



The Narrow Door

Luke 13: 22 - 35

July 7, 2019

Welcome everybody. It is good to be gathered together in Jesus Name. We are gathered together here with Bethel Grace Baptist Church, assembled at this property at 17909 Carpintero Avenue, in the city of Bellflower, California.

This morning I want to start by telling you a way in which the Kingdom of God is different than this building that we gather in week after week. This building, it has seven entryways. There are two entryways up here, two in the foyer, and three of them in the Fellowship Hall.

There are seven entryways into this building, but there is only one way into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a singular entry. It is a humble entry. It is a narrow way. Make no mistake about it, the Kingdom of our God is spectacular beyond the wildest imagination of any person sitting in this room right now. God's Kingdom will have immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

The Kingdom of God will be astonishing in its glory, but it does not have a massive and ornate entryway. Instead, you will have to duck to get in. It is a narrow entryway. You might even have to squeeze your way through. You need to squeeze your way through.

Any person who is listening to this message sitting in this place—listening to audio or watching on a live stream—you need to make sure that you enter through that way and do it now, doing it before it is too late, and the door is closed for good.

This is not just my encouragement to you. This comes straight from the Messiah. This comes from the King of kings. This comes from the Lord of lords. This is what Jesus wants us to pay attention to this morning as we hear from Him in His most Holy Word.

We pick up in the Gospel of Luke and as we get into our text, we are reminded that we are on what I am calling *The Discipleship Road to Jerusalem*. The rolling hills of Galilee are now behind the Lord and His disciples. They are slowly and steadily making their way to Jerusalem, where the cross is looming. The place of our redemption. The place of the Lord's suffering, and Jesus, speaking to each one of us, asserts that there is one way into His Kingdom.

Let's see this laid out before us as we look at what is written in Luke Chapter 13 and Verses 22 through 30:

²²He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, ²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell

you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When 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.' ²⁶Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' ²⁸In 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. ²⁹And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

This is the Sacred Living Word of God, and it is a sobering portion of Scripture. This is one of several kind of tricky passages that we are going to come to in the Gospel of Luke where it begins as a parable, kind of an illustration from everyday life that Jesus used, but as we read the tone and the gravity of what Jesus said, it something more than a parable at the same time.

This passage is often titled *The Parable of the Narrow Door*, this narrow door that enters into this grand dinner party in the House of the Lord. Then we begin seeing the visions that are here in this passage and we understand that this is something more than a parable. It becomes a vision into the life to come, a vision into the future beyond this physical life that we are living now.

The words of Jesus are so very serious. At the heart of what is written here is the fact that there is one way into the Kingdom of God, into Heaven. There are not multiple paths, through multiple religions, but there is only one way in and that way, brothers and sisters, is Jesus Christ.

As I studied and reflected on what is here, something that really, really hit me this week is that it is alarming. This is something that should really grab hold of our lapels and shake us up a little bit, because what is indicated in this teaching from Jesus is the post-death awareness of those who are outside of the Kingdom.

They want into the Kingdom, but it is too late. This is here for us in this text from the heart of Christ to us. This is a vision of the future. We see the patriarchs. We see Abraham there, along with Isaac and Jacob and the prophets. We see people from the north and the south and the east and the west. We can understand this to be Gentile believers coming in. We understand that this is not something that is happening on this earth, in this life.

There are people that are outside and are aware that they are outside. They assumed that they would be in the Kingdom, but it is very, very clear here in this text that they assumed too much. They did not have a right understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what He came to do.

While they have been close to the things of the Lord, they did not submit their hearts to the message that Jesus came to bring. This comes from Christ and His heart of mercy, speaking to us these things that we might be prepared for what comes when these bodies expire.

I was having a conversation yesterday with a brother that encouraged me. A brother here at Bethel Grace, he has been involved in some ongoing personal evangelism with some Mormon Missionaries. They started knocking at his door, and I think they got a little bit more than they bargained for with this brother of mine.

