

“*Domine, volumus Jesum videre,*” John 12:21.
“*Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,*” Mark 12:24.

Luke 13

²²He went on his way from one town and village to another, teaching, and making his way to Jerusalem.

²³Someone said to him, “Lord, are only a few going to be saved?”

He said to them, ²⁴“Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. ²⁵Once the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, you will begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open for us!’ He will tell you in reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ ²⁶Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷And he will say, ‘I don’t know where you come from. Depart from me, all you evildoers.’ ²⁸There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown outside. ²⁹People will come from east and west, from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And note this: Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”



God is often understood to close certain doors and open other ones. Sometimes, however, the trouble is that we are guessing what doors are opened; if we are the ones who are intended to walk through them; or if they are doors at all.

Today we can be sure about one door, and that is the door that matters. It is the door to God’s kingdom, to eternal life and salvation. The world seems to be full of people who think that this door will be opened for nearly everybody. But repentant sinners know that this door is undeserved and God never had to open it for any sinner.

God is without a doubt generous in our Gospel. He provides a way into His kingdom and a way into salvation. Nevermind various doors along the way. We may or may not know whether they are the possible ones God has for us. But if you have the chance in this life to enter the next, know what to do ...

WHEN GOD OPENS THE DOOR, STRIVE TO ENTER THROUGH IT

Our hearts follow Jesus on His way, verse 22. Jesus was set forth resolutely to Jerusalem, but He didn’t draw a straight line. He stopped at towns and villages along the way to teach the people repentance and the forgiveness of sins in His name.

“Few or many?” debated the rabbis, verse 23. The popular opinion was that every Jew was part of the kingdom except the worst criminals. Jesus’ answer to those who asked, few or many, was important.

“*Strive to enter through the narrow door.*” The word “strive” reflects a Greek word for athletic training, a difficult striving, a technical term for training in the games. This word gives us our word for “agony” and “agonize.”

Why “agonize”? Because the door to heaven is narrow. Christianity asks for many things that are not easy for us: a genuine sorrow over our wrongdoing; to deny the shiny things of this world; to deny our own selfish desires and urges; to thank God with good works of sanctification; to resist sin and the devil. This narrow door divides all of humanity into two groups; those inside and those outside.

Prison doors were narrow. Graves had narrow doors. The kingdom of heaven has an unattractive entry.

Likely there are wider, more attractive doors. There is competition to the kingdom of God—daily activities, riches and wealth, vanity and beauty, entertainment. ***We want pleasure instead of permanence*** and soon enough, we're sure we don't have to think about sin passed down from our parents, and sins we pass on to our children.

Why do these other doors look so big, flashy, and attractive?

They don't bleed like Jesus. They are not doors of suffering. They ignore the payment for sin.

The reason our door is narrow and looks more difficult is because the door to heaven is Jesus. The way to heaven is as narrow as the cross.

In the same chapter Jesus tells us He is the Good Shepherd, Jesus also tells us in John 10:9, "*I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*" But this is the Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. He dies a bloody death for their rescue and safety.

Therefore, this door is as horrific to the world as His wounds on the cross. It's easy to pass by when we are not striving and agonizing for it with eyes of faith. Don't miss the narrow door!

The Savior of the world opened up His body in agony for us, and He opened up His heart enough to die so that we don't have to. As our sins go, they are over our head. They are too heavy for us. But this door was a flood of forgiveness for our vices and sins.

Yes, this door is as horrific to the world as His wounds on the cross. But understand that, at the same time, this door is open. It is merciful. It is intended for anyone from all four corners of the earth to enter. It is too small a thing for God to save only the people of this time and place, but all of those who by the faith of Abraham find it, will enter it.

Jesus had to say this, because apparently not many of His listeners that day were "agonizing" to enter in. He would like more people to "agonize" over finding the door. And really that is why the question, "Many or few," would be asked. The real question is, am I among the few? Should I spend more time thinking about this? Is it possible to get it wrong? How bad could it get? How stringent are God's requirements to enter His heaven?

APP: Are there a great many people agonizing to enter God's kingdom? Are you?

I'm not asking about people striving and agonizing by their own abilities or by their own deeds. I am asking, as Jesus used the term "kingdom," because the kingdom is now. God's kingdom is one of grace, and this narrow door is entered without any saving effort on our own. Only by repentance can we find it and only by faith can we pass through it.

Why? What happens if we are over-sure of ourselves and do not strive for the narrow door? Israelites missed the cross even though it was prophesied in Moses 1500 years beforehand; predicted in the prophets like Isaiah 800 years beforehand; and painted in the Psalms.

They had no future in striving for themselves. There is no future to our being over-sure of and striving for ourselves.

We can see in verse 25 that there is a time limit outside of God's kingdom. When that time arrives, outsiders will remain outside. Their prison will be real.

Jesus lives in a perfect kingdom. His narrow door may seem narrow-minded or upside-down or inside out, but consider that salvation wasn't easy for Him. He dwells in a place we can hardly understand.

It's a narrow door, because it's real. But the grave and prison is outside. Don't be too big to walk in. Don't be fat on your sin. Skimp on self-righteousness and sin. Instead, seek His mercy, His life, and His love. Ease of conscience is inside.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Children's Message

Everyone likes knock, knock jokes. I have a few for you today.

Knock, Knock. (Who's there?) Ben. (Ben who?) Ben knocking for ten minutes. Please let me in.

Knock, knock. (Who's there?) Doris. (Doris who?) Doris locked, that's why I'm knocking.

Knock, knock. (Who's there?) Adore. (Adore who?) Adore is between us, please open up!

Knock, knock. (Who's there?) Lettuce. (Lettuce who?) Lettuce in, it's cold out here!

In our Bible lesson today, Jesus tells about people who will be knocking at the door, but it will be too late. Where is the door Jesus is talking about? It is the door to heaven. Everyone wants to get into heaven, but there is only one door and Jesus says the door is very narrow. Jesus said, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 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. Get away from me.'"

Does that sound harsh to you? Where is that narrow door that we must find and how do we enter in? You may remember that Jesus once told a story about the good shepherd. In that parable, Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enters in, he will be saved." (John 10:9 KJV) There is only one door to enter into heaven and that door is Jesus. Who can enter that door? Anyone! If we put our faith and trust in him, we won't be left standing outside knocking and crying, "Let me in."

Here is one more knock, knock joke for you:

Knock, knock. (Who's there?) Orange. (Orange who?) Orange you glad to know that Jesus is the door to heaven?

Heavenly Father, we are thankful that you loved us so much that you sent Jesus, your only Son, to be the door through which we can enter into heaven. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.