

[24 : 53] It's only through Jesus do we find our way into the Father's house. It's only through Jesus do we find salvation. It's only through Jesus do we find forgiveness and sin. It's only through Jesus do we find an accurate revelation of who God is. And there is only one way and that is repentance. There is only one way to say sorry Lord I got it wrong, forgive me. It's a very narrow door because it's only one door and one way. But when you go through that door the Father's house is a spacious place, a gracious place, a forgiving place, a wonderful place. And Jesus at the end of chapter 14 says arise. Let's go from here. What is it saying arise to? What has He said up to now? He said grace is available for all. Grace for you. He said that Jesus, He is the only way. He says my spirit I will give you. He will be with you. He will be in you and He will teach you. And you will have life with a capital L. You will have life to the full life which you can never imagine.

That certainly is my testimony. And many Christians testimony we've come to the Lord and we've had a life which is beyond our wild imaginations and the peace which passes understanding and a victory. Jesus says the devil has no hold on me. One John 5.4. Let's just look at this.

One John 5.4. You who believes in me has overcome the world. So Jesus is saying come to me and find me and know my grace. Know that I am the way. Know that I am with you. Come to me and live. Come to me and have peace. And come to me and live a victorious life because you have overcome the world because He has overcome the world. And that is the place where we start. And we begin to live our Christian life from this place of Jesus being the way, the truth and the life. And so we live into that and lean into that. And show a mission as part of that because the news is so good that we need to tell others. Now that doesn't mean you going to the ends of the world necessarily. The Lord might call you there. My daughter, she wanted to go to Bhutan and she's ended up in Central Asia and she's been there for 18 years. My brother's been abroad for 50 years. If you want to read the story about him, there's a book there called Touch of the Master. He was imprisoned in Turkey and the story is about his release from prison and how he was being released and how during his release he led a murderer to the Lord while he was in prison in Turkey. Fascinating story. Or it could be the Lord just calling you to be an outward looking person. I love to say to you if you're in the co-op and storn away and you're looking at the cauliflower and across the aisle there's somebody at the carrots and you just know you need to go and talk to them in the name of Jesus. Extend his grace to them. Build that friendship so you can tell them about the Lord. That's mission as well. Or maybe you want to give. Maybe you want to go. Maybe the Lord's calling you to pray. It's all about looking outwards and looking beyond because the Father's house is a gracious place and it needs to be filled.