

## Dangerous Assumptions Luke 13:22-30

Disclaimer: Material for this message was adapted in part from sermons found on the Sermon Central website.

The story is told of a little Jimmy coming home from school to ask his parents the following question: "*Where did I come from?*" Mom looks at dad, dad looks at Mom – the 'birds and the bees' moment has suddenly arrived. Mom smiles and as she leaves the room she says, '*This is a moment for dad and son bonding, don't you think?*' So dad takes a deep breath, sets little Jimmy on a chair and begins to explain the facts of life. Little Jimmy's eyes get wider and wider and his mouth falls further and further open. When dad has finished little Jimmy says "*But dad, Mikey says he came from Texas, where did I come from?*"

Sometimes you have to know what is behind being asked in order to understand the question in the first place. This morning, this is very true of the question they were asking Jesus. Luke 13:23

A bit earlier in his gospel account, Luke had recorded that, "*knowing the days drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.*" Luke 9:51 So now, even though He is walking intentionally towards the end of His own life, the crowds are still following Him, still asking the wrong questions.

Someone in the crowd calls out: ***Lord, will only a few be saved?*** It seems innocent enough, yet for those on the road with Jesus this was actually a loaded question having to do with Jewish national identity. But the way Jesus responded, made it a personally profound question with eternal consequences, not only for those asking back then, but also for everyone alive today.

Understand, that in Jesus' days there had been a debate going on amongst several of the popular rabbis about who would and who would not get into heaven. Most all Jews believed that everyone in the nation of Israel would be saved, with a few exceptions for real sinners – but they disagreed vehemently over whether or not any or some Gentiles might be saved. So the asker was really only wanting Jesus to weigh in on how many others HE thought – other than Jewish – might also make it.

And as usual, Jesus turned the question completely around; in response to *will the saved be few?* Jesus replies, more importantly, *will the saved be you?*

Jesus said...

*Strive to enter through the narrow door;  
for many, I tell you, will try to enter  
and will not be able.* Luke 13:24

The verb which Jesus used for "**strive**," is the Greek word from which we get our English word: **agonize**. The idea conveyed is one of not giving up, of straining every

muscle and sinew to complete a task. Usually it referred to athletes in competition; everyone being able to see the strain in their muscles as they raced for the finish line.

But note the other part of the sentence: "*many ... will try to enter and will not be able.*" When I read that, it stopped me dead in my tracks. Jesus said that many people, the unknown number that the questioner had asked about, would seek to enter through the narrow door but would be unable to do so. This raised several questions for me, as it should also for you.

- What is the narrow door by which we have to enter in order to be saved?
- Why must we strive to enter though only this door?
- And, why will some be unable to do so?

In answer to this first question, here are two descriptions Jesus gave about Himself.

I am the gate.  
Whoever enters by me will be saved,  
and will come in and go out and find pasture.  
John 10.9

And this one...

I am the way, and the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me.  
John 14.6

Jesus leaves us in no doubt that He, alone, is the door – the only door – by which anyone may enter into salvation.

How do you enter through Christ? Only by repentance and faith.

So again, as He had in previous teachings, Jesus is making it clear that no one enters through this door by accident. You cannot accidentally stumble into salvation. It is a conscious decision that you make: to strive to enter only through Jesus.

But, before going any further, let's stop a moment just to marvel at the fact that there IS a door for us to go through. This is a miracle in and of itself. Jesus created this door when He died for our sins and rose from the dead. He found a way to break through the barrier of sinfulness and holiness that was placed between us and God.

Remember the angel that God posted at the Garden of Eden with the flaming sword to keep Adam and Eve from going back into the Garden; nobody could get back in. The way was shut. Yet Jesus opened the Garden back up by receiving God's wrath on the cross; by paying for the sins of the world.

Our repentance and our baptism now identifies us with Jesus and covers us with Jesus. Our faith in Jesus makes us look holy in God's sight. And, it is Jesus who made it clear that He is the only doorway to our salvation. We don't have to create this door. The door has already been miraculously made and opened for us by Him and through Him alone. It is free and open.

But Jesus also makes it seem like this is not an easy door to get through. Jesus calls it "narrow." He warns us to "strive" to enter. He doesn't say, "*You should think about it, see if you can work it into your schedule when you have time.*" He warns us to make every effort, to enter through His narrow door before it closes. This no longer sounds like an easy thing for us to do! It sounds more like a difficult struggle!

One of the worst lies Satan spreads is that being a Christian should make life EASY for you and that God should PAMPER you. That's not how it works in a sinful world with demons roaming about. Yes, salvation is "*by grace you are saved through faith,*" but reaching that place of faith is not necessarily easy with all the distractions and all the imitations that the devil will throw in your path.

The very words Jesus chose to describe salvation show that it is not entered casually or by accident – there is only one door and it is narrow. So you cannot wander in by mistake, nor can you enter at your convenience. You have to focus, you have to strive to enter NOW – like striving to win a race – not that it is by works but it must be obvious that you have personally and intentionally done so. No one trips through this door; no one slips through.

Earlier, Jesus had told, probably the same following crowd, a parable of a fig tree that had refused to bear fruit. While the field owner wanted the tree cut down, the gardener asked for one more opportunity to coax some fruit out of it; then if it still produced no fruit, it could be cut down. Salvation is God's gift, but still there is Jesus' call for us to strive to attain it and then having done so to strive to be fruitful in it. In other words, to never take our salvation for granted, but to always be striving to grow in our faith.

Perhaps, this is also what the Apostle Paul meant with some cautionary comments he penned in his closing remarks to two different churches. To the Philippians, Paul wrote...

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;  
for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both  
to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12

God within, is the one enabling us both to want and to grow in our salvation, but still we are called to work at it; to work at our salvation.

