

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"Why Many Will Seek to Enter but not Be Able."*

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse and we find ourselves at chapter 13, verses 25-30.

Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. We will start at verse 22 for context...

Luke 13:22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 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.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. 29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Let's pray.

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There are some things in life that you can be late for while other things can be very problematic if you're late.

For example, you can be late to a movie or a sporting event, but if you're late for the bus or a flight, you're in trouble.

When I was in ROTC in college the commander of the program was Colonel Brewer. He told all of us...

"My class starts on time, and when it starts I shut the door, lock it, and I don't open it. If you're late, don't try to get in."

One of the cadets told me about a time that he was eating lunch at the same time as Colonel Brewer. He was watching him to see when he left so that he could follow him to class. He walked behind Colonel Brewer, expecting that Colonel Brewer would let him in when he reached the classroom because he knew he was walking behind him, but he still locked him out.

The most terrifying example of being locked out in the Old Testament occurred in Noah's day...

Noah spent 120 years building the ark. The earth began to flood. Noah, his family, and the animals got on the ark, and then we read this...

Genesis 7:16 Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And THE LORD SHUT HIM IN.

Shutting them in meant shutting everyone else out.

I can't imagine what it was like for those people locked outside the ark.

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As terrible as this would have been it doesn't compare to example of being locked out in this morning's verses.

In last week's sermon we basically made it halfway through verse 24. Look back with me at this verse...

Luke 13:24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Notice the two halves of the verse:

- The first half, which we looked at last week, is about people striving to enter through the narrow door now while they can.
- The second half of the verse is about people seeking to enter later when it’s too late.

You could say Jesus spoke of the narrow door that’s open now and the closed door people encounter later.

So not only is the door narrow and difficult to enter, it also won’t remain open forever.

In **verse 24** look at the phrase **I tell YOU**.

The word **you** occurs 13 times in **verses 24-28**.

Jesus wanted to make this personal. Let’s keep that in mind as we read these verses. We should picture Jesus speaking directly to us if we haven’t entered through the narrow door!

Luke 13:25 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.’ 26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’

This is interesting!

These were not people who openly rejected Jesus. They were people who spent time with him during His earthly ministry. They had been around Him. They heard His teaching. He had been among them. They probably witnessed His miracles. They had even eaten and drank with Him and enjoyed His fellowship.

The simple way to say it is this: they are people who looked like they were saved.

And they seemed to think they were saved. They mentioned their behavior that led them to this conclusion and caused them to think they should be able to enter.

But look what Jesus says to them...

Luke 13:27 But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’

The claim to have been in social settings with Jesus and even to have been in his audience listening to his teaching carried no weight with him.

If I had to think of what these people would look like today, it would be religious people who believe they’ve spent time with Jesus, listened to his teaching, but they didn’t have a saving relationship with him.

These people, along with those in **Matthew 7** who say, “Lord, Lord,” but hear, “Depart from me” are the best examples in Scripture of having a false sense of security

Notice that two times in two verses – **verses 25** and **27** – Jesus said, **“I do not know where you come from.”**

They thought they knew him, but he didn’t know them. He told them the exact opposite of what they expected.

And this brings us to lesson one...

Lesson 1: The question is, “Does the Lord know you?”

It is not enough to know something of Jesus and have some association with him. He must know and recognize us.

When Jesus says, “I do not know where you come from,” it sounds as though there are people Jesus doesn’t know. Of course, he knew them in a sense: He knew who they were and he knew of their lives. But he didn’t know them in a salvific way. He wasn’t their Savior.

It is similar to Jesus’s words in **Matthew 7:23** when he said, “**I never knew you.**”

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When we talk about salvation, we’ll commonly ask whether people “know the Lord.” But it’s not just an issue of whether people say they know the Lord. It is an issue of whether the Lord knows us.

I stress this, because lots of people – especially those in cults – say they know the Lord...

