

# Crowds Left Outside and Christ's Lament

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's turn again this evening to Luke's Gospel, and tonight we're looking at verses 22 to 35, this final part of the chapter, where we have two particular issues to deal with in the teaching of this chapter.

The first part of it there, from verse 22 down to verse 30, Jesus there is dealing with those that he himself refers to as left outside.

We've been thinking of how the kingdom of God is something that Jesus began to teach about, and last time he gave us an indication of how the kingdom of God, what it was like, in the previous passage there, that it was very small in its beginnings, and yet grew into such a great, glorious thing, and yet also, in verse 20, that it's something which has such a powerful influence, that it spreads wherever its power is actually seen.

Well, he now comes to, Luke comes to tell us about an incident that took place as Jesus went on his way. Remember, this is really the whole purpose of Luke in giving us this Gospel.

Remember, way back at the beginning of the Gospel, how he sets out in his introduction, that it's to set forth things which happened there in his own experience in Jerusalem in those days.

[ 1 : 36 ] So that everything else, as we've seen up to now, really follows on from that. That's Luke beginning to unpack, as it were, that little reference he had there to the things that happened.

Well, these are the things that happened. They have to do with Jesus of Nazareth. They have to do with his ministry. They have to do with all the things that he began to do and to teach, and the things that especially he did in the whole climax of his mission on the cross at Calvary, which is given such a lot of space in Luke as well as in the other Gospels.

But here we come to discover that actually the Kingdom of God, which in some ways is rather difficult to get a precise definition of, but in this context the Lord is making it clear that the Kingdom of God and salvation come to pretty much the same thing.

To be saved is to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. To be within the Kingdom of God is to actually possess salvation.

The two things are interlinked in that way, which is why you find described here in the first part of the passage the door into salvation. You can say it is very much also the door into the Kingdom of God.

[ 2 : 57 ] John chapter 3 then comes to mind again Jesus speaking to Nicodemus and telling Nicodemus, who was of course himself so convinced that he was within the Kingdom of God.

He was a teacher of the Jews. He knew his Old Testament. He had all of these advantages. And yet Jesus says, except you be born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Unless you be born of water and of the Spirit. That's to say by a spiritual power from God, from the Holy Spirit to turn your life around, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

There is an entrance to the Kingdom of God that God himself defines as our rebirth. And therefore it's the same when you think about salvation.

Our entrance to salvation is through spiritual rebirth. Just like you come into this world and living in this world outside of your development in your mother's womb.

[ 3 : 59 ] You come to live your life independently as an individual by being born. And you come to live your life that Jesus describes as, or the Bible describes as life eternal.

The life that God gives to his people spiritually, they come into the possession of it by being born again. By being born through the Spirit of God.

And that is one of the main features of the first part of the passage. We'll see that he deals with those who are left outside of salvation or of the Kingdom.

And yet he does speak about this door. So we're going to give a bit of attention to the door especially. Because the door first of all is described as a narrow door.

Here's this man, we don't know who he was, but he said to Jesus as he was traveling on to Jerusalem and fulfilling the purpose of his mission to get to Jerusalem to the cross there.

[ 5 : 03 ] Someone said to him, Lord will those who are saved be few? And it's interesting isn't it that Jesus, how often we find this, that Jesus makes it clear that he wasn't really asking the right question.

It followed on from what he said before about the Kingdom of God and what the Kingdom of God was like. And the way that he described it as increasing from very small beginnings.

And then having such power and influence as spread its own influence into people's lives. So you can understand why this man came or this person said, Lord are those who are saved few?

But Christ's answer shows you're not asking the right question. It's not an issue first and foremost for you of how many or how few are saved, but will you be saved?

And it's interesting too that although this was an individual who asked the question, you notice that Jesus in reply spoke to them, to the crowd that were listening.

[ 6 : 07 ] He used the occasion, he used the occasion, he used the question from this one individual to answer them all, to apply the answer to them all. He said to them, strive to enter through the narrow door.

