

## Four

Strong walls that stand do not a castle make  
Nor moat that lies, surrounding from outside  
As none can live where all are kept away  
**For** king and liege are naught where none reside<sup>1</sup>

All fabricated hindrances ward off  
Life which a home's intended to embrace  
Their grandeur warning vagrants to stay lost  
Ramshackled ruins leave tourists amazed<sup>2</sup>

A home then's not a place where rulers are  
Nor place where walls stretch high into the air<sup>3</sup>  
A home is where bridges are drawn for hearts  
And banners fly, uniting all who're there<sup>4</sup>

A home's not where inhabitants are safe  
A home's the most loving, welcoming place<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This plays off the phrase “king of the castle.” While many think of one’s home as a castle, here I am pushing back against the notion of dominion or rulership. It’s not that rulers are bad – in fact they are necessary. But when people use this phrase, it’s generally conveying a notion of “stay off the grass,” or used in conversations where people talk about how they’d have no problem shooting an intruder. It’s MINE. My domain. My stuff. But even if we were talking about rulers here, if a ruler is all about themselves and has nobody with whom to reside, who are they ruling but themselves? There is no such thing as a ruler in an evacuated castle. Ironically, then, those who set themselves up in a domain unto themselves end up being neither ruler, or at home.

<sup>2</sup> When I think of castles, I think of two types. The first type is a grand castle in its time of construction, or a large castle that still stands. I imagine what a passerby may have thought when they saw the towering walls and fortifications in the distance. While it may have conveyed safety to those familiar with the area, it most likely looked terrifying and awesome (in its literal sense). I imagine it did not look very inviting, as the point of castles has never been to appeal. Sure, structures within the castle were made to look lovely, and I’m sure they were adorned with some aesthetics in mind, but the main goal of the castle was to keep others out, and keep safe those within.

The second type of castle is the one with which most firsthand experiences come today. It’s the castle whose walls have succumb to the siege and breaching of an enemy long ago, or to the passage of time and the elements. It is a place in ruins. We know how great it must have been at one time, and we know its intended purpose, but it is now neither great or useful. It is utterly decimated, and lives and serves only in the imagination of a curious historian.

<sup>3</sup> While a home can certainly be a home with rulers, and while a home can certainly have fortifications, those two things don’t make a home. Whereas a castle seems to be largely defined by those two things, I want to push back against our phraseology when dealing with the home, because I don’t think those should be at the forefront of our minds. Even biblical homes, where there is a leadership structure, are homes where leadership is done not by being an overbearing dictator, but by being an inviter to participate in love as the leader dies to self. This is servant-leadership, self-sacrifice, and welcoming love.

<sup>4</sup> Rather than just tear down the modern notion of a home, I want to build up what I believe should most define a home. I believe it should be welcoming and uniting. First, a home should allow others in. We tend to think of homes now as immediate family, often just parents and children. We don’t have the extended family homes that much of the world has, and I think that has a negative impact on our view of family. Furthermore, our modern notion of hospitality is atrocious. People rarely invite others over, we run from getting to know people on a deep level, and God forbid a stranger or a friend of a friend needs assistance or a place to stay. We are not a welcoming culture. Many even treat their own families like crap, whether it be the neglected spouse as we throw money and time at our vicarious achievements through our kids, or our neglected kids as we are too busy fighting with our spouse because we want things to be done our way.

The second notion that defines a home is its ability to unite. Not only should people be welcome in a home (not just family), but those who come into the home need to feel united. The homekeepers are advocates for each other. Everyone should be able to be candid, knowing that even if feelings are hurt or disagreements acknowledged, they are all united in their love for and dedication to each other.

<sup>5</sup> While a home should be safe in certain senses, a home that is made safe by keeping most out and dictating to those within is not a home, and certainly not one worthy of defending. A home like that need not be attacked, as its walls will not be maintained, as none will replace the subjects who leave, and no subjects will be there to repair the walls as they fall to time and neglect. This home is self-destructive and fruitless. If walls define a home, they can be torn down. If openness defines a home, only a choice to erect defenses and rulers without bridges and banners can stop it.