

The Narrow Door

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[0 : 0 0] in the meantime you can turn your bibles to luke chapter 13 verse 22 i looked at the weather report today and i was like 25 i feel like i can wear a jacket to church today so this is my first first first jacket of the year and i'm slightly regretting that decision at this point if i'm sweating it's not because the sermon's getting super intense or anything like that it's just because it's a bit warm still luke 13 verse 22 listen to these words then jesus went through the towns and villages teaching as he made his way to jerusalem someone asked him lord are only a few going to be saved and he said to them make every effort to enter through the narrow door because many i tell you will try to enter and will not be able to 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 do not know you or where you come from and then you will say we ate and we 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 you evil doers 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 people will come from the east and the west and the north and the south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of god indeed there are those who are last who will be first and first who will be lost this is the word of the lord let's ask for god's help as we study this together gracious god your word is truth it is it is life-changing transformative truth and so we ask this morning that you would take your word and you would take it off of the pages of scripture and you would place it deep in our hearts that your spirit would take what we see here and not just allow us to grow with some with an intellectual knowledge of jesus but with a transformative knowledge of jesus where our hearts cling to him and we are changing the way we behave and think would you have that mercy on us this morning we ask it for christ's sake and his glory amen so we're in a short little series where we are journeying with jesus as he journeys towards the city of jerusalem where he's going to face his death we were in chapter 9 last week we've jumped forward a couple of chapters to chapter 13 we're in a quest to find out who he is in a world where jesus is known at a at a very superficial surface level a lot of people know stuff about jesus they know that he's connected to christianity they got some ideas that he said things like turn the other cheek but they don't really know him as in who he is what he came to do and what response we ought to have with him we're going on a journey to try and figure those things out as we follow him we're walking alongside him as he has encounters with people as he talks as he preaches as he teaches as he heals and ultimately as he dies and my hope is that each of us will have a much much clearer vision of who the biblical jesus is as we go through this now in chapter 13 which we just read luke the author reminds us that we're on this journey and on one occasion a person comes up to jesus and says lord are only a few people going to be saved now it seems like a pretty genuine sincere question quite quite an intriguing question actually how many people are going to get saved in the end and he's using the word saved there i think to mean future salvation in other words how many people are going to end up with god in his kingdom at the end of human history see with the with the exception of maybe one or two sects almost all your first century jewish

folk believed in a final resurrection of some sort of all people and the judgment then to be faced and so this person wants to know well who's going to make it who's going to get to go through that through that final judgment and particularly how many now i actually think it's quite a fascinating theological question if you've ever given any sort of thought to um the afterlife religion then at some point this sort of question has got to come up in your heart or in your mind if there is an afterlife out there if there is a salvation out there of some sort how many people are actually going to get it in the end and so if you have a burning question like that in your head or in your heart or you've read this now you're like oh i wonder what the answer to that question is well then you're going to be slightly disappointed or frustrated by jesus's answer as i'm sure actually the original questioner was in fact jesus doesn't even answer him directly you might have noticed at the end of verse 23 instead of responding to him the questioner jesus turns to them a bunch of people listening in on the conversation he responds to them probably his disciples and a bigger band of followers who are now coming on this journey with him and here is his non-answer so this is verse 24 look down at verse 24 he says make every effort to enter through the narrow door because many i tell you will try to enter and will not be able to he doesn't give a number he doesn't give a estimation well maybe this many people will make it he just issues a command make every effort make every effort to enter through the narrow door the original word is actually strive strive to enter or even more literally agonize to enter that's almost like try so hard that it might hurt you try that hard strive that hard so jesus flips the question as he often does in the gospel he says don't worry you you don't worry about who's in and who's out you worry about getting yourself in you worry you agonize about entering through the narrow door now why does he say that why does he say agonize to enter through this narrow door well two reasons and these are kind of our two points this morning number one the door won't stay open forever that's the first reason he gives and then number two you're in danger of entering the wrong door the door won't stay open forever and you're in danger of entering the wrong door so here's the first one the door won't stay open forever look down at verse 24 jesus says make every effort to enter through the narrow door because many i tell you will try to enter and will not be able to 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 so jesus has been preaching up and down the countryside at this point calling on people to enter into the kingdom of god and it's pretty clear from this passage from many others that to enter into that kingdom is synonymous with what we might see in other parts of the bible when it says someone is saved so really jesus is an evangelist what we would call an evangelist he's going out there to people saying listen you are not right with god you are not right with god and you need to by faith come right with god that's what evangelists do they preach that gospel there is a broken relationship between you and god all people are born into the situation and you need to come into his kingdom by faith you're outside the kingdom you've got to come in that's what jesus is preaching it's what uh billy graham preachers what all true evangelists preach now here jesus says you need to come in because a time might come when you can't come in anymore and you'll be stuck on the outside and he uses then this image of this narrow door one single entry point the door that's only open for a specific time eventually the owner of the house is going to get up and he's going to close that door