And that fits in of course with teaching elsewhere, as you know, that the door to the Kingdom of God, the door into salvation is not a wide one.

The way that leads to eternal life, Jesus said somewhere else, is the narrow way. It's not the broad way. That's the one that leads, he said, to destruction.

Remember who it is who is speaking. This is the Lord of life. The Lord who knows human beings far better than we know ourselves or other people know us.

The Lord who knows what the divine government is about. The Lord knows what eternity is about, what eternity is like, how eternity compares to time, how significant eternity is compared to time.

[ 7 : 15 ] And he said, strive to enter through the narrow door. The word strive is a very strong one.

It's a word that includes the idea of really giving this your all. It's a word from which you get the English word energize or agonize rather.

A word that has a lot of movement in it, a lot of energy in it. The idea of striving for something or striving to do something is something into which you really put your utmost energy.

Because what the Lord of course was stressing was that these issues of the kingdom and the issues of salvation are so incredibly important above everything else.

That you really ought to give it to you everything in order to be saved. It doesn't mean you're saved because of how much you put into it. It doesn't mean you're saved because of your input.

[ 8 : 29 ] It doesn't mean you're saved because of your striving. But he is saying, if you want to be saved, you'd better strive. Strive to enter into through the narrow gate, through the narrow door.

Now it's narrow because there are a lot of things that we can't get through it. We've all seen turnstiles.

And turnstiles are nowadays used not just at football grounds, but many other places as well. When you come, for example, through Waverly Station in Edinburgh, when you're coming off the train, you have your ticket and you put it into this wee slot.

And the turnstile, then you can walk through the turnstile. Or there might be little gates that open.

But there's usually little spikes in a turnstile. You just try getting a suitcase through there.

You can't do it. If you come with a huge big suitcase off the train, the man beside the turnstile has got to open a special gate for you to get through. He takes your ticket, he checks it, and you get through that way.

[ 9 : 40 ] But you can't take this suitcase through the turnstile itself. It's too narrow. It won't fit. It'll just block it. You'll get stuck. And the Lord is saying that the door to the kingdom of God is deliberately narrow.

You can pack your spiritual suitcase with all the things of this world that you would like to get to take with you, but you can't take it through. It's too narrow.

You have to leave self. You have to leave pride. That's why Jesus, as we saw elsewhere, describes discipleship, and he's going on to speak about it later on in chapter 14 as well, the cost of discipleship, or how you need to really be sure that discipleship is something you prepare for

properly and realize what it amounts to.

Well, he's saying discipleship is a matter of denying yourself. You can't fill your suitcase full of self and expect to get through the door to heaven.

You have to deny yourself. You have to put self away because self is contrary to giving your heart and your life to Jesus, to God.

[10:57] Self is where you want to control your own life. Self has to do with your own self-righteousness. Self has to do with your own plans as to what the best thing is for your life.

Self is something that prevents you from accepting the will of God as the office of your government. That's why he's deliberately describing it as the narrow door.

Of course, a lot of people will tell us, well, that's why I don't like the Bible. Because it makes us into very narrow people. I can't go along with you Christians, people will tell you, because you live such a narrow life.

Well, it's actually not like that at all. It's a narrow door. But the country beyond it is vast. There's nothing narrow about it once you're through.

But you can't take the things of this world through with you. In other words, it's the same as Jesus elsewhere teaches. You cannot trust in riches. That's what he was saying to a rich ruler who went away.

[12:13] He didn't like what Jesus said to him. And the disciples then turned to him and said, who then can be saved? What Jesus said, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

With men this is possible, but with God all things are possible. But some people take the view that they're pretty much the same thing that he meant as in this context here.

Because apparently it was the case that in the cities of those days, where you had to take your camel through, that there were some entrances or some openings in the walls that were quite narrow.

And you couldn't take the camel through if the camel was filled up with all the baggage that you had used on your journey. Before you went through this gate that was called the eye of the needle, shaped something like a needle's eye.