My understanding of Mormon theology is that they believe that you should obviously come to faith in Christ now in this life but if people don't, there will be another opportunity beyond the grave to hear the Gospel and believe.

But this text here, and so many other texts from Sacred Scripture, rules that out. The Word of the Lord in Hebrews 9:27 says:

²⁷... it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.

You need to hear the Word of the Lord and receive and believe it here this morning.

With this prophetic vision and these warnings of things to come coming from Christ, He drove it home with a command in Verse 24 and I think it is the heart of this passage of Scripture. In Verse 24 said:

²⁴”Strive to enter through the narrow door.

The essence of it is: Do this now. Do it now, before it is too late. Do it in the present day. Then:

²⁴...For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

I understand that to be pointing to a time beyond this life when people have died and realize that they are outside the Kingdom.

With the sobriety and the vital importance of this text with its instruction for us about the narrow door, I want us to understand three aspect of this very limited entryway into the Kingdom of Heaven, this singular way in.

If there is anybody who does not believe, I pray that these words will ring true in your heart in the hearing of God's Word. I pray that you will believe and enter in through faith. If you are here and you are already a believer, you are a Christian, I pray that as we look at a few aspects of this narrow door, it will be clarified in our hearts all the more, so that we will be able to point people to that way that leads to eternal life.

Three aspects of the entryway into everlasting glory with King Jesus. The first thing I want to point out is that:

1. It's a humble entryway (24)

I think that this really is the force that comes here in this text. That, along with the fact that it is an exclusive entryway. That is implied all throughout. This text does not say enter through one of the narrow or wide door. It says enter through the singular narrow door.

Pay attention to the fact that the door is in fact narrow. There is something about the lowliness and the meekness of this one entryway. It is a door that is limited in its size, less than standard width. It is a smaller entry. It is an unexpectedly reduced way of getting in. Enter through the narrow door, Jesus said.

Several years back Kristy and I had our first experience in binge watching a television series. Around Christmas time, we got this service called Amazon Prime. With Amazon Prime you get free shipping and Prime Video. You can stream movies and complete television series on your television or computer, thus the opportunity for binge watching! The first binge watching series that we got sucked into was a television show called *Downton Abbey*.

Downton Abbey is about this wealthy aristocratic British family in the early 1900s. They live in this massive country estate. It is like a castle and a mansion and it is huge. This home has a grand front door, the way in for all of the honored upper class, high society guests. That is the way they go in. However, is that the way the servants go in? No! There is a door somewhere in the back that is plain, just a normal little doorway. That is where the household staff goes in. That is the basic entryway for the servants.

Jesus was saying to us in this text, *That is the entryway you are looking for*. It is not this big, giant door where the red carpet is rolled out to you, but it is the narrow entryway into this dinner party. The narrow door is the one you are looking for. That is the one that you want to go into. It is the unassuming servant's way in.

What we find in the pages of Scripture is that this is a humble entryway. Understand it. Not only that, it is a singular door by which people like us may enter it, but there is a stumbling block at the foot of that singular door. It is something by which many religious people in Jesus' day and throughout the generations would not only stub their toe on, but bust their foot on. It is a stumbling block.

The way into the Kingdom of God is not through exaltation, but through crucifixion. The way into the Kingdom is through a Messiah that suffered a humiliating and excruciating public death by way of Roman execution. The way into the Kingdom of God is through the atonement for sin by which God laid upon the pure and unblemished Sacrifice. He laid upon Him the iniquities of us all.

God punished Jesus in our stead. That is the seriousness of our sin in the sight of the pristine holiness of God. The one way in is through the crucified Messiah, agreeing with God that your sin is that serious. That is how you come into the Kingdom of God. You must understand that Jesus in His grace paid the price to take your sin away. He suffered the wrath for your breaking of God's Law, day in and day out, all the days of your life.