and you won't be able to come in christian faith has historically right from the time from before the time of the nicene creed that we spoke about earlier there has always taught because of passages like this that there is an actual limit to god's salvation it's not limitless there is a limit to god's salvation the door is not always going to be open some people are actually going to be excluded now a lot of people i think in our culture today find the exclusionary nature of faith quite offensive and difficult to come to terms with why doesn't god just save everybody why doesn't he let everybody in when when people who were late come and knock why doesn't he just let them in it brings up in our minds and our hearts questions of fairness a moral sense of fairness and right and wrong god is saving some and he's judging other people is he being fair i think on one level we have to say as we think about this subject at one level we have to say it's a little bit rich that we as human beings who as who are absolute absolute masters of excluding each other want to challenge the omnipotent creator god of the universe about his fairness when it comes to excluding and including we need to say that i think but then there's even more we can say about this so it's always struck me as a little bit odd that the owner of the house in jesus's parable here he calls he calls the people on the outside in verse 27 you might have seen this he calls them evil doers and i always read that and thought like that's a it's a little bit harsh if you come late to supper at my house i don't like shut the door and go like you evil doers you're not coming back inside here all they did was come late evil doers why evil doers the word literally literally means or it was two words this laborers or workers of unrighteousness people who build unrighteousness i think about it this way the bible says that god alone is truly righteous god alone is truly good that is he is actually the source of righteousness we only know what good is what right and wrong is because god is the source of all righteousness now that's either true or that's not but if it is true as the bible says well then you have to say i think that any opposition to god is to build unrighteousness so if god is righteousness if he is the source of all righteousness and you're not building towards him you are by necessity i think whatever else you're building you're building towards unrighteousness that's both necessarily open opposition to god like i hate you god i don't want to have anything to do with you or even apathy to god i'm just ignoring you if you're not picking god you are by necessity picking and building unrighteousness because you have to build your life on something and so that very much i think then puts the onus back on us as the individual you didn't choose god you didn't pick him you didn't pursue him you didn't agonize to get into the relationship with him well then fine but then you don't have to come into his house he will give you what you want god will exclude you can stay outside of the house you can face his judgment you can face his his wrath which sounds like a terrible thing and it is but that is really just his divine anger at an eradication of all that is unrighteous jr pecker a famous anglican theologian wrote this he said god's wrath in the bible is something people choose for themselves before hell is an experience inflicted by god it is a state for which a person himself opts by retreating from the light which god shines in his heart to lead him to himself the decisive act of judgment upon the lost is the judgment which they pass on themselves by rejecting the light that comes to them in and through jesus christ in the last analysis all that god does subsequently in judicial action towards the unbeliever whether in

this life or beyond it is to show him and lead him into the full implications of the choice he has made. Paco is saying when God turns around and he finally says okay right here's your judgment what he's really doing is he's saying but you actually chose this you actually chose this this is what you picked right in the multiple choice question of life you didn't pick the God option did you you've built your whole life without me why would you possibly want me now at the end of it I'm going to give you exactly what you wanted this whole life the people who are on the outside were stuck out there they aren't desperately wanting to be inside with God they're not wanting relationship with God look at look at the first part of verse 28 it actually describes the outside it describes the experience of the people who are outside have been excluded now it says there will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth now the weeping is grief they know they're losing out on something they understand that they're missing out on something good so there is grief but then there's this gnashing of teeth now do you know what the gnashing of teeth is it's anger it's anger their exclusion hasn't led them to repentance and to godly grief they haven't gone oh my what have we done I can't believe this terrible thing we've done we've rejected the loving creator God who made us what have we done there's none of that there is anger there is how dare you exclude us that's what's out there these people don't want God and so God doesn't give them what they don't really want and have never really wanted entry through the narrow door if you don't want God then God is going to give you what you want he's going to give you an eternity without him but if you do want God and I take it by being in church there's at least something of that in every single one of you this morning if you do want God if you want to connect and have a relationship with the one who made you then make every effort Jesus says every effort to enter into that relationship agonize he says because the door will one day shut there's a hymn called come ye sinners it's written in 1759 by Joseph Hart it's a hymn that calls on people to respond to God because one day the door will shut and it uses a quite a cool word that we don't ever use anymore but it really captures this idea the word tarry and one of the verses goes like this come ye weary heavy laden lost and ruined by the fall if you tarry till you're better you will never come at all don't tarry don't do that agonize to enter the narrow door because that door might close for you you don't know how many years you've got left you don't know what circumstances await you around the corner tomorrow next week next month next year don't tarry enter the narrow door of the kingdom now today this morning how many people are going to be saved Jesus doesn't matter agonize to enter the narrow door worry about that he says secondly though there's other reason for saying this is you might be in danger of entering the wrong door so look at verse 25 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 and then you will say 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 there will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth when you see Abram Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves are thrown out people will come from east and west and north and south

