Pentecost 14 Luke 13:22-30
September 11, 2011 339-431-431, vv. 5&6-332

Please Take This Personally (And This Starts with Me)!

I. The door to heaven is narrow.
II. The door is open right now.
III. The door will one day be closed.

Dear Christian friends,

I'm going to begin with an UNAPOLOGETIC PLUG for Bible class. You may never have come or **never** even really thought of coming to Bible class. You may already have **excuses not** to come. But we all know that if something IS IMPORTANT to us we find the time for it. So **even if** you've never come before **give Bible class** a TRY for a few weeks.

I will warn you that we sometimes get a bit OFF COURSE. **Sometimes** a question about what **we're looking** at leads us off track. **Sometimes** a question comes up that has NOTHING TO DO with what we're studying but it's still an important question that **needs to be** answered.

We have here a question that could EASILY SIDETRACK us to **nothing really important**. Jesus doesn't reject the question but He does REDIRECT it. He changes it from CURIOUS SPECULATION to something very personal and **practical**. Don't ask about **how many** will be saved but instead ask HOW they are saved. Don't ask if ***"only a few"*** will be saved but ask instead, "AM I **among those** who will be saved?"

One person asked this question but Jesus directed His answer to the **whole crowd**. EACH PERSON **in that crowd** need to take this question **personally**. So do we! PLEASE TAKE THIS PERSONALLY (and that starts with **me**!)! Carefully consider how it PERSONALLY AFFECTS you that 1)the **door to heaven** is narrow, that 2)**this door** is now open and 3)that one day this door **will be closed**.

**I. The door to heaven is narrow.**

***"Lord, are only a few going to be saved?"*** Jesus didn't simply answer that question with a BLUNT **yes** or no. Instead Jesus issues a command – and please take this **personally** – I have to too – ***"Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many… will try to enter and will not be able."***

Isn't this AWESOME? God has thrown the doors to heaven WIDE OPEN to anyone and everyone **in Jesus**. Peter wrote that, ***"The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that everyone should come to repentance."***

God had every right and **reason** to SLAM heaven's doors shut to everyone. Heaven is FOR PERFECT people – people who have always and joyfully obeyed God IN EVERY WAY. Heaven is for people who MEASURE UP to **God's** standards. That AUTOMATICALLY bars all of us from heaven. And yes, please take that **personally** – I have to too. On our own we are NOT GOOD ENOUGH for heaven.

But you know what God did! He ***"so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son"*** to be **the Savior** of NOT JUST SOME people but the whole world of sinners. Please take this **personally** and SAVOR every bit of it! Jesus took the place of **everybody** under God's law and He took care of **everything** to save us. Jesus always and perfectly loved and **obeyed** His heavenly Father and He gives us all the credit for His life. Jesus took the blame for the sins of the **whole world** and was punished in our place. Jesus shed His precious blood – sacrificed His perfect life – AS ***"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the WORLD."*** Because Jesus did ALL that FOR ALL people **all** can be absolutely sure that God has forgiven **all** our sins. Trusting in Jesus we can be absolutely sure that

we are going straight to heaven when we die. IN JESUS heaven's door stands **wide open** to ALL SINNERS!

AS FANTASTIC as those gospel facts are it's also sadly true that ***"many will try to enter*** (heaven) ***and will not be able to."*** Trusting in Jesus is THE ONLY WAY to heaven. That makes heaven's door ***"narrow."*** That's why ***"many will not be able to enter."*** People who are FULL OF THEMSELVES can't fit through heaven's ***"narrow"*** door. People who want to SET THE TERMS for **their relationship** with God – "God, this is how we're going to do things" – their ego won't fit through heaven's ***"narrow'*** door. People who don't want to repent of their sins – who don't want to change their **sinful ways** – their sins won't fit through heaven's ***"narrow'*** door. Those who try to CLIMB IN through **other doors** – other **religions** – they won't find **their way** in. Heaven's door is OPEN TO ALL but it's a ***"narrow"*** door. ONLY BY TRUSTING in Jesus does anyone have eternal life in heaven. Are you taking that **personally**? I have to too!

**II. The door is now open.**

***"Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many… will try to enter and will not be able. Once the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, you will begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open for us!' He will tell you in reply, 'I don't know you. Depart from me, all you evildoers.'"***

Heaven's ***"narrow"*** door is NOW OPEN so Jesus orders ALL people – that means **we too** BETTER TAKE this personally! – we are to ***"strive to enter through the narrow door."*** The Greek word for ***"strive"*** is a VERY STRONG word. It's the striving – the contending – of an ATHLETE. It's what you see in the **Olympics**. Those athletes don't train **once a week** for two or three months. DAY after day – month after month – for years they are TRAINING - ***"striving"*** - for that ONE SHOT at a gold medal. It's BRUTAL. If you aren't ready to give **110%** of your time and effort DON'T EVEN BOTHER **trying out**. GET THE PICTURE? Are you personally THAT COMMITTED to ***"enter through the narrow door"***?