- Mormons will tell you about Christ.
- Jehovah’s Witnesses will tell you about Christ.
- Even Muslims will tell you about Christ, because they hold Him in high regard as a prophet.

But it doesn’t mean the Lord knows them, which is to say He doesn’t have a relationship with them.

When you speak to people in false religions and they want to convince you they know the Lord, “*You might ask them: “Okay, but does the Lord know you?”*”

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If you write in your bible, circle the words, “**I do not know where you come from**” and write, “*Galatians 4:9.*”

Listen to these important words...

Galatians 4:9 Now that you have come to know God, OR RATHER TO BE KNOWN BY GOD.

We must be known by God, but the people in this parable were not.

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Interestingly, notice two times – in verse 23 and verse 25 – they said, “**Lord.**”

That really makes them sound saved, but let me ask a simple question...

What’s harder:

- Saying the right thing?
- Or doing the right thing?

Anyone can say, “**Lord,**” but it’s another thing entirely for Jesus to BE our Lord.

Even though these people spent time with Jesus, and even though they called Him “**Lord,**” he wasn’t the Lord of their lives. I say that because Lord means Master, and if Jesus was the Lord – or Master – of their lives they wouldn’t be **workers of evil**. Calling him Lord was nothing more than lipservice.

Jesus doesn’t say they WERE **workers of evil**. He says that’s what they are. Currently. Presently. They are in habitual sin.

It is similar to the parallel account in Matthew 7...

Matthew 7:23 Then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, YOU WORKERS OF LAWLESSNESS.’

You see the same thing said here. Sin is a habit or pattern that they didn't break.

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The issue is they have not repented of their sin...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

Lesson 2: The Lord doesn't know people who haven't repented

Do Christians sin?

Yes.

All Christians continue to struggle against sin.

But when we become Christians God puts His Spirit in us, and the Spirit is not going to let us live comfortably in sin. He is going to make us uncomfortable until we repent.

Paul wrote...

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

You hear Paul describing the struggle against sin that is in every Christian's life.

But that's the problem for the people in these verses: there is no struggle against sin.

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Notice one more thing about **verse 27**...

The words **depart from me**, are said with a certain scornful indignation. They are not said with any amount of pity or compassion like we might expect. I'm not saying Jesus didn't have compassion on these people, but I am saying it doesn't come out in these verses. Instead, he simply casts them out of His presence, and there is no hesitation whatsoever.

How do we explain the hostility Jesus seemed to feel toward them...especially when they didn't seem to reject him?

I think the answer is the hypocrisy of their lives:

- They said they had a relationship with Jesus, but they didn't live like it.
- They said they listened to his teaching, but they didn't apply it their lives.

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Listen to this verse that summarizes all of this well...

2 Timothy 2:19 God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord DEPART FROM INIQUITY."

The people in this parable named the name of the Lord. But they didn't **depart from iniquity**, which is to say they hadn't repented.

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We're looking at the main problem with easy-believism. It doesn't preach repentance. You have people who have been told:

- If you just believe...
- If you just say these words...

You'll be saved.

But it leaves out repentance, and without repentance there's no salvation.

We streamed the ACBC training Thursday through Saturday. ACBC stands Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. It was previously called NANC: National Association of Nouthetic Counselors. They changed the name because nobody knows what "nouthetic" means. It's a translation of the Greek word for admonish.

The father of this movement is Jay Adams, and he and his materials were mentioned throughout the conference. I started reading about Jay Adams and I learned that there was considerable criticism of Adams and biblical counseling comes from secular psychology.

Listen to a quote from *The Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling* criticizing Adams: "*confrontation is essential to the theory of Adams.*"¹

Condemning Adams for confronting is basically condemning him for trying to see repentance.

It makes sense that psychology would condemn Adams for this, because psychology works against repentance.

Why does psychology teach that people do bad things? Simply put: because bad things happened to them:

- You mistreat people because your parents mistreated you
- You scream at your coworkers because your boss didn't give you a raise

So basically there's an excuse for any bad behavior.