and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of god indeed there are those who are last who will be first and first who will be last so when when Jesus says you must strive agonized to enter through the kingdom to this narrow door we have to be clear on what he actually means there he cannot i think mean that you need to earn your way into the kingdom and we might think that when you hear the word strive there but the bible is pretty clear in many many parts that the way into the kingdom is through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ that's the way into the kingdom you need to repent of a life lived apart from God and you need to trust in Christ to enter the narrow door in many ways you might actually say that Jesus himself is the narrow door the access point in the gospel of John he literally says I am the gate I'm the way in you get in through faith through trusting in Jesus not through earning or meriting access through your own moral behavior that's not the way in that's not what striving means here or should mean here and so you say well what then is the striving what does the striving mean and I would say it must be I think then a striving to believe a striving to turn away from all the other doors and to believe in this narrow door it's a striving because there are all these other options out there that is the reality there are all these other doors out there and they're very appealing they can lull you into a false sense of security like you're on the right track and you're going to the right place in fact some of the false doors are even the many many more but some of the false doors are evident in this passage there's the false door of nationalism or family heritage so we know that the first century religious leaders had debated this issue at the time how many people are going to be saved in some of the rabbinic writings of the time in fact it's likely that this questioner maybe wants to draw Jesus into that spat that's happening he's like well here's a new rabbi let's get his opinion on this big subject that's going on and so from those early Jewish writings of that same period we know the general consensus was that basically if you're Jewish you're going to get saved all Jews are going to be saved maybe if you're like really really really really really bad like you done murdered lots of people and that then you won't get in but basically if you're Jewish you're going to get in by virtue of your nationality your bloodline only the real real evil sinners who did terrible things they would be excluded every other Jew is going to be saved by virtue of being an ethnic child of Abraham that's why there's that reference to Abraham later on in Isaac and Jacob and so Jesus by answering that the way by answering the way that he does he totally undercuts that assumption don't rest he says on your national identity as a child of Abraham you strive to enter that is you strive to believe the gospel don't let your national identity let you think that you're saved believe the gospel doesn't matter who your parents are doesn't matter if you were religious and brought up to be religious it doesn't matter if you spent your entire life in church doesn't matter if you can say all the books of the bible because your parents taught you to say all the books of the bible it doesn't matter if you've grown up in a majority Christian country or majority Christian community you personal strive to believe the gospel there's the false door of community or ethnic nationalism there's also the false door of proximity in the text people in Jesus story protest we ate we drank with you you taught in our streets we hang out with you

[19:52] Jesus we are like BFFs we are like this you and me we are together you know my mom I know your mom and Jesus says I don't know who you are and that's not because he doesn't remember them or he's getting old and he can't put names to faces it's because as they as much as they were in proximity to him they never trusted in him they never repented and placed their faith in him and so Jesus is saying just because you were around me doesn't mean you've gone through the narrow door make every effort strive agonize to come through the door believe the gospel now I think you can make a fairly straightforward application from this to life in church right you see the tragic tragic reality of this text is that there are possibly people in this room right now who are involved in church activity and the social life of the church and have been for some time but who have never made a personal commitment to Christ they've never strived to believe it's incredibly sad do it don't tarry like we said earlier strive you person don't say well I come to the church all the time

