

Luke 13:22-30; Psalm 6; The Door into the Kingdom I. Strive to Enter II. Finding a Seat

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how many people will be saved? Will it be many or few? Well, today Jesus hears a very similar question in v. 23. Will few be saved? Putting this question into the context of ch. 13, we find that Jesus is continuing to teach on the theme of the Kingdom- as v. 28 and 29 indicate. Last week, Jesus taught us that the Kingdom starts small- but it grows very large over time. The Kingdom starts hidden, but one day it will be revealed and fully evident. There will be a world wide, expansive kingdom one day! So the question of v. 23 seems out of place- but remember that the kingdom starts small like a mustard seed or some yeast. In answering this question about how many, Jesus once again shifts the focus. The question for Jesus is not- how many- but rather how? How will they enter the Kingdom? It is not a speculative discussion- rather Jesus is asking a pressing and personal question! Will you be saved? Today we see that Jesus reveals the marks of a Kingdom citizen by commanding us to strive to enter by way of the narrow door.

I. Strive to Enter

Jesus begins to answer the question posed in v. 24 by giving a straight forward command- Strive to enter. We could expand this command by saying- Strive to enter the kingdom by way of the narrow door. The word- strive- is “agonitsomia” like our word agonize. It is a command given for those who desire to enter- that they must seek it- fight for it with zeal. That they must hold onto it in the midst of struggle. The it is only by great exertion that one will enter in. Earlier in v. 3 and 5 we caught a glimpse of what this striving looked like- the command to repent- to believe- to hate your sin and cling to Jesus Christ in faith! But the point here is the painful process- the intense pressure it takes to enter by way of this narrow gate. The fact is, conversion is not easy nor is it for the faint of heart! It is akin to crucifying yourself- cutting off your hand or foot- or plucking out your eye that causes you to sin. It is to take up your cross- to deny yourself. To cut off your ties with the things of this world that you love- in order to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness! So strive does not mean that we need to work in

order to earn our salvation- NO- to strive means that we must want this gift of life so much that we are willing to forsake all in order to attain it! To cling to Jesus with a heart of faith- to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength! To agonize in your desire to have this pearl of great price! Because- as Jesus says- many begin down this path but give up too easily. Many others will seek it on the last day- after the door has been shut. Many will seek- v. 24 says- but not be able to enter in! Why- because they gave up or they looked for it too late! They stopped striving and agonizing! Like Esau- seeking it with tears for a time- but not willing to embrace Godly repentance! We all know of people who want to be saved- they like the idea of heaven and they loath the idea of hell. But they resist the very thing necessary to enter heaven- as much as they hate the idea of hell they are not willing to cling to Jesus Christ with a heart of faith! They are not willing to do the one thing necessary- enter this kingdom by way of the narrow gate. They give up in the Christian life- they do not prevail- because it is too hard! The Christian life is one of constant warfare- a marathon that demands sweat! Many see this- and choose the easier, broad road instead. But narrow is the way- and difficult the life that leads to life- and those who find it are few- Jesus said in Mt. 7. The only way to enter the Kingdom of God is by way of this narrow door- as v. 24 says. Literally- it is a straight gate. He is very selective here- very clear- there is only one way to the Father- through me! Only one way- the way of truth and life- John 14. The only gate that leads to the sheep fold of God- John 10. The door into the Kingdom. All others lead to death and hell. This narrow aspect is not due to any insufficiency in the blood of Jesus, but rather to highlight the inability of all other ways to save! Apart from Jesus Christ- without living faith in Him- you cannot live and you will not enter the Kingdom of God! And this door granting entrance is only open for a limited time- v. 25. One day soon this door will be closed- and those on the outside will by no means be granted entrance! This brings to mind the foolish virgins of Mt. 25. Once the door was shut, they could not enter into the bridal feast! But think upon this- the door is now still open! Today is still the day of salvation! Yes, the good will soon shut- but it is not yet! There is still time to enter into the Kingdom

above! You can still find life in Jesus Christ- God's patience is still holding the door open! But, many who hear this warning and promise remain unmoved. One the last day Jesus will say to many- I never knew you. Many are called- but few are chosen as Mt. 22 says. Many hear the call to faith and repentance, but they still do not truly hear and respond with faith. During Jesus day, He spent His earthly ministry teaching, preaching and healing- the message was clear! But most of those who heard did not believe- and refused to enter by way of the straight gate. And even today- many who sit under the preaching do not respond but rather go their way unmoved! So Jesus' warning still stands- do not speculate on how many will be saved- rather see to it that you are saved! Strive to enter the Kingdom by way of the straight gate! By faith and repentance, find peace and entrance into God's presence! Praise be to God who gave us His Spirit and Word- that is living and active- that is powerful and effective- so that those who are dead in their sins might respond with faith and repentance!

II. Finding a Seat

Well now that we understand the command to strive- to work out our salvation with fear and trembling because God has given us the will and the way- next we consider the end result. There are two possible ends or conclusion here. First, for those who refused the straight gate- who shunned the narrow door and did not strive- there is the end of weeping and gnashing of teeth- signs of frustration and anger. V. 28 reveals again the certainty of being cast out for those who forsake and reject Jesus Christ. This outer darkness- of flame, worm and torment- is the promised destination for many. In Jesus day- the Jews were the privileged few. They were first to receive the covenant and first to receive the ministry of Jesus! They enjoyed a privileged status- the people of God. As v. 26 puts it- they ate and drank with Jesus, listened to his sermons and saw his miracles. But to no avail- this privileged place did them no good. In fact, the first become last. Those once near are cast aside and thrown out. They had presumed on God's kindness- they wore thin the patience of God- they transgressed the covenant. They thought- we have Abraham for our father- we are safe- we are fine. Nothing can hurt us. Well- as the

Roman Titus burned the city and the temple- over a million Jews died and the city streets were turned red with blood. As we read from Psalm 6- depart from me you workers of iniquity- I never knew you. But the Jews are not the only ones in a privileged position. We too have received the covenant- we hear the sermons and see the sacraments. Many have Christian parents and belong to a Christian church. But these privileges do not guarantee that you have personally strived to enter the straight gate! Many covenant children will be surprised on that last day- if they have not embraced Christ with a heart of faith- these too will be cast out and assigned a place with the goats. All of God's enemies will be put to shame in a moment as Ps. 6 concludes. But that is not the end of our passage. Many who were once last will become first! As the Israelites are cast out- the Gentiles are welcomed in! There are two groups- those who are outside the kingdom- and those inside. Those who have been striving to enter find themselves welcomed to sit down and dine with the Lord- our gracious host. These will sit with the patriarchs and prophets of old- they will dine with the apostles- and recline at the table with our Lord Jesus Christ. Since there is one kingdom, one Lord and one faith- one church- all of the saints for old and new will be gathered together in this great feast! People from every nation who have been made one with Christ will be gathered in- an innumerable host united to the Son.

To conclude, questions about election and faith can lead to speculation as well as apathy. Jesus warns against these by not answering the question of how many directly- but rather by pointing to how you personally must be saved! Jesus reveals the marks of a Kingdom citizen by commanding us to strive to enter by way of the narrow door. The Jews of his day- like most people today- assume that almost everyone will be saved except for the few really bad people. But Jesus states- many that thought they were in will be surprised on that last day. So let us each strive to enter the kingdom by believing in Jesus who the straight gate leading to life!