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The Door

LUKE 13:22-30

INTRODUCTION

1. The present population of the world is 8.1 billion.
2. How many people have lived on this planet since Adam and Eve first walked in the garden?
3. Of all who have ever lived and who will be living at the time of our Lord's return, how many of those will be saved?
4. None of us know, and we would be wise not even to hazard a guess.
5. However, in our text this morning we find someone asking Jesus, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" (Luke 13:23, NASB95)
6. This question was asked of Him as "He was passing through from one city and village to another . . . on His way to Jerusalem" (v. 22).
7. Jesus doesn't answer the question directly, but He does say something which should make each of us here this morning pause and think.
8. You see, the important question is not how many will be saved, but will you and I be among them.
9. As we work our way through Jesus' answer, I would like to encourage each of you to stop and give serious consideration to what He has to say.

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I. THE NARROW DOOR

A. THE WAY OF SALVATION

"And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?"

And He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door . . .” (Luke 13:23,24a, NASB95).

1. On this occasion, Jesus represented the way to salvation as “the narrow door.”
2. In His sermon on the mount, He referred to it as “the narrow gate” and said “the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13,14, NASB95).
3. On yet another occasion Jesus compared the entrance to the kingdom of God as “the eye of a needle” as He spoke of the demand of self-denial required to enter — “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24; cf. Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25).

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B. THE MANY

“ . . . for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24, NASB95).

1. Jesus did not say that “some” will seek to enter, but “many . . . will seek to enter and will not be able.”
2. The Jews of Jesus’ day considered themselves privileged — they were God’s chosen people.
 - a. It was God Himself who had promised Abraham to be His God and the God of his descendants (Genesis 17:7).
 - b. Through Moses, at Mount Sinai, the Lord promised the Israelites, “I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Leviticus 26:12).
3. In their minds, they had the Law, the prophets and the temple — thus their salvation must be a given.

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4. However, it was the apostle Paul, who in his letter to the Christians in Rome, spoke against such a mindset (Romans 2:17-21).

“But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God, and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? ” (Romans 2:17–21a, NASB95)

5. In Matthew 25:31-46 we find a parable by Jesus in which His return is compared to a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats within his flock.
6. In this parable, He speaks of those who presume they are saved only to hear Him say, “Depart from me” (Matthew 25:41).

Slide 5**C. THE EFFORT TO ENTER**

“Strive to enter . . .” (Luke 12:24a).

1. So what did Jesus say to His followers then and to us today?
2. “Strive to enter” (KJV, NKJV, ESV, NASB) “make every effort to enter” (NIV84, HCSB)(v. 24).
3. The Greek term translated by our English texts as “strive” or “make every effort” is *agonizomai* from which we get our word “agonize.”
4. It is a word that describes intense effort.
5. In 1 Timothy 6:12, the apostle Paul instructed the evangelist Timothy to “Fight (agonizomai) the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of

many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12, NASB95).

6. At the end of his own life, Paul wrote, "I have fought (agonizomai) the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7, NASB95).
7. When you and I consider what is at stake — Heaven or Hell — and the finality of our eternal destiny, we cannot strive too much to get through the narrow door.
8. Our struggle to enter is to be one so intense that it can be described as an agony of soul and spirit.
9. We must seek it with everything we have within us.

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II. THE CLOSED DOOR

A. THE CLOSING OF THE DOOR

"Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door" (Luke 13:25a, NASB95).

1. At present, the door is open, but there is a time limit on our Lord's offer of salvation.
2. The fact that you are sitting here right now in this period of worship means that you can still respond if you wish.
4. In Hebrews 9:27, we find these words, "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."
3. When that time comes, your opportunity will have passed.
4. Today, you are alive, today the door is still open.
5. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:2, "now is the day of salvation."

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B. OUR INABILITY TO ENTER ONCE THE DOOR IS CLOSED

“Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ ” (Luke 13:25, NASB95).

1. As I just pointed out, there will be a time when this door will be closed, either because you have died or our Lord has returned in judgment.
2. As Jesus points out “the head of the house” will close the door once and for all.
3. However, after the door is closed, nothing can be done.
 - a. The gate of heaven only opens from the inside.
 - b. No one but God can grant entrance.
4. If we fail to enter, it isn’t that God is unwilling to admit us, but that we were unwilling to enter on the only terms which made our entrance possible.
5. Jesus speaks of those who stand outside and knock, pleading with Jesus, “Lord, open up to us!”
6. His answer will be “I do not know where you are from.”
7. Jesus told them, “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’” (Luke 13:26).
8. The problem was not their familiarity with Jesus, but their response to Him — it just wasn’t there.
9. Outward contact with Jesus and His message is not what Jesus is looking for — it’s the inward reception that matters (Mark 3:35; Luke 6:46-49).
 - a. As Jesus said to those outside the house in Capernaum, “whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35, HCSB).
 - b. It is as He said at the end of His sermon in Luke 6, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46, NASB95).

10. When Jesus said, “I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from me, all you evildoers” (v. 27), He was saying to the crowd . . .
 - a. You may have seen Me. You have been physically close to Me.
 - b. However, you never responded to Me in such a way that I could now recognize you as My own.

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III. THE CLOSED FEAST

A. THOSE EXCLUDED

“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 yourselves being thrown out.” (Luke 13:28, NASB95)

1. Those who do not enter through “the narrow door” when it is open will be left outside.
2. The image which Jesus presents us is clear, graphic and painful — “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
3. Jesus gives us an indication of the emotional and physical agony of those who are refused entrance to the great feast.
4. I don’t believe there is any pain which a person may experience here in this life that can compare with the pain to be experienced by those who are refused entrance into God’s eternal kingdom.

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B. THOSE INCLUDED

“And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 13:29, NASB95)

1. Earlier, the question asked of Jesus was “are only a few people going to be saved?” (v. 23).

2. Jesus said that people will come and “recline at the table in the kingdom of God” from the four points of the compass — east, west, north and south.
3. In another parable (the wheat and the tares, Matthew 13:27-43), Jesus said “the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43).
4. There is no greater joy to be known than to sit with our Lord with His Father and all the righteous down through the ages at that great banquet table.
5. There is no place else I would rather be.

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C. THE SURPRISING REVERSAL

“And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.”” (Luke 13:30, NASB95)

1. There will be surprises in the kingdom of God.
2. The standards of heaven are not the standards of earth.
3. In His parable of the workers in the vineyard, the master paid those who worked an hour the same amount as those who worked all day.
4. When those who had worked all day complained, Jesus said:

“But he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?’

‘Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

‘Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?’

“So the last shall be first, and the first last.””

(Matthew 20:13–16, NASB95)

CONCLUSION

1. If you and I were to summarize Jesus response, it would be, "Don't worry about the number. You respond to me and be sure you are among those being saved."
2. The door of opportunity is presently open, but it will not remain so forever.
3. Once it is closed, it can no longer be opened.
4. Today, the door is open. Neither you nor I know what tomorrow holds.
5. Don't miss the opportunity.

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6. Remember, the question is not "Will only a few be saved?" but, "Will I be among the saved?"