

Written Copy: Will He Answer, "I Don't Know You!?" Luke 13:24-25

Proper 16: 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, August 25th, 2019

Text: Luke 13:24-25

²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When 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.'

Exegetical Statement

As Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to fulfill His role as Savior of the human race, He makes His way through big cities and small towns along the way. These are the towns the 72 have already visited and brought the word that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and Jesus is there to open the door of the kingdom to them through faith in Him. Along the way someone asks Him a rhetorical sounding question about how many will actually be saved. Jesus answers in a personal way which is the correct way all men should regard the subject of salvation: "Will you be among those who are saved?" Jesus uses the analogy of a great banquet hall which can be entered only by a narrow door. While the door has been opened to all who believe in this life the believe must strive and struggle with sin, remaining in a state of repentance so that faith remains when he dies or when Christ returns. There will be not time at death, nor on the Last Day to change one's heart situation in order to open the door which, by their lack of faith, has been shut. These will cry out, pleading the door be opened. They will testify that they knew who Jesus was. But they did not believe in Him. These will be cast out of the presence of God even as those who died in faith enjoy the pleasures of eternal life. The condemned shall go off into an eternity of weeping fueled by their knowledge of the gift of grace they cast off and the gnashing of teeth caused by eternal torment that is physical, emotional, and spiritual. The call to faith goes out to the four corners of the earth. And there will be those that one might consider unworthy of entrance because of their life of sin and yet by God's grace they repent and believe before its too late. And there will be those who believe themselves as we might too that they are pleasing and righteous before God but lack the repentant faith needed to open the door to eternal life.

Focus Statement:

Jesus death and resurrection opens the door to eternal life. My baptism makes the door "my door"-my entrance to His kingdom. Even though I may not want to be convicted of sin and seek to justify myself the Holy Spirit in the ongoing work of Baptism invades my live, breaks my heart of self-assurance, and in humble repentant faith sets me before Jesus once again and the door that He continues to hold open for me through the faith He gives and keeps alive

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Our emphasis on justification by grace through faith and not by works can cloud over the need for sanctification: the need to use the means of grace as a Baptized child of God to remain repentant. If a believer sees baptism as the magic rite that means they can now live as they want and be casual about sin, they are in danger of finding the door to eternity closed as unrepentance leads to a loss of faith

What the hearer should do as a result:

Understand and value the need for all Christians to remain connected to Christ through a life of faith that is powered by their participation in Word and Sacrament. Rest in the truth that while we each have a responsibility to struggle and strive against our sinful nature it is God Himself who overcomes our sin and keeps us in faith-with the door to eternity open despite our struggle with sin.

Subject Sentence: Jesus knows and welcomes those with repentant faith

Part the clouds and see if you can remember back to Jr. High. What happened to you if you were late for class? I remember what happened to me when I was late for Mr. Leske's class. He taught English in one of the afternoon periods, not the period right after lunch but the next one after that. Now Mr. Leske had a reputation that you should not be late for his class. And for a while I made sure that I was not. My previous class was down the hall a little way but on the same floor as his. So if I left right when the bell rang and headed right to his class, I would arrive with almost 10 minutes to spare. I would set my books on my desk, run to the restroom and still be back with more than 5 minutes to spare. No problem, right? Only my success lulled me into a false sense of security and self-confidence. Since I was always on time I began hanging out in the hallway, down by where my previous class had been, talking with the guys, staring at the cute girl in that room I had left previously. The result was that one day I was late getting back to Mr. Leske's classroom. I realized I was late when I tried to open the door and found it locked. That was why you should not be late to his class. At the top of the hour he would lock the classroom door. Now this was not according to my watch, or even the clock out in the hall, but the top of the hour according to his watch. I tried knocking, but Mr. Leske, along with all the other students in the class just turned and stared at me. Mr. Leske pointed at his watch, and then pointed down the hall toward the principal's office, which was where I would have to go to get a tardy slip. I heard laughter erupt in the classroom as I walked away.