I am not here to give you a self-esteem talk, by the way. I am here to tell you the reality that there is a Holy God and that you are accountable to Him and that you are fallen in sin. While you are made in the image of God and there is so much worth and glory in that, you are fallen in sin. Your desires are all twisted up. Each and every one of us, we rebel against the will of the Lord daily.

Jesus loves us so much that He went and paid the price for such transgression against God, that God might be just and the Justifier of the ungodly, people like us. That is the way in. Jesus paid the price to satisfy the justice of God that He might cleanse our sin away by His blood, that He might cover us in His righteousness that we might be fit for a Kingdom of such holiness. That is the way in.

The only way people can enter into this Kingdom is by stripping away any sense of moral superiority or self-righteousness. And instead saying that they are a sinner in need of grace, and that they need that grace and enter the servant's way—that door that Jesus opened.

It is a humble entryway. That is something that we must understand first. Let's see something else that is here:

2. It's a strenuous entryway (24)

Did you notice that, looking at Verse 24 once again? Jesus said:

²⁴“Strive to enter through the narrow door

Strive! That word *strive* in the underlying Greek that the New Testament was originally written in is the word *Agonizomai*. We get the English word *agony* from it. It was a word that implied struggle and it was often used in either a military or athletic contest, where you were striving against an enemy.

So Jesus says to all those hearing Him, *Strive to enter into the Kingdom, and you enter in through this narrow door*. Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, reading everything that we have in the pages of Scripture, this is not to say that we must work for our salvation and we must merit a place in the Kingdom of God by our upright deeds and behavior.

Who could do that!?! Certainly not me, not by an infinite longshot! It says even in the prophecy of Isaiah that all of our righteous deeds are like filthy, soiled rags before the holiness of God. So it is not that we work our way in by some kind of righteous efforts. However, there is still this sense in which we must strive to enter in.

How often do you use that word *mozey*? I think of a country western when I hear that word—mozey along, kind of lackadaisical. Nobody is going to kind of mozey into the Kingdom of the Most High God who created and sustains all things by His Holy Word. It is not like we cruise in with some kind of lackadaisical attitude. That is the first thing we must understand.

In addition to this, understand that there is a world that we live in that is infested with lies that have been spread, starting with the father of lies, Satan himself. There are so many people in this society of ours who will say, *You are okay. I am okay. Whatever path you are on, it is going to make it into the glory of Heaven.*

No! That's kind of the movement of the spirit of the age and the person in Christ is going to go against that saying, *Wait a minute here! I am in sin. I need to deny myself and look to Jesus.* Christians are to have the kind of grace that goes against the grain of what the fallenness and the world tells them to do. So in view of all the falsehood in this world, Jesus said to strive to enter through the narrow gate. Strive!

We don't enter in casually. This is serious and the person who understands the holiness of God and their own sense of culpability, they will understand the gravity of it all. Maybe an illustration will help. I have been reading a commentary on the Gospel of Luke by a Scottish brother in Christ by the name of Scot McKnight.

McKnight spoke of a certain pattern of church attendance that he noticed in his small hometown. Maybe it will kind of indicate the attitude that so many people have that we need to strive against. He said:

“While living in Scotland, I attended the local church in my village of 800 people. Sunday attendance was usually about 35 people, most over the age of 50, and several of whom were Americans. But twice a year the church held a communion service. In that church, a person had to attend one of these services to keep their name on the church roll. Those weeks had triple services, as almost everyone in town showed up.”

Thirty-five people came most Sundays. To keep their name on the roll and to keep the sense of what would probably be false assurance, suddenly they were busting at the seams on those Sundays, thinking that they could live life however they pleased without any sense of walking with the Living God in that renewal that defines a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

McKnight went on to say:

“This kind of cultural commitment to the church is not a relationship with Jesus. It is tragically erroneous to think that mere formal connection to him means that one will celebrate with him in the end...”

No, it comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, one that begins with a sense of fear and trembling—that we understand that He is holy and that we are not and we need to be forgiven and joined to the One who died for us and who rose from the grave.

