

Make Every Effort to Enter

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 March 2024

Preacher: Ricky Njoto

[0 : 00] Yeah, so we're continuing our series through the Gospel of Luke. So please keep your Bibles open to Luke chapter 13, starting from verse 22.

I remember when I first became a Christian, there was one question that just, one big question that I kept asking over and over again, and that was, why doesn't God just save everyone?

Isn't it unfair that only a few are saved? And I remember one of the pastors in my old church during that time tried to explain it like this.

If you drive around in your car and then you see a beggar on the street, and you give them some money, and you drive around again, and then you see another beggar, and you choose not to give them some money, isn't that up to you?

Why is that unfair? I understood where she was coming from, but I could not accept the reasoning. I cannot afford to help every beggar in this world, but surely God could afford to save everyone in this world, so why doesn't he?

[1 : 25] I was not, so I kept pressing and pressing, and that's why she eventually said, I think you need to go to Bible college. And perhaps a related question is asked in our passage this morning.

In verse 22, read with me, in verse 22 and 23, then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.

Someone asked him, Lord, are only a few people going to be saved? Jesus' answer, however, flips the focus of that question.

In verse 24 to 25, he said to them, 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. Jesus here gives a similar metaphor to the one that he gave in the previous chapter, and that is, Jesus is like an owner of the house, and salvation is pictured as being inside that house.

[2 : 47] And so here, instead of answering the person's question, straight on with a yes or no, and instead of answering with a logical argument for why God saves only a few, Jesus turns the question into a practical challenge to self-reflect.

It is as if Jesus is saying here, you don't need to know how many people will be saved, but make every effort to be saved.

And that is because, in verse 25, the opportunity to be saved will not be there forever, will not always be there.

There will be a time when the door is shut, and no more opportunities will be given. And like I've said before, that shutting of the door might happen soon, might happen tonight or tomorrow, we never know.

The question now is, how? What's the effort that we need to do to be saved? And this metaphor certainly gives the impression that salvation depends on our effort, doesn't it?

[4 : 03] Jesus says, make every effort, and the picture there is a bunch of people trying to get through a narrow door through their own effort. So, what do we need to do to be saved?

Run faster ahead of everyone else? Shoff other people harder? Perhaps don't tell other people about that door so that we can just walk through the narrow door alone?

But verse 25 to 27 quickly shows us that it's not about our performance at all. In verse 25, the people want to gain entry, knocking, but Jesus says, I don't know you or where you come from. His answer is not only that he doesn't know who they are, but also where they come from. And I think this alludes to the Israelites' assumption that they are saved merely because they come from Abraham.

They come from Israel. And the context makes this assumption clear because previously, Jesus has criticized the nation Israel through the metaphor of a fig tree.

[5 : 18] And then from last week, he has criticized the Pharisees' treatment to the law of Sabbath, the law of Israel. And so here, I think there's that assumption that children of Abraham, the people of Israel, should be able to gain entry into the house of salvation merely because they come from Abraham.

And yet, Jesus' answer is surprising. I don't know you or where you come from. In other words, your biological origin doesn't matter.

And then in verse 26, the people want to enter based on their performance towards Jesus' ministry. They said, but we ate and drank with you and you taught in our streets. In other words, we have been listening to you teaching. When you were there preaching to us, we were there listening to you and eating with you and drinking with you.

This should remind us of the crowd who's been following Jesus all this time and hearing him teach, but they can't see who Jesus truly is and therefore don't believe. And from last week, where the crowd only wants Jesus' works and miracles and teachings, but not the person of Jesus.

[6 : 42] And so again, in verse 27, Jesus answers in the same way. I don't know you or where you come from.

Jesus doesn't recognize them by their biological origin or their own performance precisely because they don't have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Jesus doesn't know them. The question is, does Jesus know us? Notice here, Jesus' constant use of the word you.

I've highlighted that on the screen. In this parable, he doesn't use the word he or she. He doesn't say he will stand or the visitor or the guest will stand outside knocking and pleading.

No, he says you. And so, he invites the listeners to place themselves in the parable. And so, the original question, will the saved be few, has become, will the saved be you?

[7 : 56] And I think it's appropriate for us today to place ourselves in the parable as well and ask the same question. Will the saved be us?

We need to make every effort to enter the door of salvation. But we can't gain entry based on origin. Like if we say, but my parents are Christians.

Or, my parents baptized me at birth. And we can't enter the door through performance. That is, even if we say, I've tried to adopt the teaching of Jesus.

Or, I've been to church. No. Entry to salvation is only based on faith that makes us personally know Jesus and makes Jesus personally know us.

