

Strive to Enter the Kingdom, Part 1

Luke 13:22-24

As we reengage our minds in the study of Luke's Gospel, I'd just invite you to turn back again to that, beloved book, and you can turn to the middle of Luke 13, Luke chapter 13. We are entering into a new section in this place, Luke 13:22, a new section in, in this Gospel. It's got a clear theme and it starts in Luke 13:22 and continues on through Chapter 16.

It's a section here of strong evangelistic concern. And it's thematic in this sense, I mean, Jesus has obviously been preaching the good news of the Kingdom ever since he began, so he's had an evangelistic concern all through his ministry. But there is a stronger evangelistic concern as Jesus is pushing his people, the nation of Israel, pushing them toward a decision.

His life, his work, his teaching, demands a verdict, demands decision and so he is provoking them to think carefully about themselves in light of his teaching. In light of his

commands. Comfortable people don't like to be discomforted, do they? Self-assured people don't like it when their reasons for assurance are challenged. When the ground of confidence that they've had in their lives is unsettled and even removed.

People tend to like what is familiar, what is easy, what's comfortable. People prefer to remain, at rest. I mean, we can all detect this in ourselves, don't we? I mean, who wants a chaotic life? So we work toward managing things so that they're easy and comfortable, so that we're at ease in our souls and our minds; were comfortable, and we remain at rest.

As I've shared the gospel with people, as I've called people to repentance and faith and obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it's quite often that I've heard some variation of these words. I've heard this more often than I care to remember. I'll come to Christ later. I'll obey his words soon. I'll get to that, but not yet. Have you heard that? Have you heard those words that sentiment? Whatever it is in that person. A lifestyle that they want to maintain; man or a woman that they want to pursue. A particular course of action that they intend to take.

Some option that they want to keep open and on the table. Whatever it is, it's sinful when posed against the demands of the Lord Jesus Christ. But I'm gonna do it anyway. I'll ask for forgiveness later. God will forgive me, after all, God is a loving, forgiving God.

They've been taught that by many churches. It's nothing more than wicked presumption. It's presuming on the grace of God. It's taking his patience and kindness for granted. Sinners want the easy route. Nothing too disruptive to their lifestyle, nothing to make them ill at ease. Nothing to change them, actually.

As I said, it's whatever's familiar, comfortable whatever keeps them at rest. It's really Newton's first law of motion, right? Law of inertia. A body at rest tends to stay at rest until acted upon by an external force. Well, nation of Israel body at rest, meet Jesus, the net external force.

Look at verse 22 of Chapter 13. "Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward

Jerusalem. And someone said to him, 'Lord, will those who are saved be few? 'And he said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able, 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. "And he will answer you." 'I do not know where you come from.'

"Then," you will begin, "you will begin to say 'we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets. 'But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil. '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, but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and West and from North and South, and recline at the table in the Kingdom of God. Behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last?'"

Now if that doesn't disrupt the inertia of Israel, the only thing that they can expect is certain judgment. That's what

he describes here. The same warning, beloved. The same warning applies to us. To follow this same exhortation, strive, it's a present tense, "be striving to enter through the narrow door."

We're going to focus our attention this morning on those first three verses, 22, 23 and 24. Those verses set the scene that give the occasion and they provide the thesis. That Jesus gives and explain everything that follows. So what follows in verses 25 to 27 is a kind of parable. Some call it a prophetic allegory. Parables tend to be given in the third person.

Jesus in this section uses the second person. To point the finger at the people in this nation, he speaks prophetically to the people of Israel, targeting them directly with his parable. And then, verses 28 and 29, he follows that prophetic parable with a judgment oracle. He gives these people, who would reject his invitation, he gives them kind of a preview of what judgment is gonna look like. And it's a terrifying, terrifying thing to imagine.

What pain and regret that they will suffer, when they see the door closed, that they can't get through, and everybody else is on the inside and they're on the outside. This is for all who failed to strive now to enter the Kingdom. And then verse 30 sums it up with a proverbial summary.

Alright, so three points. The setting, the occasion, the thesis. First, the setting and the setting is what we're need, what we need to see here is that for Jesus, the setting is that there is a cause for increasing urgency, in his message. A cause for increasing urgency in his message, and especially particularly this, to demand a verdict. To call for decision. And we're riding the fence regarding Jesus Christ and his demands on your life. And he has a cause for increasing urgency.