There is a sense in which it is a strenuous entryway. Strive to enter through the narrow way, Jesus said. We continue with one more aspect of the entryway that I would like to point out to you.

3. It's a joyous entryway (29-30)

It issues forth in joy when we see this great turnaround that is in this passage of Scripture. For when a person humbles themselves to enter through that lowly servant's doorway, behold what they find upon entering in, they have a place at the Master's Table (Verse 29).

Coming in, there will be believers from the north and south and east and the west. Gentiles and contrite Jews have entered through the narrow door. They went through the servant's way and once getting in, they are not dismissed to the servant's quarters, where they will eat poarge or oatmeal or whatever inexpensive food material might be given.

No! When they come through that servant's entry, through the narrow door, they find that they have a place at the Master's Table. They are there having fellowship with the Head of the Home with all of His servants, the prophets and the patriarchs, who in the end are just sinners like us saved by grace too.

Jesus used a lot of this language of the banquet. Somebody recently asked me how that works because the church is going expand and there are going to be a lot of Christians that are there. Can I expect to be anywhere close to the head of the table.

I responded that I don't know exactly how that works, but I think that eventually that is going to be the case for all Christians. We are going to settle into this perfect fellowship by which we commune with our King, and all the brothers and sisters in Christ having a place in the dining hall of the Messiah.

So there is a joyous, joyous tone that this portion of Scripture concludes with. You enter in through the narrow door and what you find is that you are going to be feasting with the King—the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. It is coming.

We continue, going into the next portion of this Scripture. I want us to understand that these words and this teaching was originally given to Pharisaic Israel. The question is: How will they respond to what Jesus is calling them to? Will they humble themselves and will they understand that they need to enter into this narrow way as well?

This is not answered directly but we get to see something of the heart throughout the land of Israel in what comes next. Jesus gave this sobering teaching, then in Verse 31:

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."

We read this and we might think to ourselves, *What do you know about that? What got into the hearts of the Pharisees? Were they looking out for Jesus here? Were they trying to give Him some inside information so that He could avoid harm when harm came His way? Is that what was going on here?*

Well, not so fast! The threat of King Herod was probably legitimate. King Herod was a very troubled and conflicted man, and he was responsible for the recent execution of John the Baptist. He was haunted by that.

He heard of all the things that Jesus was doing and he thought that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. We might understand that Herod probably, in his meandering mindset, wanted to kill Jesus, to get rid of Him.

However, looking at this message to Jesus, that does not necessarily mean that the Pharisees were being altruistic. More likely, this was all out of expedience. The threat of Herod may have provided for them a way to get rid of Jesus without culpability coming to their feet.

So looking at what is in Verse 31, we probably should not put the emphasis on Herod wanting to kill Jesus but, rather, on them wanting Jesus to get away from them—go way up north to Asia. Go way down south to Egypt. Go out east to Edom. You can even go out west and take a swim in the Mediterranean. Just get away from here.

That is what they were saying to Jesus. They were trying to shoo Him off, even as Jesus was giving these vitally important glimpses into the things to come. There are many people in our midst who just want to shoo Jesus off and find an opportunity to do so.

Now Jesus continued and He responded. Will Jesus say, *Oh, boy, then maybe I should scam. Maybe I should get out of town. Maybe I do need to take flight.* Is that what Jesus did? Now see how Jesus responded when we look at Verses 32 through 35.

First, Jesus had a word to send back to Herod. Then He had a word to the city of Jerusalem. The message to Herod shows us the resolve in the heart of the Christ to continue on His present course. The word to Jerusalem gives us a way to peer into His heart of tenderness and mercy for sinners like us.

First, we see this word back to Herod. Verse 32:

³²And he said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.

Yes, I would understand that to be a veiled reference to the resurrection. Verse 33:

³³Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’

Here in this text we see the resolve of Jesus to make His way to the so-called City of Peace, where He would die at the city gates to establish peace between sinners like us and the holiness of God.

