

## Only a Few? How about You?

Luke 13:22-30 (NIV)

<sup>22</sup> Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, <sup>24</sup> “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. <sup>25</sup> Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ <sup>26</sup> “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ <sup>27</sup> “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’ <sup>28</sup> “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. <sup>29</sup> People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. He has his goal in mind. He has already lived perfectly for over 30 years. His destination is Jerusalem where he will be betrayed by one of his own, handed over to the chief priests and the elders, be crucified, and then rise from the dead so that Satan’s head is crushed, conquered for good, and all sins of all people of all time are paid for. And he’s not shy in telling people that this is his mission.

Hearing Jesus teach and preach, something triggered an unnamed person to ask Jesus: “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” (verse 23) Jesus had just taught that the kingdom of God would start little like planted mustard seed or yeast mixed in with dough, but then it would expand and grow and become huge. Did this person not see this? Could it be that he saw crowds of people listening to Jesus and then not following him, that only this band of 12 and a couple others actually did? His observations led him to wonder if only a few will be saved. It’s not a hopeful question.

Has the same question flashed through your mind – “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” (verse 23) For a minute, do you look around the church and say, “Is this it? Are these all the faithful? Are there not more? Where are the people who were here last week? What about that new couple? Did they not come back? What about that member who has been coming longer than me? Where are they today?”

Is there something wrong with us? We know that there are thousands upon thousands of people lost right here in Layton. How come they aren’t here? Do we need to do something different? Do we need improvements on our worship? On our building? On our people? Do we need a better location or more advertising or more door to door outreach? Do we need to change our teachings, our message? What do we need to do because I wonder, “Are only a few going to be saved?”

Jesus answered this person and everyone around him: “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.” (verse 24) You ask, “Only a few?” Jesus responds, “How about you?” This might go counter-intuitive to the Christian who has been called as God’s royal priesthood to declare the praises of him who called him out of darkness and into his wonderful light. Since God has saved us, we have a heart and a mind to get his message to others that they too will be saved. But it’s not here at this time that Jesus says, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Instead, he asks, “How about you?” Examine yourself. Are you making every effort to go through the narrow door? Because many will try and not go through.

Only a few? How about you? You get thinking on this, and it’s kind of scary. It’s a narrow door. It’s not a gate, but a door that maybe you have to sidestep through, one that you have to cock your shoulders to slide in. There are a lot of things that I have done that should exclude me from entering through this door to be saved. I have made mistakes. I have blatantly sinned. Things that I have done against others haunt my memories. My conscience accuses me. Guilt weighs on my heart. Can I get through this narrow door?

This door is narrow because there is only one way in. There’s no back door. There’s no window to climb through. It’s exclusive. Only Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one is saved except through him, his perfect life, his sacrifice on the cross in Jerusalem, and his resurrection from the dead.

So, to get through this narrow door, is it like knowing the secret password, that instead of using “Open sesame,” you say, “Jesus” and you get in? Jesus makes it clear that getting through him as the narrow door is more than being acquainted with him. Once the door is closed and people knock and plead to be let in, the owner refuses. The people try harder reminding the owner, “We ate and

drank with you, and you taught in our streets.” “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’” (verses 26-27) They will not get through by a knowledge of Jesus. They will be cast out where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. God will not know you. This is hell.

God will say that he never knew me?! How can he say that? Didn’t he make me? Didn’t he know that I existed? And how can he call me an evildoer?! Sure, I’ve done some things wrong in the past. I’ve made some mistakes, but who hasn’t? I’m not a bad guy. I don’t deserve hell.

Only a few? How about you? Am I really an evildoer? By my own definition, I’m not that bad. There are others who are worse. I have not been put in prison. I’ve only broken minor laws like jaywalking or the speed limit – and then only by a couple miles over, no different than anyone else. But God says that any act of disobedience – whether willfully done or ignorantly done – is evil. Any thing contrary to his will is evil. I messed up, and it is evil to God. I am an evildoer by the definition of the one who will judge me – God himself.

Jesus wants us to think about what the final verdict will be for us. He wants us ready for Judgment Day. Our Judgment Day will either be the day we die or the day Jesus returns. Instead of looking and trying to figure out what the judgment will be for other people, making our own judgment call that only a few will be saved, Jesus asked, “How about you?” Will I make it through the narrow door?

Those who will enter through the narrow door are those who trust that Jesus accomplished what he set out to do. Those who will enter through the narrow door believe that Jesus substituted his life for ours, that he lived perfection when we could not, that he paid the price for my evil deeds on the cross, that he was raised from the dead as a proclamation that my evil deeds have really been wiped out and forgotten, forgiven, by God. Those who reject Jesus and so trust in their own efforts, their own works, their knowledge that Jesus existed but didn’t believe in him as their substitute and perfection, they will not enter through the narrow door. It will be closed to them. They will be cast out to the eternal sufferings of hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, sadness that they wasted their chance to be saved, in pain because God has turned his back on them and now does not know them.

Will only a few be saved? How about you? What hope do I have? Jesus’ statement gets us looking to the future while also reflecting on what will get me through the narrow door, to be saved. He does this because he does know you and me right now. In fact, he had you and me on his mind as he was making his way to Jerusalem to complete his goal of suffering and dying to remove our sins from us forever. God knows you right now whether you’re a believer or not. He made the payment whether you or I would believe he did. He has given us life. He has knit us together in our mother’s wombs very specially and uniquely. He gave us life this morning. He made sure that our lungs still worked and that the earth still had breathable air for us. He gives you what you need today to not only survive but also thrive. As long as you are on this earth, his face is shining upon you, blessing you, caring for you.

God does even more than that. He gave you today, this day, to know what he has done for you, to know that Jesus is your perfect substitute, that he really did win for you the forgiveness of your sins. Today is a day to remember your baptism (or maybe to get baptized), to remember that Christ has washed you clean of all your sins and clothed you with his perfection. Today is a day to receive the forgiveness of sins through his Word, through his Supper. Today is a day to be reminded that while you trust Jesus for your salvation, you will be going through that narrow door. God has forgiven you. God has made you new. God knows you.

Are only a few going to be saved? After asking you to examine yourself, Jesus goes on to say, “People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.” (verse 29) There will be people who are going to be saved who will come from all over, from all four corners of the earth. John writes in his vision of heaven from Revelation that those who are in heaven are a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language. Right now, there are millions if not billions of Christians gathering around God’s Word, being called on to believe solely in Jesus and his life and his merits for their worthiness, for them to go through the narrow door. We rejoice that God’s kingdom is not confined to this group of believers.

Will only a few be saved? No. Many will be saved. But also many will be condemned, thrown out, cast into hell and no longer be known by God. But how about you? Today is a day to rejoice that God knows you, that God sacrificed himself for you, that God went to Jerusalem so that you would go through the narrow door of Jesus’ life and death and so be saved. Be renewed and built up in this truth every day so that you have the confidence that you will be among this great multitude in God’s kingdom, all who are saved. Amen.