

w e e k 11 : *Jesus preaches a narrow message*

Scripture to Read: Luke 13:22-30

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.”

Summary of Luke 13:22-30

Someone asks Jesus if few people will ultimately be saved. Jesus answers that instead of being inquisitive about such a matter as this, you should make sure that you enter through the narrow door—a door that will not always be open.

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

“And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” [Luke 13:30]

Questions for Personal Study and/or Group Discussion

- Have you ever been denied admittance to a place where you firmly believed you were going to be let in? What was that like?
- What might have prompted someone to ask Jesus whether only a few people will be saved?

- Why do you think Jesus rarely (if ever) answered hypothetical questions? What wisdom should this impart to us about dealing with speculative and hypothetical questions? How does Jesus deal with the question?

- What does Jesus' warning about the narrow door tell you about salvation? Read Philippians 3:13-14 and Luke 8:5-7,11-14 as you form your response.

- What is the meaning of the story in v.25-27 about the band of travelers arriving late at night at a roadside inn? What does such a story have to say to us and our relationship with Christ?

- Why might Jesus' prophesy in v.28-30 been offensive to his audience? Think of some ways in which God reverses human expectations. Consider the song of Mary in Luke 1:46-55 as an example.

- A number of people today do not believe in the existence of hell. Does Jesus' teaching support their view or contradict it?

- Discuss (or think about) ways that we can present the narrow, exclusive message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (see John 14:6) in a culture that believes that all religious faiths are equal and that none can make exclusive claims to the truth.¹

- One of the reasons people reject Christianity is that they see a false version of it in modern-day Pharisees. How do the events of v.10-17 illustrate that statement? Do we really believe that the gospel is for everyone?

Notes and thoughts...

A thought worth thinking: “Unless all human life is just a game; unless we are mistaken in our strong sense that our moral and spiritual choices matter; unless, after all, the New Testament as a whole has badly misled us—then it really is possible to stroll past the open gate to the kingdom of God, only to discover later the depth of our mistake.” [Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 170]

¹ A good resource is Timothy J. Keller's *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

Narrow yet open: “The Greco-Roman world’s religious views were open and seemingly tolerant—everyone had his or her own God[s]. The practices of the culture were quite brutal, however. The Greco-Roman world was highly stratified economically, with a huge distance between the rich and poor. By contrast, Christians insisted that there was only one true God, the dying Savior Jesus Christ. Their lives and practices were, however, remarkably welcoming to those that the culture marginalized. The early Christians mixed people from different races and classes in ways that seemed scandalous to those around them. The Greco-Roman world tended to despise the poor, but Christians gave generously not only to their own poor but to those of other faiths. In broader society, women had very low status, being subjected to high levels of female infanticide, forced marriages, and lack of economic equality. Christianity afforded women much greater security and equality than had previously existed in the ancient classical world. During the terrible urban plagues of the first two centuries, Christians cared for all the sick and dying in the city, often at the cost of their lives.

“Why would such an exclusive belief system lead to behavior that was so open to others? It was because Christians had within their belief system the strongest possible resource for practicing sacrificial service, generosity, and peace-making. At the very heart of their view of reality was a man who died for his enemies, praying for their forgiveness. Reflection on this could only lead to a radically different way of dealing with those who were different from them.” [Timothy J. Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008), 20]

Tips for Parents with Young Children

The church meeting at your supper table. The following steps are “field-tested” ideas to help direct theological discussions between parents and their children while also building the children’s theological vocabularies so that they are increasingly familiar with biblical concepts. Remember: a brief, God-focused time together is

better than a long, task-oriented time in which everyone is miserable.

The discussion questions and tips are offered to help you and your children grow in relationship with each other and with Christ. They are meant to be supportive and not constraining. Therefore, do not feel bound by any questions or pressured to follow the steps too rigidly. Follow the Spirit’s leading and don’t be a religious parent who is rigidly inflexible and who makes this time together drudgery rather than delight.

If you miss a night, or if conversation gets off track, or if your family occasionally just wants to talk about something else, don’t stress—it’s inevitable. For your children, the point is to learn what they are thinking about God, to help them know and love Jesus as God and Savior, and to teach them how to articulate and explain their Christian faith. For parents, the point is to instruct children and each other, thereby creating a family culture in which every member freely and naturally talks about God and prays to him together. In short, the goal is that your family would open the Bible and grow in love for Jesus, one another, your church, and the world.

Finally, remember that family Bible study requires a sense of humor, so make sure to have some fun, enjoy some laughs, and build some memories.

Monday: Read Luke 13:22-24. Luke reminds us that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. Use a Bible map to point out the route to your child (there’s a map at the end of this installment of the study guide). Ask your child why Jesus was going to Jerusalem (answer: to suffer and die for our sins). Thank God together for Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice to bring us to God. His cross-work is his great work.

Tuesday: Read Luke 13:24. Talk about why the door to salvation is narrow (Jesus is the only way of salvation; we come to him by faith alone). Don’t worry about how many will be saved; instead, be sure that *you* are saved. Talk with your child about whether he or she has received and rests upon Christ alone for his/her salvation.

Wednesday: Wednesday Night Connection in December will consist of preparation for the children's Christmas program on December 16. Spend some time together praying for FPC, its leaders, and your friends at church.

Thursday: Read Luke 13:25-28. You can act out the little story Jesus told to make it more vivid. Explain that just being around Jesus (going to church, praying, learning, etc.) is not the same as belonging to Jesus and trusting him alone for our salvation.

Friday: In Luke 13:30 Jesus says, "And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." Children love to be first in line, first to be served ice cream, etc. Talk about how God wants us to put others first. Identify one or two areas in daily living where you and your child can make a tangible effort to put others first.

Saturday: Quiz your children on Catechism questions or Bible memory verses they are learning. Pray that Phillip and Grant would have boldness in preaching the Word of God tomorrow. Also, pray for the Sunday School teachers and for the musicians and choir members who serve us each Sunday. We will be celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Morning Worship. This would be a good time to go over the catechism questions about the Lord's Supper.

Sunday: Before you leave for church, explain to your children that their ministry at church is to welcome new children, help their Sunday School teacher, serve others, and worship God in the service. After church, discuss with your children what they learned and what you learned.