You had to take the baggage off. You had to unload the camel and then you led the camel through. If you tried to take the camel through with all the baggage still on top of it, you couldn't do it.

[13:18] The gate was too narrow for security purposes, I'm sure. Some people say that that's the imagery behind what Jesus is saying. And it fits with what you find here as well. Strive to enter through the narrow gate.

When he's saying strive, he doesn't say keep your baggage on and push as hard as you can and eventually you'll get through it. What he's saying is strive to offload everything you don't need.

Strive to offload everything that will keep you out. And then you'll get through. And then you'll be inside. And then you can enjoy the vastness of all that God provides for his people.

It's not a narrow world. It's not a narrow view of life. It's a narrow entrance. But you enter into the broad vistas of salvation.

They're never ending. They're filled with the things of eternal life. But then he speaks about not just a narrow door, but a closed door.

[14:28] Strive to enter for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. And then he amplifies that.

He expands on that by explaining what he means by they will not be able. These many who will try to get in and will not be able. Why will they not be able? Because the time is coming, he says, when the door will no longer be open.

When the master of the house returns or 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.

It's a picture of somebody who is in bed. The door is still open. But there's a point at which he rises. He gets up, whether it's in bed or in the chair or whatever.

The master of the house rises up and he goes to the door. And the door is shut. And those who are outside have to stay outside because he locks the door.

[15:30] That's it. The house is made secure. Those who are inside are inside. Those who are out are out. And when the master of the house arises, when this same Jesus returns, the door to the kingdom will be shut.

It will no longer be just a narrow door. It will be a closed door. And he himself will lock it. And if you're outside, or if I'm outside, then we're outside for good.

Forever. The opportunity to go through the door is limited. There's a point at which it comes to an end.

It's not going to be like that all the time. Forevermore. And then from outside the door, there is what we can call a pointless pleading.

Lord, open to us. And he will say, I do not know where you come from. And then you will begin to say, But we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.

[16:50] 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 in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves cast out.

Now he's saying this specifically to these Jewish people of his day. To the crowds, that especially to the religious authorities, particularly the Pharisees, the scribes, and those who were opposed to him, and made their opposition very obvious to him.

He's saying to these people, the day is coming if you continue like this. This is what you will actually experience. This is how you will be found.

Outside of that door, that's now open to you. And then you will say, Lord, open to us. But he will say, I don't know where you're from. Now that might sound a bit strange.

But what it's saying really is, the Lord is saying, you had social fellowship with me, yes. And they themselves are saying, but we ate and drank in your presence.

[18:02] We were with you at all of these meals, and you taught in our streets. We are a people who came under your teaching.

You know us, Lord. And he's saying, yes, you know me from that point of view, but you've never had living, spiritual, loving fellowship with me.

You did not accept me into your lives. You did not accept me for who I was. You continued to reject me. And now the door is shut.

And you've seen the mistake you made, but there's no going back. And I think that's one of the really solemn things about this whole issue. That these are people described as really knowing now the truth when it's too late.

Realizing the truth in a way that they never realized it before, because they now realize the terrible loss that they have entailed in not accepting him, in not accepting his word, in actually putting this away from themselves, so that here they are, and he has come back, and he has shut the door, and they are on the outside, and they're pleading to be let in, and they're using these arguments in order to try and persuade him to turn the lock, and just open the door one more time.

[19:29] And he says, no, go away. Apart from me. I don't know you in any ties of spiritual kinship at all.

You have no fellowship with me. You have no connection with me in any vital way. Therefore, you have to leave.

Now that, of course, is not just applicable to these people of that day. If you have to take the principles that are taught here, and apply them to our own situation, to our own age, to our generation, to your position and mine tonight, as we found here in this church building this evening. Because this is, these principles of God's word have to come across the years of history that have elapsed because they're relevant for our age, and for our needs, and for our circumstances.