I'm on that volunteer roster Stephen got up and he gave that announcement I was like I'm on that roster already why aren't the rest of you don't rest on that for your entrance through the narrow door rest on your personal belief in Jesus Christ this actually applies even outside of the church not just inside the church there's a kind of secular way you can apply this so people look at their own moral respectability I'm a good person I spoke to an unchurched person recently who was attending church for the first time in a long time I said are you religious do you have any faith in Christ and the first thing they said to me was I'll try to live a good life it's an instinctual reaction I try to live a good life people look at their own moral respectability I'm a good person I haven't done terrible things surely God if there's a God out there he'll let me in and I want to say to that person how can you be so sure how can you be so sure if you have never strived or agonized to know this God to understand him to understand his will for people to understand how he views morality and righteousness then how can you have any assurance that you will be saved you need to strive and to agonize to enter the narrow door friends if the Bible is true and I believe it is then salvation is available and judgment is real and so we ought to strive and agonize to enter the narrow door of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ no other way but faith in Jesus Christ no other door now can I just say a quick thing about striving quick word about this striving to believe a little further explanation on this by Jesus using that word in reference to believing the gospel it obviously means that it's hard work okay in some sense it is hard work to believe and keep on believing in the gospel as our only and ultimate hope in this life it's a simple act super super simple act you repent and you trust in Christ to save you from your sin that could not be more simple there's not like a long list of things you've got to do before you become a Christian it is incredibly simple repent of sin and trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation but simple does not always equal easy you are to strive and you are agonized to keep believing that thing that doesn't sound easy that language and it's not easy for the reasons that we've stated above we look through all sorts of other tempting doors for hope and for salvation and for justification and so it's hard to keep believing that this one way is the way but if it's not easy then can I say this to you this morning can I say it as I say to myself if you are a Christian or if you want to be a Christian if you want to trust in Jesus if you want to believe the gospel if that's you then and I don't say this lightly but you are a fool if you don't fill your life with things that will build and grow your trust in the gospel you are a fool if you don't prioritize the studying of God's word and the sitting under the regular preaching of God's word in worship listening to that gospel being preached and taught over and over again every single week you are a fool if you don't give yourself to Christian community and ensuring that you have other believers striving next to you saying hey keep going this is the way we're all going in the same direction let's keep going you're not by yourself

God has given us his word and he has given us his church to help us in the striving and so don't be a fool let them play a central role in your life if you're sitting there and you're going well my church attendance is super super patchy I barely spend time with other Christians then you're going to find it incredibly hard to keep persevering in one direction towards this narrow door you're going to find all sorts of other doors incredibly alluring you're going to want to run through them all the time and you're going to say why am I doing that I believe in Jesus intellectually in my brain I believe in Jesus but I keep finding myself going down that door why is that happening that's why because you're not surrounding yourselves with things that build the grace of the gospel in your life and remind you of the narrow door day in and day out I spoke about cycling a little bit last week I speak about cycling a bit in my sermons because cycling has taught me many things about myself and about discipline and about the faith in many ways but you might remember a few years ago when the Cape Town cycle tour the Argus was called off because of the violent winds there were all those videos going around of guys under the civic center with their 60,000 rand carbon fiber bikes getting blown away and everyone losing their mind because the wind was so bad and a lot of people were really really bleak when they cancelled the race that morning because they were all dressed up ready to go when that SMS came through to say that the race had been cancelled a lot of people were really really bleak because they put in so much effort over the year before training to try and get a good time they put in so much effort so they were very bleak not me

I wasn't even out of my pajamas when I got the message that the race was cancelled that morning that's how late I generally go off when I do the Argus I'm like one of the last few guys I've got to worry about those guys closing the road behind me that I get through each closure I'm not an accomplished rider I ride slowly and I battle I really battle through these long distances that 109 kilometers of the Argus is a massive massive challenge a massive struggle for me and so I literally need to strive and agonize to get up those final hills and get back here to Greenpoint now knowing what the Argus is like knowing the amount of striving it takes knowing the amount of agonizing that it takes for me to just get in under 7 hours knowing all of that if you put me in a bicycle shop before the race and you say pick whatever it is that you want to make your ride easier pick whatever gear you want to make your ride easier I'll tell you what I'm not going to pick I am not going to pick a single speed BMX one of those ones where you have to pedal backwards to brake

