

**August 25, 2013**  
**Pentecost 14**

*"Jesus Is the Narrow Door"*

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**LUKE 13:22-30**

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**T**hen Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, <sup>24</sup> "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. <sup>25</sup> 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.' <sup>26</sup> "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' <sup>27</sup> "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' <sup>28</sup> "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. <sup>29</sup> People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

I recently heard someone say that only 20% of the people in this country can be found in worship on Sunday morning. The percentage is even less in European countries where large cathedrals echo with the sound of great pipe organs and only a few gather for worship. We look up and down the streets of the neighborhoods in which we live. Few are making their way to worship on Sunday morning.

Martin Luther once compared the spread of the gospel to a pattering rain. It rains hard for a short time in one place. The sun comes out and dries the earth, and the cloud moves on to another location.

Jesus surely had his experience with large crowds following him for a short time but then they walked away. The message Jesus proclaimed about entering the kingdom of God only through him was too hard to believe and accept. So we hear someone ask the question that we still ask of Jesus today, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

Jesus does not answer the question about few being saved. Instead he directs us to look at him as the narrow door that leads to eternal life. He wants us to make every effort to enter that door because our eternal salvation depends on it. It is a matter of heaven or hell for each for each of us.

**Jesus wants you in that door**

"Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem." Even though he is Lord and God Jesus walked through the cities and towns. He was on his way to Jerusalem to suffer and die for our sins, yet he took the time to talk to people as he passed through towns and cities. He wanted every person he met, even his enemies, to see him as their source of eternal life and their hope of entering the kingdom

of God.

Your journey in his life is also very important my dear Christian. Take time to smell the roses and give glory to God for the blessings he gives. More important believe that your life on this earth has one purpose and that is to let people know about Jesus as the source of salvation and eternal life. You bear about in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a privilege it is to live another week on this earth to Jesus' glory.

We are not told why someone asked Jesus this important question, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" We do know that this question pops up in our minds when we see people losing interest in what Jesus has done to save them. Will the pattering rain that has fallen on this country pass on to other places in the world as the end draws near?

Jesus does not want us to dwell on this question "Are only a few going to be saved?" He wants us to be more concerned that we go through the narrow door that leads to eternal life, not the wide door that leads to eternal death. "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because, many I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to." It has been said that the people of our current age are very religious people and very spiritual, but they are seeking their relationship with God on their own terms. It came across the news this past week that Presbyterians are rejecting the popular new hymn "In Christ Alone" because of the offensive words about satisfying the wrath of God at the cross.

Jesus wants you and me to make every effort to enter through the narrow door of what he has done to save us and rescue us. The Greek word for "making every effort" is agonizo from which we get our word "agonize" and "agony." It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith in Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit who also helps us hold on to Jesus. This new person we are in Christ struggles with every bit of strength that Jesus can give to stay in this narrow door and not follow other doors that lead to eternal death.

Jesus is the narrow door because he is the only way for people to be saved. He said it so clearly in John 14:6 where he said, "I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." Years ago while serving in Santa Barbara I heard a so-called famous Lutheran theologian from Harvard Divinity school proclaim to a large audience that Jesus was exaggerating when he spoke these words. He said we should believe that there are other doors or other religions by which people can be saved. The theme for his lecture was "The Bible and Other Religions."

It is easy to find fault with Oprah Winfrey who rolls her eyes and puts down the lady in her audience who quoted Jesus words about being the way the truth and the life. The real issue is not Oprah. It is me and my human heart. We were programmed by Adam's fall into sin to minimize the results of sin in our life and to maximize our ability to save ourselves. No one has to teach a little kitten how to wash its face. No one has to teach a hell born sinner how to be saved. It is instinctive to believe I can make it on my own.

A thousand neon lights flash the message inside of me, "You can save yourself if you are since and try to do your best." Everything inside of me screams out "Be all that you can be and God will love you and you will be saved." Jesus told a man who held these beliefs "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the

Spirit." Then Jesus pointed this man named Nicodemus to his death on the cross with the words, "God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son..." God's plan of salvation is very narrow door. It is Jesus, only Jesus. Only his blood shed on the cross can wash me clean of my sin. "In Christ alone my hope is found..."

This past week at our voters' assembly meeting, we closed the meeting by reading three verses from Galatians 5 where it says, "For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit." There is lurking inside of me and inside of you a sinful flesh that wants to go back to thinking there is so much more to being saved than just going through Jesus the narrow door. Our sinful flesh creates in us a longing to believe that we are saved partially by what Christ has done but then also by what we are able to do.

The time will come when even that narrow door will be closed as Jesus tells us, "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.'" The door closes for people when judgment day comes or when they breathe their last breath and die. There are no second chances waiting for people after they die. God's Word tells us in Hebrews 9 that Jesus has Jesus died on the cross once for our salvation so die only once and then we face the judgment.

As long as people live on this earth they will devise their lame excuses for not believing in Jesus as the narrow door. Some day the master will say to them, "I don't know you or where you come from." They will cry out, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets." My grandmother was in church every Sunday. My father was Baptist minister. Here is my confirmation certificate. I have not been in church for years, but I still pray. I once read the Bible through from cover to cover when I was in college. Always there is this false hope and delusion that a remote connection to Jesus is enough to get in on the last day. To these Jesus will say, "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers." Without Jesus the evils of this life cannot be forgiven. Rejecting Jesus will result in "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Jesus often warned about the horrors of hell. He pleads with us this morning to hold fast to him as the narrow door and not trust in ourselves or anything else for our salvation.

### **Jesus wants all people in the narrow door**

Because Jesus is your narrow door you can be sure of being in the place he has prepared for you. You will also be pleased to see people believing in this narrow door from all over the world. The narrow door is also a wide door as it embraces people from all over the world. Jesus tells us, "People will come from the east and west and north and south, and will take their places in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and the first will be last."

The Lord our God will surprise us on judgment day. There will be people from the east and west and north and south. God's word will reach out into the world in the last days. The words of Isaiah that we read earlier are truly amazing, "And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will see my glory."

In the Revelation John sees people gathering around the throne of the Lamb from all over

the world. "After this I looked and there before me as a great multitude that no one could count from every nations, tribe, language and people, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and they were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.'"

Salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb. Our God has provided for us a door, a narrow door in Jesus. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The last will be first and the first will be last. Those who think they can make it on their own will perish forever. Those who humbly trust in the Lamb will be forever in the place Jesus prepares for us where he will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Jesus loved talking to people. He loved telling them he was the narrow door that leads to eternal life. He gives us the privilege of sharing this message and leading other people to trust in this narrow door. Look up and down your street. Look into your family. Look at the church attendance here in our country. Glorious opportunities abound for leading people we know and love to this narrow door that leads to eternal life. Amen.