Why does the Bible teach we do bad things?

Simply put: because we're bad. Because we have sin natures. There's no excuse. The only response is repentance.

Here's why I'm telling you this...

Christianity without confronting sin, or without repentance, is easy-believism and it looks more like psychology than Christianity.

One of the ACBC speakers was from China and he was talking about the big problem in China. He said it's all easy-believism without preaching repentance.

The reason easy-believism is so dangerous is it's so close to the Gospel. It is true that we're saved by grace through faith – or by believing – but true, saving faith – or belief – produces repentance. Saving faith and repentance go hand-in-hand.

Let me show you just how important repentance is...

If you look back at **verse 25** you can see two things that didn't replace repentance. The people said, "**We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.**" This means:

- People can spend time with Jesus
- People can listen to Jesus' teaching

But even these things don't serve as substitutes for repentance.

And without repentance these people go to hell. That's not my opinion. We can tell that from Jesus's words in the next few verses...

Luke 13:28a In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,

Pause here.

Hell is not a mindless passing into oblivion. It involves eternal torment, which this verse describes.

DA Carson said, *“The definite articles with ‘weeping’ and ‘gnashing’ emphasize the horror of the scene: the weeping and the gnashing... Weeping suggests suffering and gnashing of teeth suggests despair.”*

We see that Jesus was not afraid to speak of hell, and in fact did so more than anyone else in the Bible.

Charles Spurgeon said, *“There are some ministers who never mention anything about hell. I heard of a minister who once said to his congregation – ‘If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ you will be sent to that place which it is not polite to mention.’ He ought not to have been allowed to preach again, I am sure, if he could not use plain words.”*

Now before we read the last few verses I want to share something with you.

I feel like the best way to appreciate what it was like for the Jews who heard Jesus say this is to put ourselves in their place. If we don't, we won't appreciate just how shocking this actually was.

First, to understand what it was like being one of these Jews think about all the spiritual privileges they had been given. Let me read a few of them from Romans:

- **Romans 3:1 What advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were ENTRUSTED WITH THE ORACLES OF GOD.** The oracles of God is a way to refer to the Word of God, which is how it's translated in some Bibles.
- **Romans 9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong THE ADOPTION, THE GLORY, THE COVENANTS, THE GIVING OF THE LAW, THE WORSHIP, AND THE PROMISES. 5 TO THEM BELONG THE PATRIARCHS, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.** They had been given all this!

Spiritually speaking, it is hard to imagine God giving anyone more than he gave the Jews.

And because of all they had been given, what did they think?

They thought they were going to heaven...simply for being Jews.

Listen to what they said to Jesus when he was trying to set them free from sin...

John 8:33 They [said], “WE ARE OFFSPRING OF ABRAHAM and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”

They continue arguing with Jesus, and again they say...

John 8:39 “Abraham is our father.”

They kept saying Abraham was their father, which meant, “We are going to heaven because we are descended from Abraham,” or in other words, because we are Jews.

Think of when John was preparing the way for the Messiah by performing baptisms of repentance. What did he have to tell them to stop saying?

Matthew 3:8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘WE HAVE ABRAHAM AS OUR FATHER,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

John wanted them to repent, but they thought they didn't have to because they were Abraham's descendants. John told them to stop saying that.

The simple point is this: the Jews thought they were going to heaven because they were Jews.

And who did they think was NOT going to heaven?

Gentiles!

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With that in mind, briefly look back at **verse 24**...

Luke 13:24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Who would the Jews think are the **many** who would seek to enter but not be able?

The Gentiles!

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Now the shock for the Jews...

Luke 13:25 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.’

Who is the you? Jews!

Luke 13:26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’

Whose streets did Jesus teach in?

The Jews. Not the Gentiles. He spent almost his entire ministry in Jewish territory.