This text is filled with boldness. Do you see the bold heart of your Messiah? He called Herod a *fox*. Understand, every king in antiquity would have envisioned themselves like a strong lion, a

force to be reckoned with and Jesus said, *Here is what you can tell Herod. Go tell that fox that I am going where I'm going and I'm going to go to Jerusalem, realizing that I am going to die there. Go tell him that!*

The English translation here does not even give us the full extent of the boldness with which Jesus was speaking, because that word *fox* is actually in the feminine form. So often when you look at movies that depict the life of Christ, Herod is kind of depicted as an effeminate figure, it is based on this. Jesus said, *Go tell that vixen that I am on my way to Jerusalem, and I am going to continue my present course.* Wow, that is pretty bold.

I was pondering this into the week and was thinking just what if. What if a delegate came from Sacramento saying, *The governor, he understands what you are saying and has caught wind of you, sir, and you better get out of California or trouble is coming your way. You are going to get stuck in the slammer.*

A comparable response might have been, *You go tell that weasel that I am going to do what I am going to do!* Some of you might say that that might be a very fitting response. You might tell me to get out of politics, but Jesus was here in politics!

At the heart of it all and what this indicates is that Jesus was resolved to go and open the door that you might enter in, even when going into Jerusalem meant He was going to die on that splintery rugged Roman cross. Believe me, the splinters would not be the worst of it because He would drink the cup of divine wrath that human sin deserves.

That was Jesus' response to Herod. Then Jesus also spoke to Jerusalem and we see the tender heart of the Messiah. Jesus began addressing Jerusalem in a way that is comparable to how King David addressed his wayward son, *O Absalom, O Absalom.* Jesus said in Verse 34:

³⁴O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and 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 were not willing! ³⁵Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

We see the tenderness of the Lord here.

This week I read a story about a boy that lived on a farm. Tragedy hit when the barn on that farm caught fire, and it was burned to the ground. The he and others were sorting through the debris and wreckage in that barn.

Looking through everything, the boy noticed this lump of charcoaled wood. He went up and kicked it. Upon kicking that lump of charcoaled wood, several little chicks scurried out from underneath it.

That boy realized that it was not a piece of wood, but that was the mother hen acting on its impulse to protect her young. Here, the heart of the Savior was saying, *Jerusalem, Jerusalem,*

how often would I have gathered you under my wings. How often would I have had you protected from the harm that is to come.

This is speaking of Jesus and His desire that fallen sinners be saved and shielded from the punishment that our sin requires at the hand of God. Yet, what did Jesus say? *I willed, but you willed not.*

We need to understand that. *I willed it and you willed it not.* We need to receive texts like this into our theology and the Calvinists in us need to live with a little bit of tension there because that is the language of the text that is here. It shows that Jesus' desire was for the salvation of sinners, even sinners that would reject Him.

This statement of Jesus to Jerusalem, it includes the word *until*.

³⁵Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

It is interesting that some in Jerusalem were saying that of the Triumphal Entry, but in Matthew's account, we find that Jesus said these exact words again, weeping over Jerusalem: *You will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

There is a ray of hope for Jerusalem and for Israel in that word *until*. The desolation remains until a large majority of the Nation recognizes the blessedness of the One, Jesus of Nazareth, who came from their midst to die for sin.

The prophecy of Scripture in Zachariah and in Romans indicates that there is going to be a generation of Jews at the end age where there is a widespread faith and renewal. They will believe in their Messiah. But today these words come to us.

We are left with these two images. Jesus who wants to protect us under His wing. Have you found yourself, through faith, safely under His wings? Jesus says that here is an open door. It is a narrow door. You must humble yourself to enter in. Have you entered in? Believe in Jesus.

If you are here this morning and you are believing in Jesus for the first time, please let me know. Let the person who you came with know. We want to encourage you in the Christian life. I mean that! We want to come along side of you. Let's talk. We want to know about your faith. Believe in Jesus today!

Let's close in a word of prayer. Then we will go to the Lord's Supper.