Luke begins the section with a travel note. It's the first of several travel notes that will be coming in his Gospel. Look at verse 22. Jesus went on his way or he was going on his way. Luke is by the verb showing progression here. So he's going on his way and he's going on his way through towns and villages. This is the program he's set up earlier in Chapter 10, sending

evangelists before him to announce his arrival, to preach the Good News of the Kingdom, to heal with Kingdom power. To prepare that village, town, city, for his arrival. Rejecting towns would not even be visited. They would not show up on the itinerary. But those towns that had even one family and one home that would be receptive, Jesus would visit them. The apostles put them on the itinerary, and they went and visited.

And so he's going through the towns and the villages here in Judea. He's teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. He's got his eyes set on Jerusalem. Now in this travel note, there's no precise time given, no exact location. But by comparing this with other Gospel, the other Gospels, we know Jesus has entered into the Perea phase of his ministry that's in the region of Perea.

The other Gospels are explicit citing this at Matthew 19:1, Mark 10:1, John 10:40. He's visiting the communities of the Jews who live in the region of Perea. Perea, if you kind of look at the maps in the back of your Bible, you can see it's on the east side of the Jordan River. The Jordan River, River is the western

boundary of Perea. Shared, that same boundary, is shared by Samaria to the West. So Perea is situated between the Sea of Galilee in the north and the Dead Sea to the south. Galilee, the territory region of Galilee, is to the northwest, and Judea is to the southwest, and Perea is to the east.

Politically, Perea is under the rule of Herod Antipas, along with Galilee to the northwest. So Jesus having ministered already in Galilee, having saturated Galilee with the Kingdom teaching in the earlier part of his ministry, he's now returned here to Herod's jurisdiction by entering into Perea.

Herod Antipas, it puts him in potential danger, as that's you can see that indicated by verse 31. When the Pharisees warned Jesus about Herod Antipas. Hey, he's wanting to kill you. Get outta here. Luke's travel note, as I said, it's the first of several to come in Luke's gospel. These travel notes really remind us that Jesus is continuing to pursue this program of preaching the Kingdom, healing people, showing Kingdom power, validating his message by his works, and his power, and his strength and his authority. And yet he doesn't stick around. He



preaches, he calls for verdict, and he moves on. He is continuing to move toward his goal.

Because he's come to accomplish a mission, he's been given a mission by the father. He wants to fulfill the scripture he wants to fulfill the will of his Father in Heaven. And as he told his disciples in Luke 9:22 here's the mission. Here's the plan. "The son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

That mission is always on his mind. That mission is, is, is, is set before him, always. He knows that his time right now is drawing to a close, and I think that's part of what intensifies the sense of urgency that he feels in his teaching. It's the same message of entering into God's Kingdom that he's been preaching all along, but he senses an urgency for people to respond because the time is so short. Wants them to respond now, before it's too late.

Nothing has changed in the message, though, he has always taught on the difficulty of entering into the Kingdom. May remember the end of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus drew his sermon to a close there by calling for a response there, to enter into the Kingdom of God, to receive the offer of the Kingdom. Matthew 7:13 to 14. This is what he said, "Enter by the narrow gate," sounds very similar to what we're reading here in our text, "enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter by it are many."

Folks, those aren't unreligious people. Those aren't irreligious people. Those aren't pagans. Those are religious people on the, going through the wide gate and taking the easy road. And I know you know that there are many churches who are wide gate churches, easy road churches, but those lead to destruction.

Many are going through there, but "the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. Those who find it are few." So as Jesus says something very similar in our text later in his

ministry, comes with a warning. That the gate, the entrance onto the way, and then verse 24 the door, this opportunity is coming to an end.

Access will soon be denied. And Jesus can see that very soon, verse 25, the people to whom he speaks, the people he's looking at their faces. He can see eye to eye. He looks at their body language, he looks at their facial expression, he loves these people, dearly. These people to whom he speaks are gonna be stuck outside one day.

The Master of the house will get up, slam the door shut. The banquet of celebration is gonna proceed, but without these people. It's part of what intensifies his concern here. He knows the time is short. The cross is just a few months away. This door of opportunity is soon going to close. But there's another reason his concern increases.

It's, corresponds to this opportunity closing, but Jesus has been on the move, as we said, ever since Luke 9:51. When he determined to go to Jerusalem, he's eager to complete his

mission. He came to die for the sins of his people. He came to grant their full access into God's Kingdom before God's throne, that they might call God Father like he does.

And in Luke 9:51, we read, you can look at it there, if you like to, flip back Luke 9:51, we see, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up he set his face to go to Jerusalem." That's Luke 9:51. Luke 9:22 about thirty verses earlier he just said the Son of Man is gonna be rejected, suffer many things, be rejected, die. And he's determined to get there. He's resolute.

