

"The Road Not Taken"

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[0:00] The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke. Glory to you, Lord Christ! Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.

! And someone said to him, Lord, will those who are saved be few? And he said to them, Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door saying, Lord, open to us, then he will answer you, I do not know where you come from.

Then you will begin to say, We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets. But he will say, I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets of the kingdom of God, but you yourselves cast out.

[1:20] And people will come from east and west and from north and south and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ. Teach us, O Lord, your word. We are your people. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Please be seated. Well, what did you think about those scriptures today? Causes you to think about it.

The Old Testament lesson, the Epistle, and the Gospel. All were full of challenges. We're going to talk about challenges today.

Now, I had some friends. I really did. I don't know where they've gone, but I had some friends. I had some friends in seminary who recently went to visit their married son and daughter-in-law in Germany.

[2:34] And it's interesting. Every day, at the end of the day, they would post photos. It used to be when someone says, Would you like to come over to our house and look at our vacation photos?

You suddenly realize you've got a terrible headache. But doing it one day at a time really was neat. And the other thing that was neat for me was they took a lot of pictures of churches.

I'm into churches. Well, they had a title for their day-by-day travel log. It was called Frank and Betty's Excellent Adventure.

Isn't that great? So I thought about the Gospel today, the Gospel lesson from Luke. And what we're catching is Jesus' Excellent Adventure.

It's a day-by-day travel log. A lot of us don't realize that the life of Jesus was a lot like the life of a prominent person in America today, Franklin Graham.

[3:39] Or like his father, Billy Graham. That's what Jesus did from day to day, from town to town. So let's go into this excellent adventure and see what God has to teach us.

And we're using Luke chapter 13, verses 22 through 30. And if you want to follow in the few Bible, it's page 1037.

1037. We're going to go through this Gospel lesson line by line. Part 1, you might call, Are Only a Few Saved.

Let me read verses 22 through 24. Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.

And someone said to him, Lord, will those who are saved be few? And he said to them, Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and not be able.

[4:52] Have you ever wondered if only a few will be saved? There's a lot of discussion about that these days. Is it just a few? Is it a lot? Is it all?

Well, let's see what Jesus had to say about that. First, the question. Maybe even before that, the questioner. We can deduce that this was not one of the merry band of twelve that Jesus had following him and learning from him.

This was probably someone in the crowd. And his motives may not have been with integrity. Will only a few be saved?

Now, this questioner looked at this merry band that Jesus had with him. There was not one religious leader. There were no wealthy people.

There was actually a bunch of smelly fishermen and even a tax collector. Can you say, and so he says, you know, is that all there is? Will those be saved be only a few?

[6:02] And Jesus, when asked a question from the crowd, often answered by telling a story, didn't he? Telling a story, a parable. And so that's what he does here.

He doesn't answer that question directly. Will only a few be saved? He says, strive to enter by the narrow gate. What in the world does that mean?

So we have to look into this. It's interesting that the Greek word for strive is one that we use in a kind of a negative sense. It's agonize.

Agonize to enter by the narrow gate. We have to think about that in the context of the time. If you were, for instance, going from one place to another, you had to have supplies along.

So you probably had a camel. A lot of people had camels back in those days. And you pack your supplies on the camel. And it comes time to go to sleep.

[7:12] And if you're fortunate, you find an inn. You've got to get into the inn. And there's a gate to get in. And camels have to bend down to get in that gate.

Well, what about all the supplies? You've got to pull those supplies off to get them to the gate. Can you think of agony? Agonize. Jesus is using that concept to say, Agonize to go through the narrow gate.

He's talking about the question, Will only a few be saved? You and I know that we're saved by God's grace.

We can't tally up enough good points to get to heaven. There aren't enough points. And the world to get there. And so it's by grace we are saved.

But that doesn't mean we're on easy street, does it? We still have to do something between the time we fall into the arms of Jesus and the time we leave this earth.

[8:22] That's called virtuous living. Not always easy. You might call it the narrow gate. Now, most people in that day and age in Jerusalem and in its environs, they chose the popular cultural gate, the wide gate of blindly following a religion.

Jesus knew that they would not all decide to follow his direction.

They would be stuck in a mindless following of a religion. And so he tried to warn them. Choose the narrow gate, the one I'm offering.

Not the wide culturally accepted gate. Still happening today, isn't it? We find ourselves as Christians more and more in the minority.

What we look on as virtuous living is looked on in much of the world by extreme bigotry.

[9:43] It's amazing. It's amazing. Especially for someone a little more mature in years like me.

Today, I see how things used to be looked on. While people were naughty, everybody kind of agreed on what it was to be naughty. Today, naughty, are you crazy?

You see the difference we're living in. And so, Jesus is saying to us, Enter by the narrow gate.

Trust me. Strive to follow me closely. It'll get you to heaven. Avoid the wide gate.

Self-centered, culturally popular living. It'll get you to hell. You see, we have a choice to make in America. And sometimes we need to make that choice more than once.

[10:48] There was a wonderful poem written years ago by an American poet named Robert Frost. It was entitled, The Road Not Taken.

