**The Narrow Door to Salvation**

Based on [Luke 13:22-30](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk13.22-30)

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The central message of the Gospel lesson has to do with salvation. Jesus’ disciples ask him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few? And the answer is yes. Jesus teaches three things, first that the door to salvation is narrow, second that the number who enter in is few, and third those who enter in will consist of people from all around the world. The door is narrow, many will be excluded, but their exclusion will not be because of where they come from. It’s because Jesus won’t let them in, because he doesn’t know them.

The door that leads to salvation is narrow. Jesus teaches this and you do not believe it. You think that because there are so many people in the world of so many different faiths that the door to salvation must be broad and wide. **So long as you’re a good person, help others and try your best to do what’s best, you think that person is on the right track even if he doesn’t know that Jesus died for his sins, or confess that God sacrificed his only begotten son to rescue you from bondage to the death and the devil.** But Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the father except through me.” He says, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved” (John 10:9). And today he says that that one door is narrow.

There are not many doors to the kingdom of God, there is only one and it is narrow. There is only one door and it is Jesus Christ. He invites all people to him. He invites you, says “Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Do you labour? Are you heavy laden? Then Jesus is talking to you no matter where you come from. He extends the invitation to all those who labour and are heavy laden. That’s why he says today to his disciples, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you will seek to enter it and will not be able.”

Those who enter the door to eternal safety will have striven. They will have labored, they will have borne heavy burdens in their life on account of their desire to enter through the narrow door. Now someone might object and say, “**I am not saved by my efforts, by my labour, by carrying heavy burdens. Christ carried my burden, he bore my sins on the tree. It is because he strived to save me that I am saved**.” Amen! Nothing that you do can get you through the narrow door, because the door is a man; the door to eternal security is a person, Jesus Christ. And he took you in himself when he gave you the new birth of water and spirit. He opened the heavens for you when he baptized you into the kingdom and gave you faith to trust his promise that so long as you remain in him; you will be where he is.

But what if, while you are entering the narrow door you are overtaken by robbers? What if while you are on the path that leads to eternal life, you are sold into slavery, beaten, mocked, oppressed and abused? What if your baptism into Jesus Christ leads you to your own cross; and while you are hanging in derision, passersby yell for you to curse God and die. What if your confessing Jesus Christ as your Lord causes you to lose your job, your friends, and your family? You would be tempted to simply get off the narrow way because the terrain is too rocky and the weather’s not good.

This is where the striving comes in. It is not in our struggle with salvation, but our struggle with sin. So long as we live in this world, we must strive against our old sinful nature that seeks those things that lead us away from the narrow door. The ongoing, lifelong struggle against sin, the world, and the devil characterizes the lives of all who are baptized into Christ. But the Lord promises victory. James says, “**Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).** Paul says, “**You have been set free from sin, and have become slaves to righteousness**” (Romans 6:18). Jesus says, “**If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you…But take heart; I have overcome the world**” (John 15:26;16:33).

For instance, in your struggle with sin, do not trust in wealth. Be on your guard against all covetousness, of one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 12:15). The one who lays up treasures for himself is not rich toward God and forfeits the heavenly treasures inherited in baptism and sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14).

This is why we pray that God would lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. We could not pay for our sins or redeem ourselves from out great debt of sin. It is true that the narrow door to eternal life is requires a toll. **It requires a payment of perfect righteousness that we cannot and never could afford.** Thanks be to God in Christ that he has paid the toll, not just for himself, not just for you, me and a few close friends. He paid the toll for many, indeed for the whole world to enter through the narrow door. However, Jesus says “**Many I tell you will seek to enter and will not be able**.” This is not because Christ did not pay their toll. It is because he does not know them and so the narrow door remains closed to them and Jesus will not open it.

“**When 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.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!**”

Right now, as we speak the narrow door to salvation remains open, and Jesus invites all to enter in. The way to enter into Christ is by repentance and faith in Christ. **Anyone who tries to come to Christ apart from repentance is standing at the wrong door**. Anyone who practices sin and lives in it are on the broad path to the wide door that leads to destruction. Even if they ate and drank in Christ’s presence, even if they heard him teaching in their streets he does not know them, because he does not know anyone who glories in their sin before him.

Right now the narrow door is open. On the last day it will be closed. And can you imagine a more horrific sight? When God shut the door to Noah's ark, it was not opened again until the destruction was complete. So too shall it be on the last day.

I have heard it taught and said that God doesn’t send people to hell, that they choose hell. While there may be a right way to understand that; it is misleading to think that somehow the damned are getting not only what they deserve, but also--in some perverse way--what they *want*. Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms that when the door is closed, there will be those who want to enter heaven, who will then strive to enter through the narrow door and knock...who will come to Christ but it will be too late. **Had they come sooner the door would have been opened, but now it’s shut and Christ does not recognize them as friends, but they are seen according to their deeds as workers of evil.**

So strive to enter through the narrow door and do not delay. Repent and believe in the Gospel, so that while the door is open you stand in it and your evil works are covered, your sins washed away secure in the Holy Ark of the one Christian and Apostolic Church**. Someone might say that you don’t need to go to church to be saved; I won’t argue except to remind you of this.** You need to go to Christ to be saved, and Christ is found forgiving sins and washing away evil works only in the church. And here he is before you, giving you a foretaste of his heavenly banquet in Holy Communion, where you can be sure to receive him because he is placed in your mouth under the bread and wine his own body and blood for you. Forgiving your sins, and though you are workers of evil, making your righteous in the sight of his Father.

And so the church is the entrance to the narrow door who is Christ. When the door is shut there will be those who knock on it and say--in the hopes of being recognized and gaining entrance--“We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.” This is an appeal to the presence of Christ in his church on earth. These damned are saying “**we heard your word preached,” “we shared Holy Communion with your saints**”…we went to church on Christmas and Easter! It is clear that external fellowship with the church on earth does not guarantee eternal fellowship with Christ and the saints in heaven. Truly Christ is in his Church, it is his body and he is with us in every baptism, every communion, every sermon but not all present will receive it to their salvation. Some will receive Christ in the church to their condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:29). Not all who commune with in the church have true communion with Christ. This does not at all diminish the great gift we are given in the Lord's Supper. It's simply the fact stated by Christ in our text today.

This is a sobering reminder of the responsibility that Christ has given his church on earth. Imagine if you are a part of a church that gives the holy body and blood of Christ indiscriminately to anyone who comes forward. And imagine someone comes forward who is practicing sin, holding to a false and unchristian teaching, denying some or all of Christ words and your pastor gives them the assurance of salvation by communing them. **Oh what great guilt and offense we heap upon ourselves if we give someone the impression that they are right with God when we know they believe or act falsely against him. So it will be for the many who will knock on the narrow door only to find out it’s too late.** Woe to us if we are cause for their false sense of security and their delay in entering through the narrow door. What will Christ have to say to a church that, through open communion, led people who were not striving to enter the narrow door to believe that they were?

But what great joy is to be found, when your sins are forgiven. That when you come to Christ on his terms through the narrow door, you enter into eternal life even now. The door is still open, and as we struggle against sin even to the point of shedding blood (Hebrews 12:4), we are in last place in the world. But the last in the world are the first to enter the narrow door of eternal life in Christ Jesus. So he says, so he has promised, so is our assurance until he comes again in glory to bring us to the eternal wedding banquet where there will be feasting forevermore with Christ and the saints in heaven, angels attending. Until that day comes, strive to enter through the narrow door.