

# Luke 13:22-30 EMS

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[ 0 : 01 ] Please pray with me as we stand. God, we pray that you would give us an increase of your grace this morning. We might meekly hear your word, receive you with pure affection, and bear forth the fruit of your Spirit, which you fill us as we keep in step with the same Spirit.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. You want to reach back into your pew or the slot in front of you and turn to page 873 again, if you're not already there, to Luke chapter 13.

Halfway down the left column you'll see verse 22. We can begin a sermon series today called The Great Reversal. You'll see that on the front of your service sheet from the Gospel of Luke, chapters 13 to 17.

It's a great catchy phrase. It's not completely original. I'll spare you the books by which that title is on as well, but they range from economics to politics to even evangelism and social concern. Some of those are a reach and an overstatement, but I don't think it is when it comes to God's word revealed to us in Luke chapter 13 as we begin here in verse 22.

[ 1 : 30 ] But our series extends from chapter 13 to 17, though it comprises a section that begins back in chapter 9, verse 51, when we read there, when the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

And then picking up, here in Luke chapter 13, verse 22, as you look down there, we read, he went on his way, end of the sentence, toward Jerusalem. So Jerusalem is literally the city's God, or the God of the city.

That's what it means. So Jerusalem is the throne where God resides and rules his kingdom. And today's reading is about that kingdom of God, though it spreads broadly, and he resides and rules over the whole of creation.

So this reading today is about that kingdom, though, and the king who rules it. If you look down in verses 28 and 29, you'll see those phrases, that word, the kingdom of God, and more especially today's reading regards our admittance to the kingdom of God by salvation.

And all access is granted through a door. Let's use three times in the passage. So today's sermon is going to be framed this way, okay? There's an open door, there's a closed door, and there's a doorman.

[ 2 : 52 ] Okay? Very, very easy. Open, closed door, and a doorman. So first, the open door. An anonymous question is actually put to Jesus, but not a faceless one.

And verse 23, and as you look down, you see the question is, Lord, who will those who are saved be few? Was the question sincere?

What was the motive? The question is no doubt, I think, speculative, maybe calculative, and impersonal. But Jesus takes it really seriously.

So Jesus gets personal, and maybe even offensive, because he answers this way, strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Jesus doesn't say, first, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. First, he says, strive to enter through the narrow door. Then the answer comes.

[ 3 : 56 ] Answer-ish, I think. In other words, Jesus says, I think, don't focus on the many or the few. Focus on you. The door is open right now, so don't just stand there, but strive, because many went through it.

The door is open then, and it's open now. And God only knows the motivation and collection of those seeking to enter.

And the Lord then and now urges all who have ears for hearing and hearts for hoping to strive. So apparently, seeking is not enough, but striving is essential, because it means, actually, to struggle, to wrestle, to strain, and to stretch for this, but even more, to agonize.

This is the same word used by Paul to describe athletes' training in his book to the Corinthians, and also his own ministry of labor, to the Colossians.

It comes from the word, literally, that's used, that we translate, agonize. Almost like, though, not exactly, though, because the word isn't used about Jesus, who's in the Garden of Gethsemane when he's distressed, but that's not the word they're used.

[ 5 : 25 ] So you feel like, I don't know if I want to agonize that much. Well, there's maybe a little relief, but this is what the word means when he tells this person and all of us to strive.

Jesus wants everyone to know, the door, yes, is narrow, but it's open. So strive, agonize, enter. And if you're a follower of Jesus, you all know what that's like.

The stress, the strain, maybe even the agony of your conversion by repentance, through faith, in the grace of God alone. that's the open door, now the closed door.

The door won't remain open eternally, which is why our Lord urges us to strive. The door will close at some point in time, which is conveyed by Jesus in this teaching in verse 25, as you look down. He says, when once the master of the house has risen, then shut the door. So the door is shut by the house master. Entrance is open to all, but not forever.

[ 6 : 26 ] And it's a lie if you've actually ever been told so. I don't ever forget when I was leading a church in Abbotsford called Holy Cross and Bishop Don Harvey came and visited us.

He told us this story about this conversation between the devil and some of his demons. And the conversation unfolded and he told the demons, don't persuade the humans to doubt or disbelieve in Jesus.

Just whisper in their ears. You don't have to submit and serve Jesus today and enter his kingdom. You have all the time in the world.

Jesus is the master who rises from his banquet, hall, chair, and will close the door. This means there are some on the inside and some on the outside, but all have the opportunity to enter through. Some plead afterwards and beg, looking for a second chance. But we're told by Jesus that some will then begin to stand outside and knock at the door saying, Lord, open to us.

[ 7 : 35 ] The offer isn't indefinite and has a definite time limit even though he doesn't tell when. So access isn't granted but denied once the door is closed.

Entrance to the kingdom of God is not like a bus ride though, but more like an airline journey. Sometimes you can run to the bus stop just when the doors have closed, right? And occasionally the bus driver will open the door for you.

You're laughing like I know you know where this is going, right? But if you're late to the departure gate, right, at the airport and the crew's on the plane and so are the pilots and the gate is just closed, it's not going to get opened again.

But the master doesn't give the Johnny-come-lately of the silent treatment like a heavenly airline carrier. Our Lord gives an explanation.

