

**THE NARROW DOOR // Luke 13:22-30**

*Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke*

There is never a wrong time to respond to Jesus—today is the day and the right time is always right now. We understand that salvation is God’s doing, an act of his sovereignty. Salvation is something the Father ordained, the Son accomplished, and the Holy Spirit applied. But this is also balanced with human responsibility. People who want to be saved are saved. God uses the means of preaching and the instrument of faith to bring people to Jesus, and we make a choice to follow him.

This passage in Luke occurs midway through the travel narrative that comprises 9:51 through 19:27. At the beginning of this journey, Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem, and throughout, the cross is looming. With this fact always before him, Jesus merged the details of daily life with gospel opportunity. This is how we ought to live—always on mission.

Along the way, a man asks Jesus a question: “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” (v. 23). It seems that the man has seen the very small entourage following Jesus and heard him teaching on the difficulties of following him. The man may be asking, how big of an enterprise is this? He doesn’t want to go out on a limb on his own. Is Jesus really worth following?

While the question is legitimate, it is not relevant. The main concern should not be the number of people who will be in heaven, it’s will /be in heaven. Don’t be so concerned about how many will make it to heaven at the expense of asking if you will make it yourself.

**Main Point: Kingdom entrance is never without human effort.**

To strive means to struggle or contend. The word in Greek is *agónizomai*, and it is the origin of the English word “agony.” Here it is used in the sense of fighting your way to a narrow door.

**Why all this talk about striving?**

**1. Time is short (v. 25)**

The door is not only narrow, it is also only temporarily opened. Don’t be slack when it comes to spiritual priorities.

**2. Close doesn’t count (v. 26)**

We may assume that our activity, our heredity, or proxy will merit our kingdom entrance. We may say, “I was at the church;” “I served;” “My family were Christians.” But the emphasis cannot be on what we have done or the family we were born into—it’s all about what Jesus has done. Being “close” is dangerous—it’s easy to deceive yourself that you are in when you are not.

It’s not about you knowing Jesus—it’s about Jesus knowing you. It’s not about asking God into your life or your heart—it’s about you wanting to be a part of God’s heart and life.

**3. Hell is horrible (v. 28)**

The weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell implies the acknowledgement of a missed opportunity. They had the chance, and they didn’t take it. The passage suggests that those in hell can see those not in hell and their pain is exacerbated because they can see what they missed. It is even worse

for this original Jewish audience because they are being told that others, from North, South, East, and West, the Gentile nations of the world, will be enjoying heaven—a kingdom surprise.

The man asked, “Will the saved be few?” but a better question is “Will the saved be you?” At the end of this passage we see that fact that God’s economy is not our economy. Here, those who thought they would be first are last. Those who had reason to think they would be last are found to be first. Jesus is looking for unlikely candidates for heaven: he calls them to deny themselves, take up the cross, and strive for the narrow door.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does “striving for the narrow door” look like in everyday life?
2. How can we live on mission by merging the details of daily life with gospel opportunity? What do some of these opportunities look like? Can we pray that God will make these opportunities obvious?
3. How do the realities that time is short, close doesn’t count, and hell is horrible motivate us to share the gospel? Who do we know who is banking on being “close” who needs our gracious witness?