There's NOTHING BETTER than **being a Christian** and having Jesus as your Savior. There's also NOTHING HARDER than staying a Christian! Every single day the DEVIL tries to trip us up with all kinds of **appealing** temptations. **Every single day** the WORLD tries to distract us with its **screwed-up** priorities and **messed-up** morals. **Every single day** our SINFUL NATURES buck and fight us. "It's TOO HARD – I'm too tired – I DON'T FEEL like it. But EVERYBODY ELSE…" That takes its toll on our **faith** and our determination to live **God-pleasing** lives. YOU KNOW that, right? You've faced those struggles.

So Jesus orders us to ***"strive"*** – literally to KEEP ON **striving** – ***"to enter through the narrow door."*** The ONLY WAY we **can do** that is by faithfully being in God's Word. That's why church **every week** and those devotions at home **every day** are SO IMPORTANT. That's why Baptism and **Holy Communion** are SO SPECIAL and **comforting**. That's also why Bible class is so PERSONALLY IMPORTANT for each one of us. The door to heaven is ***"narrow."*** It's open right now, BUT…

**III. One day that door will be closed.**

Notice how Jesus makes this all SO PERSONAL. ***"Once the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, YOU will begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open for US!' He will tell YOU in reply, 'I don't know YOU or where YOU come from.' Then YOU will begin to say, 'WE ate and drank in your presence, and You taught in our streets.' And he will say, 'I don't know where YOU come from. Depart from me, all YOU evildoers.'"*** How Jesus wants EACH ONE of us to take this PERSONALLY!

ONE DAY heaven's door will be shut. **We know** that ONE DAY this world will end. **We know** that if Judgment Day isn't soon we will ONE DAY die. Those are GIVEN FACTS **nobody can change**. Ignoring them **doesn't make** them GO AWAY. We don't know JUST WHEN that will be. Considering WHAT'S AT STAKE we better be ready AT ALL TIMES.

The only way to **be ready** is by trusting in Jesus as our Savior. Jesus makes really clear that **faith** isn't simply KNOWING ABOUT Him – being acquainted with Jesus – able to answer **some questions** about Jesus. Jesus doesn't deny that these Jews could argue, ***"WE ate and drank with You, and You taught in OUR streets."*** But Jesus does deny KNOWING them **as His followers**. Faith is BOTH – **both!** – a HEAD knowledge of Jesus **and** the HEART trusting in Jesus as our Savior. Going to **church** – getting a **Christian education** – being confirmed – being a member of a church – an ACTIVE and **involved** member! – that's ALL GOOD but without our hearts ACTUALLY TRUSTING in and clinging to Jesus **we're not Christians**. Having your name on the **church books** is NOT THE SAME as having saving faith **in your heart**.

Are there any more terrifying words than to hear Jesus TELL YOU **to your face**, ***"I don't know you. Depart – get away – from Me!"*** Will there be a MORE TERRIFYING SOUND than heaven's door shut and you're standing on the **wrong** side? **Will there be** a more sickening eternity than hell's ***"weeping and gnashing of teeth"*** while you see God's saints of all time ***"take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God"***? Do YOU SEE WHY Jesus wants us all to TAKE THIS PERSONALLY? Heaven's ***"narrow"*** door is now open but ONE DAY it **will be shut** never to be opened again.

**Ah**, but what an eternity to BE INSIDE – to take YOUR PERSONAL PLACE at **heaven's feast** – to sit with ***"Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God"*** – to be in the VERY PRESENCE of the triune God! What a thrill to hear Jesus PERSONALLY INVITE YOU, ***"Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*** Can you already feel Jesus TENDERLY ***"wiping every tear from YOUR eyes"*** – clothing you with that ***"robe washed white in*** (His blood) ***the blood of the Lamb"***? Does your spine already tingle **just thinking** about that BLESSED REUNION ***"before the throne of God and in front of the Lamb"***? Can you even imagine eternity in that ***"new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"***? Please take **all** this PERSONALLY! This is what Jesus has PERSONALLY PREPARED and promised us. This is why Jesus INSTEAD of answering ***"how many/few will be saved"*** – He instead commands EACH ONE of us, ***"Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able."*** Please take this PERSONALLY – I have to too! Amen.

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