He says this, then the master will answer you, I don't know where you've come from. At least that's what the ESV says. Not that where you come from actually makes a difference and we'll find this out later that you can come from anywhere and everywhere.

[ 8 : 45 ] In fact, two things used to make a difference when it came to those who entered the kingdom of God. Geography was one and ethnicity was another. But that's all changed now that the kingdom of God is at hand come through Jesus Christ.

What matters now is that the master knows you. Or literally it says here, where you are.

Access to the kingdom of God by the gospel of grace is knowledge-based. But it isn't our knowledge of God, though that's important, we need to know him, but his of us.

Where you are at any given time makes all the difference with Jesus. Not what you've done, or how you feel, or what you think, or where you've been, but where you are.

In other words, the question is, where am I? Am I like Adam who hid from the great I am? Do I hide myself from the Lord?

[ 9 : 50 ] Am I afraid to let him see me for who I am? Or do I make myself known to him who I know is omniscient? But he wants me to know he sees me as the sinner I am, but in need of his saving, his soothing, his securing grace.

And we can sabotage our relationship with Jesus by waiting for him to close the door on us. But when he's closed that door, it's not like a slam.

It's more like a silent closing, quiet but definite. Because the invitation and the imperative to strive and agonize for entry was offered all along.

So the door is closed at some point, but not quite yet. So it's the open door, the closed door, now the doorman. So the door is open and one day the door is closed.

But what about the opener and the closer? That would be the doorman. And the doorman knows these three things.

[11:00] One is about good versus evil, the other one's about the inclusive versus the exclusive and the other is the first versus the last. It's not another three-point sermon just so you know. Very quickly though, the doorman knows good from evil so he says this, depart from me all you workers of evil, interested in evil and good.

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. The doorman is deeply interested in good and evil.

He doesn't leave that to anyone else to define. This is not the only place scripture reveals this to us. John chapter 10, we're told by Jesus himself who identifies as the door.

He says a thief is positioned to steal the shepherd's sheep. And because Jesus knows good and evil, he says in effect, over my dead body. Will the thief, that is the evil one, get my sheep?

He's interested in good and evil. Exclusive versus inclusive. There's a wideness to the grace of the doorman that corresponds to the narrowness of the doorway. As narrow as the door is, even wider, is the kingdom of God.

[12:18] And the picture here, I think, is actually like an hourglass. You know, really big on top, narrow in the middle, and then very wide at the bottom. And the doorman wants people to come from any and everywhere to the banquet table.

So Jesus tells us, and people will come from east and west and north and south and recline at table in the kingdom of God. Come from everywhere. And it's not only Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem anymore.

Now the supper of the Lamb on the throne is open to all from Lima. You guys may not even know where that is. Or Langley. From Sydney, Australia, to Vancouver Island, to Vancouver, from B.C. or Washington, red or blue states, red, blue, green, orange, and dominated electoral districts of Canada.

The gospel is for everyone, everywhere, who bring their sin and stain, their suffering, and their shame to the doorman. Last one, first and last.

The doorman cares for the last and the first. There is a too late even though many are called but few are chosen. It's Matthew 22, verse 14.

[13:41] Here in verse 30, Jesus declares, and behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.

The doorman designs a kingdom that is reversed. Those who want to declare, but I was here first, don't have exclusive rights to the kingdom of God.

The doorman takes great pleasure in those who have agonized and strived to join in his divine feast. Jews and Gentiles by the grace of God through the agonizing death of Jesus.

He's not asking us to do something that he actually hasn't done for us. So that's the open, the closed, and the doorman. Just a closing by way of implication and a little personal story.

Open and closed doors by the doorman. There is only one door. But many implications, I know, for our discipleship, our fellowship, our worship, our evangelism, our social justice, everything.

[14:50] Lots of implications. But let me just share this with you. I grew up in the Lutheran tradition. My mom's family were Lutherans. My dad's family left the church when my grandfather and the pastor got in a conflict over tithing.

So my dad was never baptized until he actually met my mom and they were to be married in the Lutheran church. So dad isn't a Christian in his own words up to this point, but he's a hard worker. He starts a business when I'm about four years old holding down two jobs. The job is selling and installing and servicing garage doors and operators and hollow metal steel doors.

Back in the days when there were CB radios, do you remember that? Some of you are like, I have no idea what that means. My dad's handle was The Doorman.

When he became a Christian, he got a vanity license plate and on the license plate it said, One Door. I know, it's kind of corny, but it was a conversation starter.

[ 15 : 56 ] And so people would come to him, maybe Christians, maybe not. What does that One Door thing mean? And then it led to conversations of love. We talked to them.

They were a Christian, what that One Door meant. Where it was, when it was, who it pointed to. And of course, when it was people that weren't Christians and lots of them weren't in that field, then it led to a different kind of conversation, but one of love.

It's One Door, friends. And I think the implications, and I'm assuming that all of you have actually entered through that door already, but what about those who don't know Jesus yet?

Do they know about this one door, that threshold? And even the agony and the striving that people do and the struggle to approach that door and pull back, but actually on the other side of it, there is Jesus knocking on hearts, desiring to keep the door open, but will one day close it.

We speak to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.