I'm not picking one of those I am picking one of those 60,000 Rand fiber bikes with more gears than you can even count weighs less than the shoes I'm wearing with the cleats and the whole thing I'm going to pick the most comfortable comfortable cycling shorts because that's one of my biggest problems is sitting on that seat I'm going to pick the most comfortable gloves that you can't even really feel the handlebars it's like heaven when you touch the handlebars if I have got all of those options in front of me as I'm about to go out and strive and agonize over 109 kilometers I would be a fool to pick anything else in the best available stuff that I've got you have God's word you have God's people you have the church don't be a fool don't be a fool believing the gospel is hard work you need these things more than you possibly know you know why us pastors keep on telling people to come to church come to church come to church get into small groups to get into seminars to get into prayer groups it's not because we want to have shiny numbers so we can go to conferences and say my church is bigger than your church it's because we know from having done this for a long time we know that if you don't prioritize those things your risk of walking away from the faith is like 20 times higher way higher now this section of teaching ends with a picture of a feast

[28 : 41] Jesus says people are going to come to this feast from the east from the west from the north from the south and take up their place at the feast in the kingdom so actually in some ways to answer that original question it seems like quite a lot of people are going to be saved the narrowness of the door has more to do with the way in which one is saved than the total number of people who will necessarily pass through that door so maybe a lot of people are going to be saved the narrowness is the door the way of salvation you see because Christ is our narrow door he's the narrow way salvation is only through repentance and faith in Christ we in fact we could say it this way we agonize we agonize we agonize to enter that narrow way because he agonized on the cross to open up that narrow way for us we strive to get through that door because Christ strove to the point of shedding his own blood to open that door for us we make every single effort to give all to get through that door because

Jesus in the greatest efforts of all time gave his life to open up that door friends listen very carefully the door is narrow not because God is stingy with his love not because he doesn't want heaven to get too cramped not because he delights in keeping people out the door is narrow because there is actually only one person in this universe who would have the amount of love necessary the amount of power necessary the desire necessary to stand in the place of sinful human beings sinful you and me and give his life so that that door can come open that's why it's narrow and that one person is the incarnate son of God Jesus Christ you want to see striving you want to see what striving really looks like this is striving listen to these words from the Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd Jones he says consider what Christ suffered at the hands of men the misunderstanding the hatred the malice and spite think of his suffering from weariness and hunger and thirst think of men laying cruel hands upon him arresting him trying him mocking him jeering at him spitting in his most holy face think of cruel men condemning him to death and scourging him look at him staggering under the weight of the heavy cross on his way to

Golgotha look at him nailed upon the tree and listen to his expressions of agony at the thirst he endured and the pain he suffered think of the terrible moment when our sins were laid upon him he even lost sight of the face of his father for the one and only time and gave up the ghost and died and was buried and laid in a grave he the author of life the creator of everything lies dead in a grave why did he do all of this the astounding answer is because of his love for you and me because he loved us such is the depth of his love there is no other explanation such as the depth of his love such as the depth of his striving for us the door is narrow because only jesus is prepared to strive that much for the salvation of the human race only he can save us only his love his power is necessary to open the way to a holy god friends how great and precious is that love this morning that narrow door shouldn't be an obstacle to belief that narrow door is love and life itself it should be something to be treasured so deeply when we know that the narrow door is jesus something to be desired more than anything else that jesus christ would love us that much and it is only when you see that love for yourself that you will then be empowered and strengthened and motivated to strive to believe in this gospel of our striving savior let's pray father we we walk this road and we see all these other doors that open around us and offer life and satisfaction and joy justification hope we think we're on a good track sometime like these people did when they said hey we ate with you jesus we spent time in the streets with you we think we're going down the right paths and sometimes we're so deluded because we're not following the christ of scripture the christ who would give his life as a ransom to save for the help us this morning to strive to believe that true gospel to shun in some ways all the other doors all the other options and to follow this one true option trusting in jesus to save us trusting not that we have the ability to strive hard enough to get through that door but that christ has strived for us as another door is open through simple faith well i pray for any person who's sitting here this morning who's never trusted in jesus that you and your great mercy would open their eyes to the reality of grace that they would see that there is forgiveness and there is hope and there is life in jesus if they would just repent of a life lived apart from him whether there was a life in open opposition to god or a life just of apathy to the things of god that they would repent of that and they would say jesus save me i want to be yours why don't you bring them to that point of salvation this morning for those of us who know you as our lord and savior why don't you fill us with a vision of your son who endured the cross for us so that we might go on enduring that as temptation comes we might fight away temptation as that the temptation comes to to to downplay the importance of your church and your people we would fight those things because we know what cost these things have been earned for us at help us to strive lord in belief of the gospel we ask this for christ's sake in his glory amen