Most of you had to learn it in high school. And maybe in college, if you took English literature, you had to analyze this poem and see how it related to you personally.

Let me read it here because it fits right in with what Jesus is saying. Two roads diverged in a yellow wood. And sorry I could not travel both and be one traveler, long I stood.

And looked down one as far as I could to where it bent in the undergrowth. Then took the other as just as fair. And having perhaps the better claim because it was grassy and wanted wear.

Though as for that, the passing there had warned them really about the same. And both that morning equally lay in leaves, no step had trodden black.

[11 : 54] Oh, I kept the first for another day. Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence. Two roads diverged in a wood. And I, I took the one less traveled by.

And that has made all the difference. The path of Jesus is what we're called to choose.

So, back to the questioner. He probably shouldn't have asked, Will only a few be saved? He probably should have asked, Will I be saved? When I was in seminary, I sponsored a speaker to come into the seminary community.

He was conservative. He was evangelical. He was gospel preaching.

[13 : 04] Many in the seminary community were not thrilled with this choice. And in the theology class, One student said, Wait a minute.

Are you saying that The people up in the Himalayas can't be saved Because they haven't heard the gospel? And the professor answered back, Really, I don't know about people in the Himalayas, But I do know about you.

Are you saved? Well, explosion. But he was telling the truth. But wait, there's more.

This sermon has more. Verses 25 and 26. The shutting of the door. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, And you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, Saying, Lord, open to us, Then he will answer you, I do not know where you come from.

Then you will say, But we ate and drank in your presence. You taught in our streets. And he will say, I tell you, I don't know where you come from.

[14 : 22] Depart from me, All you workers of evil. So, Who are the people Of whom Jesus is speaking? I think it's those who Refused To go His way.

Who refused to accept His gift of salvation. This thing about We know you. Actually, We may claim to know someone When we really don't.

Married couples find that As they go through the years, They didn't know these things About each other. I've heard people say, I never knew you.

To the spouse. It's just interesting How that all works. Sometimes we claim To know someone When we really don't. Another Harken back to early years.

Is we had a Commandant In the Marine Corps Who was like The boss Marine. And his name was Al Gray. And he was a fiery individual.

[15 : 28] Well, I was going through A graduate school In the Air Force. And Al Gray was there To make the speech. And Fellow Students Knowing I had Been in the Marine Corps Said, Do you know This General Al Gray?

And I said, Sure. Well, He was not A bosom buddy. I think I shook Hands with him Once At a cocktail party.

To say I Knew Al Gray Is a slight Stretch. That's what Happens In relation To God Often With us. The claim Of knowing Jesus. Maybe we know A religion But do we have A personal Relationship With God?

Back in those Days The Nominal Religious Community Had a Knowledge Of God But They didn't Really Know God. Do you Know God Intimately?

[16 : 36] Most of us Would Honestly Say I'd like To But we Can Know God Intimately He Wants Us To Know Him Intimately Remember The Four Steps Of Salvation God Has A Wonderful Plan For You Step Two Because We've Sinned We're Out Of That Plan Step Three God Loving Us Dearly Becomes One Of Us To Pull Us Out Of Our Dilemma He Comes He Lives He Dies He He's Resurrected He Opens The Kingdom To Us And Then Step Four We Walk Through The Door We Repent Of Our Sins And We Receive Jesus Christ As Our Lord And Savior And Then We Can Know Him Intimately Each Day Talk Talk With Him Listen To Him Look Into His Word Check Out How We're Treating Each Other Ask

Jesus To Be Between Us And Those Who Are A Problem To Us Intimacy Is Ours Which Brings Us To The Last Point Verse 30 Jesus Continues And Behold Some Are Last Who Will Be First And Some Are First Who Will Be Last That's The Dilemma Of Who We Are As Humans Back In Those Days Culture Think Among The Religious Community Was That We Are The Holy People And They Are Going Straight To Hell In This I'm Not Talking About Today's Jews But In That Day The Jewish

Religion Jews Win Gentiles Lose That's What They All Believed Jesus Turned That Thing Right
Upside Down

He Said You Cannot Depend On Following 600 Stupid Rules And Think That's Going To Earn You
Heaven In Fact Anyone On The Earth That Loves Jesus Will Be With Me In Heaven Jesus Turns
Our Lives Upside Down As Well Heaven Comes To Us By Faith In Christ Heaven Does Not Come
By Trying To Rigidly Follow Some Rules That Has Been Tried And Found Wanting Nor Does
Heaven Come By Making A Decision For Christ And Then Living A Slovenly Life We're Called To
Sanctification God Asks A Choice Of Us Conclusion!

Remembering Frost's Road Less Traveled What Direction Are You Making Regarding Your Life
Your Future Your Intended Eternity Jesus Or Popular Culture There's No Both And Let Us Pray
Lord We're Thankful That Justification Is Easy And That Sanctification Is Hard Guide Us Dear Lord
As We Progress Forward That We Might Know You Intimately And Desire To Please You In All
Things We Pray This Father In The Name Of Jesus Our Lord Amen