What does that mean? It means that we are the people who are presently eating and drinking in the presence of Christ, as it were. If you take that language to be a description of the privileges of having the gospel, of having the message of the gospel, of having the Christ of the gospel in our midst, in his gospel, in his church ordinances, in the Lord's Supper, in the worship services of the church.

[20:58] that's where we're at. That's where we are. Just as if we were like these people in those days where he was in their streets, they heard him speaking, they saw his miracles.

That's where you and I are. And so he's being very kind to us tonight and saying that this is what he said to these people so that we are forewarned.

So that we are given the information that we need to have so that we will not be left outside. That's why he's giving it to us.

It's not easy to preach this. It's not easy to accept this. It's not easy to unpack the solemn things that Jesus is saying here. But we have to do it because our very eternity is bound up with it. Our eternal destiny is bound up with it. We can choose to put it aside. We can choose to leave it aside in our preaching. That's one of the good things about going through a Gospel of Luke or a book of the Bible like this.

[ 22 : 08 ] If you're doing it passage by passage, you have to deal with the difficult things. You have to deal with the solemn things. You have to deal with the truth as you find it. if you're going to be honoring to God.

And he's setting before me and he's setting before you tonight something that is designed for our benefit. For our everlasting benefit.

what he's really saying is don't you with all your advantages with all that you have that many people in the world don't have tonight don't you with all the advantages you have above those people who never come to church and don't want to come to hear the Gospel here you are with all the advantages don't you be found outside when I come back and shut the door.

If you haven't come through it then you will never come through it again. We have one life to live. One opportunity if you take that life the whole extent of that life as our opportunity to come through the door of the kingdom into salvation.

And that's all that we have and it's not a long time. it's a closed door at the point of Christ's return and you see what he's then saying depart from me 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 in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out and people will come from east and west and from north and south and they will recline at table in the kingdom of God and behold some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last.

[ 24 : 05 ] Now Jesus is introducing something there which would in some ways be quite stunning to these Jews. Not only did they expect themselves especially these Pharisees and these religious people to be within the kingdom already but they did not expect to share the kingdom with Gentiles with people of the nations round about them and yet Jesus is saying to them actually those that you see presently as last or least likely to have a place in the kingdom of God they'll be first some of them and many of you he's saying who think that you are first you'll be last you'll be left out some of you and what they have really you could say is the pain of an endless regret that's what it's like outside the door it's a place you never want to be because he talks about weeping and gnashing of teeth weeping is grief gnashing of teeth is rage the utmost grief the deepest grief the utmost rage against God because they're outside even though they know they're outside by their own doing it's still a rage against God and it's a rage that they cannot get in when they now want to get in the utmost grief and the utmost rage there is endless regret because he's saying you're seeing people in there that you thought you'd be company with

Abraham Isaac Jacob the prophets you'll never share their company you'll be outside did anybody ever say to yourself I hope I'll see you in heaven probably they did many of us would have had that said to us by godly people whose salvation we wouldn't doubt they lived as people of God in this world and when they were about to leave this world some of them at least said to their loved ones and to others who knew them I hope I'll see you in heaven will you will I will we share salvation with those we know have gone to be with God or will we be left outside will our eternity be one of endless regret it must be a terrible thing it will be a terrible thing to spend the whole of eternity thinking about all the advantages we had that we didn't take regretting we didn't take them filled with grief and anguish that we didn't and now we can't do anything about it and now there's no going back to redo it oh if only that's going to be an echo throughout eternity on the lips of millions of people if only if only if only if only

I'd gone through that door if only I'd done it when I felt the truth of God speaking to my heart that night in knock free church if only I'd done it when such and such a person spoke to me and I could see what they were getting at and yet I didn't actually accept the saviour into my life then even though I felt that it was very near that I was on the border of the king oh if only I'd done it but if only my words filled with pain on the outside of the door but let me just say this you have an account of a door that's narrow you have an account of a door that's closed but for you and for me tonight it's a door that's still open it's not shut yes it's narrow but it's not shut you tonight and I are looking into salvation there's the door that God is placing before us you're looking through it you're looking into salvation you're looking into the righteousness the life the forgiveness of sins the pardon the

adoption the sanctification all the things that you see there that God has provided for his people on the other side of that door get in there go through that door don't stand any longer outside it's open so that you go through it because just think of what