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Now look at the second half of **verse 28**, which we haven't looked at yet...

Luke 13:28b when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.

So there are going to be some Jews, such as the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – and the prophets in the kingdom of God, but many of the Jews in Jesus's day would be excluded.

And it gets even worse for them...

Luke 13:29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.

Who is this verse describing being part of the kingdom of God?

Gentiles!

This adds insult to injury: first the Jews learn they aren't getting in, and then they learn Gentiles are getting in.

Hell will be absolutely terrible for anyone, but it will be even worse for the Jews who thought they would be in heaven, while the Gentiles, who the Jews thought would be in hell, end up in heaven.

It ends up being the opposite of what they thought. It's like the last is first and the first is last, which is what Jesus says...

Luke 13:30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

The **first** refers to the Jews, and the **last** refers to the Gentiles. It isn't that Jews and Gentiles were going to change places in line. Instead, the first would be shut-out, and the last would be let in.

And this brings us to lesson three...

Lesson 3: There will be surprises in the kingdom of God.

There are times Jesus said things and it almost seemed like he was trying to upset his audience. This is one of those instances.

Jesus's words would have been incredibly shocking – and probably infuriating – to these Jews listening.

One commentator, France, said regarding the Gentiles being part of the kingdom of God and the Jews being excluded...

"There could hardly be a more radical statement of the change in God's plan of salvation inaugurated by the mission of Jesus."

In other words, nothing could be more radical than what Jesus described.

Human expectations are completely reversed. The kingdom of God will be much different than we expect.

We will be surprised by:

1. Who is there
2. Who isn't there
3. Some people have been very prominent in this life and they will be completely unknown in the next life
4. Some people have been completely unknown in this life and they will be very prominent in the next life.

Think of:

- Martyrs
- Persecuted Christians who hold to their faith in Christ
- Missionaries serving in poverty in Third World countries
- People dealing with pain and disease in ways that glorify God
- People who have experienced terrible loss, but are still faithful to Christ
- And people remaining faithful in situations that they are tempted to run from, such as that believing spouse who has to put up with a cruel unbelieving spouse every day

All of these people might be last in this life, but they will be first in the next life.

Look at the end of **verse 29**...

recline at table in the kingdom of God.

Even though it is only a few words, it gives us an idea what heaven will be like:

- It seems to be a place of rest. We will sit down.

- It seems to be a place of fellowship. We will enjoy the company of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets and I'm guessing plenty of other believers
- It seems like we will meet people from all over the earth, and throughout all of history

Spurgeon said, *“But you shall hear those loved voices again; you shall hear those sweet voices once more, you shall yet know that those whom you loved have been loved by God. Would not that be a dreary heaven for us to inhabit, where we should be alike unknowing and unknown? I would not care to go to such a heaven as that. I believe that heaven is a fellowship of the saints, and that we shall know one another there.”*

I want to conclude with this...

In verse 30 Jesus said, **“SOME (referring to Gentiles) are last who will be first, and SOME (referring to Jews) are first who will be last.”**

This is not a universal law. Jesus did not say, “ALL Gentiles will be first” or “ALL Jews will be last.” In other words, not all Gentiles will be saved.

Even though we are Gentiles, we are more like Jews in terms of privilege. The Jews had been given the Law, the covenants, the Tabernacle, and many other things to show them the way to God. We have been given much too:

- If you're a Christian I wouldn't want to cause you to go through life questioning your salvation.
- But if you're not a Christian I wouldn't want you to go through life thinking you are one.

In my mind, this passage is one of those very sobering ones that should cause us to examine our salvation so that we wouldn't hear the words, **“Depart from me.”**

If you have any concern about where you will spend eternity, get right with God today. Repent of your sins and turn to Christ.

If you have any questions about anything I've shared I'll be up front after service and I'd consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.

ⁱ Benner, David G; Peter C. Hill (1999). Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling. Grand Rapids. p. 249.