A commentator even says here, there's nothing more tragic than being close to God's blessing and then missing out.

[9 : 02] that was how the Israelites were. The Israelites were near God's blessing and they thought they had the right to enter salvation, but because they did not accept Jesus, they were rejected.

Let's make every effort to not only be near salvation, but enter it through personal knowledge and faith in Jesus.

Even if that means going through the narrow door against the flow of the world. Also, notice here how Jesus answers the question about salvation, will the saved be few, with an image of a feast, a party.

And this is continued in verse 28 to 30. there will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth because you can't come in when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.

The image here is of a party with the heroes of the Old Testament people of God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets. And joining them are, in verse 29, people will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

[10 : 35] Who are these people joining them? This echoes the prophecy in Isaiah 11, where the dispersed Israelites will return to Israel, but along with them will come nations, in verse 12.

Nations, that is, other nations, the Gentiles, non-Jews, us, to come and join the party. And yet, Jesus is saying here, there will be non-Israelites coming and join the party, but then some Jews will be left out.

Because the right to entry is not based on biological origin, but through a personal knowledge of Jesus. Jesus. And so, in verse 30, indeed, there are those who are last who will be first and first

who will be last.

The Jews to whom salvation was offered first, some of them will be last. And the Gentiles who came last, some of us, will go first.

That is, we will enter, because we believe in Jesus. And so, here, Jesus mixes a warning with an enticement.

[11 : 52] On the one hand, he shows us what it's like to miss out. There will be gnashing of teeth and crying, because you miss out on the great feast. But on the other hand, he gives the people an image of what salvation looks like.

And it looks like a banquet, fun, with great food, with the heroes of the people. And why is that enticing?

Well, for the Jews who traditionally enjoyed eating together with families and friends, this was the ideal scene. Let me give you an illustration.

There was a moment when this thing here, it's too small, so I'll put it on the screen, this thing here, was Kai's favorite toy, Volvo XC40.

He even knew the name of the car, Volvo. He would play with it and bring it with him to places until he saw a real Volvo XC40 in the parking lot at Westfield and it was blue as well.

[13 : 08] And his eyes sparkled with excitement with excitement and he shouted, Volvo! And now, after a few months, you know, kids, he doesn't care about this toy car anymore.

That's why he allowed me to bring this here. But every time he sees an SUV, doesn't matter what kind of SUV it is, he shouts, Volvo! Volvo!

The favorite toy used to be the best thing that he owned. But the real thing is even greater, isn't it? And we adults know that the real thing is better than the toy.

But what if there's something greater than what we see as the real thing here? So it's the same thing here.

the Jews enjoy having great food with families and friends. But this, the salvation that Jesus offered, oh, it's the real thing.

[14 : 16] Salvation is not just being saved from punishment. It's not just that. It is a banquet. It includes a sense of belonging for the lonely people, who want belonging.

This is it. It includes a sense of belonging. It includes friendship, fellowship with their heroes, enjoying food and company together with them and with God in the kingdom of God.

And don't forget from the previous chapter, with King Jesus serving them. God but what is especially painful is seeing those heroes with God in the fellowship but not being able to sit together with them at the table.

Instead, many non-Israelites will come from every direction to feast with them but some Israelites, because they reject Jesus, who have had the greatest opportunity, will miss this blessing.

Don't let that happen to you. You might be near the door. You might have ticked the Christian box in the survey your whole life.

[15 : 39] You might be near salvation, going to church and hearing the gospel preached. But if you don't enter that narrow door, if you don't choose a personal saving relationship with Jesus against the world's pressure and pleasure, you won't get the greatest pleasure of all.

Perfect fellowship with God and with other people. Just like the Jews back then, you might miss out. Now, in case people think that Jesus is being harsh here, for shutting the door at them just because he doesn't know them personally, in the next passage we see Jesus' tender, generous, and gentle heart.

In verse 31, some Pharisees warn Jesus about King Herod's intention to kill him. And Jesus says in verse 32 to 33, oh, I'll still do what I was planning to do today and tomorrow.

I'll still heal the sick and cast out demons. He's not afraid of the threat of the fox that is Herod. And on the third day, I will go to Jerusalem.

[17 : 06] Why does Jesus need to go to Jerusalem at the end of verse 33? Because no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.

Meaning, it's not possible for a prophet to end his ministry anywhere else outside of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the capital city, the religious and cultural center.

And as one who carries the message of the kingdom of God, Jesus has to go to Jerusalem and die there. In other words, Herod, it's not possible for Herod to kill Jesus outside of Jerusalem.

Instead, it's the people of Jerusalem who will have Jesus killed. And so Jesus here is planning to head down to Jerusalem to face the people that are going to kill him.