In his letter to the troubled Corinthian church, Paul concluded...

*Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, **if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you**—unless you have come to believe in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

*"Hold firmly to the message you have received," "work at your salvation," "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matthew 3:8), "unless you have come to believe in vain."* These phrases should urge us never to take for granted our faithful response to God's gracious offer.

The "P" in "TULIP," which is an anagram for the Reformed Christian understanding of salvation, stands for the "**perseverance of the saints**," meaning that if one has truly been saved, it will be evident by their continued growth and fruitfulness. **If there is no evidence of Christian growth, then you should question your salvation.** I cannot escape from the thought that this is exactly what Jesus meant by saying, "*strive to enter through the narrow door.*" How have you worked at growing your faith lately?

Which brings up the third question: why someone might be unable to enter?

Here is the answer Jesus gave to those who asked Him:

*When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then in reply he will say to you, 'I do not know where you come from'* Luke 13:25

Do you understand what Christ said here? **The door will not be open forever.**

One day the door will be shut and it will be too late. That is why seeing His rapidly approaching death, Jesus urged the crowd to have their own sense of urgency.

- Just as you cannot enter through this door by accident,
- or by a casual stroll but by "striving,"
- one day you will not be able enter at all; because it will be closed for all eternity.

One day, God, will shut the door that Jesus opened to "*whosoever will.*" That day is coming, and it is 2000 years closer than when Christ spoke these words for the first time.

From behind that closed door, God will say, *I do not know where you come from.* To His Jewish listeners, that was a blasphemous thing for Jesus to say. After all they were God's chosen people – their forefathers were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was to their forefather Moses that the Law was given. They were signed and sealed as God's people by circumcision. Yet Jesus said to them that the day will dawn when the door of salvation will be closed to you; you will cry out for it to be opened, only to hear God tell you He doesn't know you. How dreadful those words must have sounded to them. That could a day could come when God no longer recognizes them as His people?

But also, Listen carefully to how these now-shut-out people respond to that closed door...

*Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!'*

Did you notice how they seemed to have this sense of entitlement? They command – they beg? – “*Lord, open to us!*” They had this false sense of security because of their past familiarity with Jesus. It’s almost nostalgic. “*We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.*” You hear a lot of people today talk about how Jesus ate and drank with sinners who were the outcasts of society, so we should be welcoming to sinners too. That’s true, but this text makes it clear that eating and drinking with them didn’t save them.

You know the shocking thing is, just as this was true of them, it is perhaps even more true for us today. They can and we can, claim a physical proximity to God. You have eaten and drank at His holy table in communion. You have heard His word preached and taught. But, here is the reality this morning, if you have not strived to enter in through the narrow door, if you cannot claim a repentance of your sins and a turning in faith to Christ, if you are not continuing to grow in your faith, then you are like those people walking with Christ, only physically but not spiritually present with Him; you are still standing outside a door that will soon be closed.

We are all sinners who deserve only spiritual death and God calls for us all to repent – before the door closes for good. It’s an awesome thing that God became human and dined with us. But that’s not what saved us. **We needed God to DIE for us.** He came to take upon Himself our miserable death. It’s not His friendliness that saves us. It’s His gracious death and resurrection which we have asked God to accept as ours.

Having fond memories from Sunday School days of singing “Jesus loves me,” or remarking on how you really liked Rev. Salley’s sermons; these do not qualify you as “saved by the blood of Christ.” Salvation comes with a call to repentance, faith, and growth. It’s not just a matter of eating and drinking with the right people.

Jesus then went on to describe what those shocked outsiders would see on that day when they find the door closed:

*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, and you yourselves thrown out. Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God.*

They will see the patriarchs of their faith, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, sitting down at the wedding banquet to celebrate the coming of the Messiah on the last day. But they

will also see those whom they never dreamt would be present on that day – a countless number of Gentiles from all four corners of the earth sitting down at the same table.

The Jews considered themselves to be very religious. They considered themselves to be the elect, the people of God. They certainly considered themselves to be further up the ladder than Gentiles. And yet Christ says that it is these very Gentiles – whose ability to even be saved, they were doubting - because they strived and entered through the narrow door into salvation - these will be the ones present at this banquet. While those, who always thought they had guaranteed reservations, now find themselves without. No wonder Christ describes their response as weeping (in sorrow and grief) and gnashing (in anger and frustration) of teeth at what they witness. This is a total reversal of expectations and places – the first will be last and the last will be first.

In answering the question of, 'how many others?', Jesus tells his hearers and us, it is not the numbers that are limited but the time.

**Did you hear that?** It is not the numbers saved that will be limited, but the time for being saved, which is limited.

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Just as He warned them back then, Jesus continues to warn us today, you need to be sure that you have responded to Jesus. The core issue is in personally "knowing" and "growing" in Jesus not just "knowing about Jesus." Thus, the original question of, "*Will many be saved*" should now be more properly understood by each of us as, "*Will you be among the saved.*"

According to a 1991 Gallup poll, 78% of Americans expect to go to heaven when they die. However, many of them hardly ever pray, read the Bible, or attend church. And they admit that they live to please themselves instead of God. If you were to ask these people how they knew they were going to heaven, they would not know "how" they were going to do so; they just assumed that like all "good people" they would make it – somehow. That my friends is a very dangerous assumption.

So, what lesson should you take home with you today?

1. You will not get to heaven accidentally.
2. Jesus is the narrow way – the only way to heaven.
3. We have been urged to strive to enter through that door,
4. Lest, in failing to do so, one day we find ourselves locked outside.
5. Missing heaven will be a decision you will regret forever.

When God closes the door on the last day which side will you be standing on?