When I came back I found that my ordeal still wasn't over. I knocked but he didn't answer. I had to wait outside while he had his back to me. The rest of the students were looking at me though and were laughing at whatever he was saying. Finally he came and let me in. I gave him my slip and sat down. He walked over to my desk. He was a big man, a former college football player. His heels hit the tile floor with a powerful thudding sound when he walked. He stood in front of my desk holding the slip in his hand, reading it for a moment while I and the rest of the class waited. Then he said, "Mr. Pretznaw, what was so important that you had to be late for my class?" I told him nothing was that important. He said, "Exactly. You better work hard to make sure you aren't late again." And that's what I did the rest of the year.

Now as unpleasant as this was for my 13-year-old self, feeling embarrassed, being made fun of, locked out of class and then calling me out in front of everyone, it pales in comparison to the feeling you and I would experience if we fell victim to what Jesus describes in our Gospel Lesson. Jesus gives this illustration in response to a question that is asked of Him as He was traveling through cities and small villages. He is on His way to Jerusalem, where He would suffer and die. Along the way someone ventures to ask Jesus a rhetorical question: (**Luke 13:23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"**) Now this kind of question would be appropriate in a Seminary theology class, but not in this setting. But it's what we do when they question we want to ask is personal, and the answer might not be what we want to hear. So while this person asks **"Hey Jesus, I'm just wondering, will there only be a small number of people who are saved?"** The question they really want to ask is: **"Will I be among those who are saved?"** This is the question that Jesus gives answer to .

Jesus answers by using an illustration saying (**Luke 13:24**) **"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able"** He is picturing Eternal Life as a big banqueting hall that can only be entered through one door. And He says that one must strive to enter through it. The Greek word being translated here is where we get our English word "agonize". That's what it takes on our part Jesus says. You must keep working at it, struggling and contending to enter as if you were locked in battle with an adversary. Now for us as Missouri Synod Lutherans this strikes us in an uncomfortable way. It sounds as if the way to enter eternal life depends not just upon God's grace but also on our works. And its not like the person asked "What must I do to be saved as others have asked Jesus. The answer to that question is always the Law which tells us that we can never do enough.

To understand Jesus illustration we first need to ask, "What is the narrow door"? The narrow door is Jesus Christ Himself. And the power that opens it for us and keeps it open is faith. **John 14:1-6** is clear on this ¹ **"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.** ² **In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?** ³ **And if I go and prepare a place for**

you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ **And you know the way to where I am going.** ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**" Faith in Jesus death and resurrection opens the door for you and keeps it open. Now, if we could walk through that door and into eternity the minute the Holy Spirit grants us faith, we would be all set. But for most of us there is a lifetime to live between our conversion at our Baptism and the day when we pass from this world and find ourselves standing before the door that leads to eternity. And the years in between find us engaging in a battle with our sinful heart, with the culture we live in, and with the devil who desires that we head toward any door but the one marked Jesus.

The battle is a spiritual one, but it's still a real battle. The sinful hearts that all believers still possess struggle to admit that our continued sinning is a real problem. We don't like to be told or have it pointed out to us that we are wrong. Obeying God's commands prevent us from having fun and living our lives the way we want to. How many times do you struggle in your heart to really love your neighbor as yourself? How does it feel when your shortcomings in this area are pointed out? How does it feel to see yourself as a failure? And the culture we live in believes that first and foremost that you need to please yourself to be happy. But living for oneself and not for God is the definition of a sinful lifestyle. Easier to downplay our sin and see it as not such a big deal. When we do that we play right into the devil's hand. When sin is no longer serious enough to need a Savior, when we think that we can have a free pass on sin because Jesus died on the cross, we are in trouble. We forget how much our sin angers God. We forget that we deserve death because of it. And with that forgotten how little does Jesus sacrifice for your sins mean to you? And the devil is there to lie to us and assure us that all is well.

Faith is what keeps that door open. But faith cannot exist in a heart that is not repentant, in a heart that is not troubled by the sin we commit. What will happen if faith leaves and our time comes to walk through that 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.' When you die and stand at that door without the gift of faith you God granted you will find the door already closed and secured. It was faith in Christ that kept it open. But when faith is gone the door to eternal life is closed forever. It doesn't matter how hard you knock or how much you plead. The answer from within will be "I do not know you".