Jesus is doing he's turning this question of this this person that asked him will the saved be few and he's turning it round and he's putting it this way will the saved be you not few will the saved be you now there it is what can be more pointed what can be plainer what can be more designed than that for our benefit for our good is that is that not the epitome of kindness that God has made it so clear to you this door is a door for you to enter through put your trust in the Lord if you haven't done it before now take his offer tonight put your hand in his hand go through the door with him into salvation and then the

Lord comes to lament over Jerusalem we really have to just say this in a word at that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him get away from here for Herod wants to kill you and he said go and tell that fox by which Jesus meant that worthless person behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow on the third day he goes on to speak about how it's not possible that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem in other words you're seeing there how determined Jesus was to go through with his work right through to the death that he knew he had to die at Jerusalem and isn't that itself in the context such a powerful argument as you put it alongside that emphasis on the narrow door that's still open to you in other words you could say the passage is saying to us very plainly look at all that Christ committed himself to and finished and went through with there was the door to the suffering of the cross was there ever a door like that he had to go through that door and here he is looking through that door and saying I have to go through it I must do it for my people that's what he's saying nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and finish this course at Jerusalem I must do it what he's saying is I'm constrained to do it I'm determined to do it here is the Lord saying strive to enter in through the narrow door how can we not strive to enter in through the narrow door when Jesus put so much put everything put his everything going through the door of his suffering and of his crucifixion and of his death for our sake and then he goes on to lament oh

[ 32 : 58 ] Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and those stones those who are sent to it how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not one thing is very obvious nobody is left outside because Jesus is unwilling to take them how often I would have done this for you he's saying I would have gathered your children the children of this Jerusalem this city that his affection is so set upon as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and there's a marvelous picture of care of attention of this mother hen just smothering her children with love with compassion with everything that you associate with the care of a mother hen for her little chicks and he's saying that's what I would like to have done for you spiritually that is what I would have done but you would not it's not a question of whether or not

Jesus is willing to do it or would he desire to do it or not the problem is their will not his how often I would have done it but you would not nobody's lost because Jesus is unwilling we are lost because we are not willing to be saved we are left outside because we are not willing to go in the fault is not with him the fault is with me with you without will because every rejection and refusal to go through the door is a willful one you will not do it and therefore you stay out he's saying and your house is left to you therefore forsaken it appears that he means by that the city itself maybe the temple as well is included

I'm sure it is but in any case he's saying behold your house is forsaken well it's the ultimate disaster what is the forsaken house why is it the ultimate disaster disaster because God is no longer living there and where God is not in the sense of living there in living fellowship with us we have no life your house is left he says forsaken it's marked by being outside you belong outside not inside friends tonight those of you who are not saved who knows this may be the last opportunity that you have to hear the gospel maybe it's the last opportunity

I'll have to preach it you and I don't know when the door will be shut on this life and that's why this moment is so important the door is open the Lord is calling you through it you know some have gone through it already there waiting on the other side to welcome you that door is a door that's designed to admit every single kind of person who will have the Lord as their Savior and those who will not have to stay outside and as they're holding please please come in don't stand outside let's pray Lord we give thanks for the presence of your spirit we give thanks for the way in which you appear in your own word and for the way that you make it evident that you are present amongst

your people we give thanks for your presence here this evening we pray oh Lord when your word has touched our hearts that we may have that response of faith that response that will come to welcome your own call to us to come to enter through this narrow door grant us grace Lord we pray as we seek your grace to enable us to come in so meet us we pray and give us that welcome that you have for your people hear us we pray for Jesus sake amen amen go to people that you are single Lord amen for so meet down me