

“God’s Door — Open or Closed?”—Luke 13:22-24

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “God’s Door — Open or Closed?”, is Luke 13:22-24 → *He went on His way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to Him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

If there is one phrase from my childhood which still “rings” in my ears today, it’s the voice of my mother saying, “Shut the door! You’d think you were born in a barn!” Her concern with leaving the door open was that it served as an invite for every fly in the country to take up residence in our house, not to mention other unwanted critters. Actually, the door to our house was intended to let certain people in while keeping certain people out, depending upon their relationship to our family or the proper credentials for entrance. In our text Jesus talks about the door of “God’s house,” if you will. Is God’s door opened or closed?

Jesus’ command in verse 24 of our text to *strive to enter through the*

narrow door is in response to a man who asked Him a theoretical question: *Lord, will those who are saved be few?* (Verse 23) Such questions are asked by people all the time. They provide avenues for entering into “theological-philosophical” discussions which really make people “spectators” in the drama of salvation rather than actual participants. They allow people to avoid looking at their own sin and thus their need to repent and place their faith in Jesus.

A classic example is Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well. Striving to reveal her need to trust in Him for eternal life, He revealed her sin of having had five husbands and presently living with a man outside of wedlock. Her reaction? *She said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”* (cf. John 4:16-20) “Let’s change the subject and engage a debate about worship practices!” Immediately Jesus brought it back to the place of her heart and faith in Him.

Theoretical theological questions are focused many times on the “status” of others in their relationship with God. This too is a satanic tactic to deflect the focus off of personal sin and onto the character of others. It reinforces our self-righteous sinful natures and make us feel like “we’re in” but what about everyone else. Peter tried this after Jesus reinstated him and told him what kind of death he would encounter *to glorify God*. Then *Jesus said to him,*

“Follow Me.” Immediately Peter turned, looked at John and *said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?”* Jesus said to him, *“If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!”* (cf. John 21:18-22) Jesus would not allow people to dodge their need to recognize their own sin, repent and submit to Him in faith as their Lord and Savior.

So Jesus brought it back to the hearts of the people in our text with whom He was interacting, specifically many Jews who refused to believe in Him as Savior and Lord. *He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.* The door is described as *narrow* because there is only one key to opening that door and passing through it. Jesus stated it in John 14:6 when He referred to Himself as *the way, and the truth, and the life.* Thus *no one comes to the Father **except through Him.*** Access into God’s presence happens only by trusting in the atoning work of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

Thus, God’s door is constantly open to all who desire to enter by faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. God is constantly providing us with an “open door” to Himself through His Word and Sacraments. These serve as His means of giving us His grace. Romans 10:17 says that *faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

These people were hearing the words of Jesus. They talked with Him,

walked with Him and even ate with Him. Even though they were God's chosen people to whom He revealed Himself first and foremost many would encounter a shut door on the Last Day, barring their entrance into God's presence eternally. Why? This was the point of Jesus' parable. No matter how much they strive to justify His opening the door for them by appealing to the fact that they *ate and drank in His presence, and He taught in their streets*, He would say, *I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from Me, all you workers of evil!* (cf. Luke 13:25-27)

Workers of evil? Isn't that kind of a harsh way to describe "God's people" who possessed His Word, His promises, His covenant and His Messiah? That's exactly the point. Evil in God's eyes is not just violent, rebellious acts of the sinful nature but even more importantly the rejection of His Son's Person & Work for your salvation. Mere casual acquaintance with Jesus and His Word is not the same as placing your faith in Him alone for salvation! In fact, mere casual acquaintance or simple knowledge about Jesus or acknowledging that He is real or existed or whatever actually shuts God's door in the face of such unbelief. It is no different for us today.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 says: *Working together with Him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is*

the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. God's door is open to you today. The Holy Spirit brings you into a faith relationship with Jesus and His forgiveness of sins through your baptism, which 1 Peter 3:21 says *now saves you . . . as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ!* Simply possessing a baptism may bring you to God's closed door. Living your baptism daily brings you to God's open door!

As Jesus calls you to *strive to enter through the narrow door* He provides the way for you to continue in faithfulness to Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. It will involve persecution which challenges your faith in Jesus; it will involve temptations and even falling into sin; it will involve challenges of striving to choose God's ways in the midst of your vocations of life. Thus, His door is still open to you as He calls you to take, eat and drink for the forgiveness of your sins. He provides the opportunities to repent of your sins and receive the absolution given by His Church, by His authority and on His behalf! These means of grace sustain and cause growth in your faith **in Jesus as your Lord and Savior.**

These means of grace are based upon the sure promises of God's Word. It's not just a matter of possessing these means of grace. In fact, simply using them doesn't mean that you necessarily receive their benefits. Rather, we engage them by faith in Christ's Word and promise connected to them to

receive the forgiveness of our sins, life and salvation. Thus, in our striving to enter God's presence eternally we do not fail to partake of them regularly. By doing so we would be closing the door of God's grace and forgiveness for us. In our striving to enter God's presence eternally we do not view them as our own possessions, going through the motions of using them without any desire to carry their benefits into our daily vocations of life in obedience to Him as our Lord and Savior. Once again, by doing so we would be closing the door of God's grace and forgiveness for us.

The Holy Spirit is constantly drawing us *to enter through the narrow door* of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone! He brings us to His Word, to Confession & Absolution, to our baptismal life and to His supper while the door is open so that, when it is finally shut on the Last Day, we are safe inside of our heavenly Father's home. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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