Why? This is where we see the love of Jesus. In verse 34, we see Jesus burdened with grief.

[18:15] Verse 34, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together.

As a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. We can see this as a living parable. Jesus pictures himself like a hen and the people of Israel like her chicks.

And if we go back to verse 32, Herod is pictured as a fox, a pest to God's field. And as the true king, Jesus wants to gather the people, his people, not for political reasons or for gaining power, but to gather them under his wings, out of love for protection, like a mother to her children.

And this is enhanced by the play on the word desire. In the original language, the word desire occurs three times. Herod the fox desires to kill Jesus the hen.

Jesus the hen desires to gather the chicks to protect them from the fox, but the chicks don't desire their mother. And if we go to the end of the book, the gospel of Luke, the people actually side with Herod to crucify Jesus.

[19:47] The chicks work together with the fox to kill the hen. What an irony. No wonder Jesus laments here.

And Jesus knows at this time that it's going to happen. At this point in the gospel of Luke, he has already predicted his death at least twice, and yet he still desires to go to Jerusalem to gather his chicks that he knows are going to betray him.

No other god does this. God is so if we think that the image of Jesus as a rejecting host in the previous passage is harsh, this image of a hen shows the heart of Jesus in the present.

Before it's too late and the door has to be shut, Jesus actually desires to gather and protect the people out of love. love. And that's why he needs to go to the center in Jerusalem.

And he desires to gather us too. And he will only reject the people to get into the banquet later because they have rejected him first.

[21:12] The chicks run away from the hen. And when the chicks choose to side with the fox rather than with the hen, what do they get?

Well, I've got a friend who used to have a few chickens in his backyard up in Eagle Mount. And one time a fox came and in the morning he found everything destroyed, ransacked, a trail of feathers. foxes. That's what foxes do. And so in verse 35, Jesus says, look, your house is left to you desolate, ransacked.

I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That last sentence there, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, comes from Psalm 118 where the people recognize the king and welcome him to enter the temple.

And so Jesus is saying here, until the people recognize him as their king instead of Herod, their house will be left desolate. We've heard from last week that Jesus came to set us free from our sins.

[22:30] And so if we continue to reject him, then we will always be enslaved by our sin and we will be left desolate. And Jesus will reject us from entering the heavenly banquet because we have rejected him first.

And so perhaps the illustration at the start of this sermon could use a bit of revision. Jesus doesn't save everyone, not because he can't afford helping all beggars who ask him, but because many beggars don't think they need help.

And they reject his help and even want to get rid of him. If we know that we are beggars and we beg him, he has promised, surely I will never turn you away.

And that's what Jesus is lamenting here, his cheeks running away from him. Friends, if you haven't done so, take Jesus.

Take this king as your king, as your God. Don't just take his teachings or miracles and then run away with them. Take him as your king and you will get a king who loves you and protects you like a mother to her children.

[24:03] You will get a king who will serve you in the banquet. You will get a king who has given his life for you. Make every effort to have a personal relationship with him because that's how you enter the door.

And if you already have Jesus as your king, enjoy him. Enjoy the loving embrace of his wings. It doesn't make life easier.

After all, we are just chicks who can do nothing in this dangerous world full of foxes. But if we run to Jesus, he promises to protect us.

As an old hymn says, safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on his gentle breast, there by his love overshadowed, sweetly my soul shall rest.

In fact, some of us sang that hymn yesterday at the memorial service of Grace's sister, Helen. Grace is a member of our 745 service.

[25 : 17] And we heard the testimony of how Helen, who was in India, had a quiet but firm and confident faith. Her faith enabled her to persevere for two years of battling with illness.

And in the last moment of her life, she kept saying to her Hindu nurse that there was a house being built for her. And right before she died, she said, the house is ready.

She trusted in Jesus' promise and she was confident that when she died, she would be in the arms of Jesus, protected by his loving wings, feasting in the house of God.

And that witnessing, through her confidence and trust, was used by God somehow to touch the heart of that Hindu nurse who afterwards wanted to be a Christian.

so let's not forget to invite people around us as well, the other chicks, your family, your friends, your colleagues, so they don't get devoured by the foxes, but return home to the embrace of Jesus.

[26 : 34] So that when Jesus returns, they too will get through the narrow door and they too shall enjoy the banquet with you and with God.

let's pray. Amen. Thank you, Father, for reminding us to enter through the narrow door through a relational faith in Jesus.

Thank you for reminding us of your great love to us and the great love of your son who died for us, whose sins killed him in Christ our King, we pray.

Amen. Thank you.