Many will respond, "But Jesus, I know you!" (**Luke 13:26**) **Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.'** You may even add some other things like talking about how you sat through so many boring church services, how you came up to the communion rail and partook, how you did so many wonderful works of charity and gave so much money. But none of those things have the power of faith (**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!'"** Knowing Jesus; having head knowledge of who He is and what He did is not enough. Jesus must say on that Last Day that He knows you, That He knows you as one of His Father's precious children. That you know Him by faith. As Jesus said in **Matthew 10:32-33** ³² **So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,** ³³ **but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.** It is only by faith that we can confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior. All who arrive at the door without faith either will be turned away. It doesn't matter if they were those who rejected the gift of the Holy Spirit throughout their lifetime, or they once had the gift but discarded it out of apathy and laziness. Both will have the same destiny: **Luke 13:28** **"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.** It's the place where Jesus is not. Where love and forgiveness and mercy are not. Instead there is a deep darkness that is physical, emotional, and spiritual. A despair so deep and intense that it causes non-stop wailing and weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is eternal torment that was originally designed as punishment for only the fallen angels. But it is where all those who refuse the gift of faith have chosen as their eternal destiny.

But that doesn't have to be your future, or mine. It's what we all deserve, but it's not what Jesus desires us to have. God the Son came to earth and became a man so that He could remove that eternal torment and suffering forever from your future. He suffered that torment for you on the cross. All the times we see our sin lightly, all the ways we choose to please our own sinful heart in opposition to God's commands and will. All those offenses have been removed by Jesus through His death and resurrection. God's anger over your sin was poured out on Jesus and there is none left to pour out on you. And His resurrection is proof that He did all that was necessary to make you right with God. We receive all this in our Baptism. In the water of Baptism we are given the Holy Spirit just as God's Word promise. He comes to work the miracle of faith. The faith we need that makes all Jesus did on the cross for you, and for me. The faith through which we are declared to be God's precious and forgiven children. The faith by which Jesus declares before the Heavenly Father that although we still sin, we are in right standing with Him, because He has earned that standing on our behalf. With that faith Jesus knows where we have come from, from His Body, the Church. And by that faith we not only know who Jesus, we believe in Him. And therein lies the power that opens that door to eternal life and keeps it open.

It is the power that keeps the door open even as we strive and struggle against the desires of our own sinful nature, the temptation to join the world in its sinfulness, and against the lies of the devil that would direct our future in any direction but the door that is Jesus. You know how hard the struggle is against sin. You fight against temptation to gain a small victory only to find that you've succumbed again, often to the same sin that you were fighting against yesterday. But the good news is you never struggle alone. The Holy Spirit given in your Baptism is the power you need in your struggle. He is at work to keep your faith alive through the means of grace: through your participation in the Word and Sacraments. Using these means He moves you to repent. He moves you not only to confess your sin but to create in you the desire to a new life of obedience. He reminds you that while your sin offends God, through faith in Jesus, your guilt and your punishment have been taken away. You have been restored us to right standing with the Father. And this happens not just once, but every time you confess your sins and hold fast by faith to Jesus work of salvation on your behalf. In our life of striving against sin we are given Jesus

victory as our victory. And the Spirit remains at work to keep our hearts repentant because it is only repentant hearts that can have and hold the faith necessary to keep that door open on the Last Day.

The rest of that year in Jr. High I lived with respect for Mr. Leske and his desire that his students be on time. And arriving early had its benefits in that I wasn't rushed, but could prepare and organize myself for the class period to come. Jesus gives to us this illustration so that we might have a respectful fear of what it means to live out our lives of faith in this world. So that we realize that no matter how strong we believe ourselves to be, if we try to struggle and strive against sin on our own we are not strong enough and can end up giving up our faith. On the Last Day we would find the door shut. But in our Baptism Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit who uses the means of grace to keep our hearts repentant and our faith alive and working, trusting not in ourselves, but only in Jesus work for us. Even though we continue to sin He keeps our hearts repentant and looking by faith to Jesus who has done all that is necessary to keep the door to eternal life open for us. By faith He knows you and declares you to be the Father's precious child. And may that be how you are welcomed by Him on the Last Day. Amen.