He's determined, he's unwavering. There's an expression used, his face is set like flint. Which means for the rest of his time on this earth during his first Advent for the rest of this mission, until he gets to the cross, Jesus is gonna continue to be on the move. Now here in chapter 13, Jesus is just a few short months away from the cross. He's been traveling and as he's been traveling, Jesus has witnessed a disturbing attitude among his people.

He's been through Galilee, all through Galilee. He's been through Judea, ventured into Samaria, and now he's come into Perea. And the entire land of Israel is inhabited by comfortable people. People who are spiritually lazy. People who are asleep. They are at ease but at ease for no good reason.

And Jesus knows that for these people judgment is coming. Divine judgment for the rejection of Israel's Messiah, so as he, as he visits with the people, going from town to city to village to hamlet he's, as he visits with them, they seem to be fast asleep. They seem to be resting on their laurels. They're, they're happily settled in a false assurance.

Synagogue attendance. Ritual observance. Participation in the synagogue duties. Jewish identity in all parts of the country. Whether it's large cities like Jerusalem or smaller towns like Capernaum or villages and hamlets of the rural areas, people are trusting in the wrong things. They haven't even attained to the list we read out of Philippians chapter 3 that Paul had. They're not even close.

But they're still resting in that, their spiritual heritage, their religious works, the fact that Moses and the Prophets are read to them every Sabbath. The fact that they listen to preaching every week. Probably talk about things, discuss. Now that Jesus has come. Preaching the Kingdom with divine authority, doing miracles with divine power, he's claiming before them to be the fulfillment of all the texts about the Messiah. He is their Messiah, and people aren't listening to his call to repentance and faith.

They hear his commands but they bounce off the ears. Like that's for somebody else, I'm good. And his visitation, becomes just one more thing that they can take for granted. One more reason for a false sense of assurance. Down in verse 26, the mere fact of the Messiahs' visiting them is the basis of their argument there isn't it? The reason that he should let them enter, why, "we ate and drank in your presence. You taught in our streets." We're simpatico. We're familiar with you.

Look proximity to the Messiah means nothing without true obedience to his teaching. Without heeding his call to

repentance and faith, listening to his preaching means nothing when there's no saving relationship to the Messiah. Familiarity breeds contempt. When there is no love, there is no joy, there is no true gratitude in God. There's no heart to follow Jesus as Lord in obedience. So again, as Jesus walked through the land following his itinerary, he, he's visiting all these cities, towns, villages, he's seeing an unregenerate people.

An unregenerate Israel, unconverted and lost, and yet they're deluded into thinking they're fine. They'd embraced a false gospel. They'd received a false assurance, and that inoculated them against loving Christ and obeying his Gospel. So Jesus, he's here increasingly concerned. And he intends to provoke his people to repentance and faith. He wants to provoke them to some sober self-reflection, to some thoughtful self-examination.

He wants them to ask the most important question in life, Will I participate in the Kingdom blessing? Will I be at that banquet table? Will I be there with the Patriarchs and the

Prophets. Will I enter into the Kingdom of Heaven or am I going to be cast aside?"

We face the same challenge today folks. The same challenge with so many of our fellow Americans inoculated by sub-Christian substandard false gospels. False gospels have saturated this land. Come to Jesus and he'll fulfill you. Feel that God shaped hole in your heart. You know that thing you're trying to fill with all kinds of bad things? Jesus will be there. Come to Jesus and he'll heal all your emotional hurts and wounds. Come to Jesus, you'll be happier now. You'll have health, wealth, and prosperity. And you get Heaven when you die. What a deal. Sign here. Pray this prayer.

It's kind of like what David Wells described back in 1995 when he writes this. "What people who are coming in these church doors today are thinking about and what they want is not primarily personal salvation. That is to be forgiven before a holy and righteous God. That's not what they're thinking about. What they want is a sense of personal wellbeing, however momentary and fragmentary that personal sense of wellbeing is."



Same thing in Jesus' day, same thing. Nothing new under the sun, right? People are the same. People lived under the same delusions they told themselves, the same lies. They assured themselves that they were safe, spiritually healthy, no concern for their eternal future, the reality of it anyway.

Which is why Jesus keeps pressing the same kinds of questions into their consciences. You've been showing up, you've been listening to my teaching, but you yourself, will you enter into my Kingdom. That's the question. Again, proximity to the truth is not what counts. Obedience to the truth that is the issue.