

Truth Known Too Late, Part 1

Luke 13:25-30

Let's go to Luke chapter 13. Luke 13, and you can find your way to verse 22. Jesus is going to expand on the thesis, strive to enter through the narrow door. The word strive, *agonizomai*, it came out of the Greek arena, the concept. The Greek arena, that's where contestants entered to put everything on the line to win. Many entered into the arena, many runners ran the race, but only one would win the prize. That one winner, that one runner, he wins because he sacrifices everything. From the moment that he sets his mind on the goal, he begins to train, to exercise self-control, to conduct himself and his body with mental discipline. And all that work and preparation, which could take years, it earns him the chance to compete.

It gains him entrance into the arena. And once he gets into the arena, having paid the highest cost, when that gun goes off, he runs. He strains at every muscle, every nerve, he puts forth his all, to gain the prize. You say, wow, that's what Jesus is

saying. Strive to enter through the narrow door. That's the concept that he wants raised in the minds of his listeners.

Jim Elliot, the well-known missionary, wrote in his journal, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Wise words. Jim Eliot was just 22 years old when he wrote that back in 1949. Who was he thinking about, when he wrote that down? Notice he doesn't publicize it like we do today. He didn't put it on Twitter. There was no Twitter back then, but he just he wrote in his journal. This is private reflections.

He's thinking about his life. And obviously, he's reflecting on the kingdom. Obviously, he was counting the cost. That was the result of his counting the cost. He was calculating the trade off, his all in exchange for the glory of God. His life, which he cannot keep, in exchange for eternal life. He was thinking about striving to enter the kingdom of God and what it would cost. This is what Jesus wanted his audience to think about and it's what he is going to have us consider today as well.

Look at verse 22, "Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem." We said last time he was teaching about the kingdom. Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, those villages that wanted to receive him. And he was teaching them about the kingdom of God, and he was healing them, demonstrating what that kingdom power is like.

It is beneficial to you. Listen to the kingdom message, because God is good, the king is good, and he's kind, and he demonstrated it through what he did. Yet he was journeying toward Jerusalem because the basis of entrance into the kingdom of God would not be met without his dying on the cross, being buried in the tomb and rising the third day. And so he went to accomplish his work. Verse 23, "Someone said to him," someone from the crowd, unnamed, unknown, "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." J.C. Ryle summarized this section, this command, this way, he said, "Whatever others may do in religion, the Lord Jesus would have us know that our duty is clear. The door is narrow, the work is great, the enemies of our souls are many. We cannot sit still in sin and worldliness waiting for the grace of God, we're not to carry on in our wickedness, saying that we can do nothing until Christ draws us to himself. We're to draw near to him, as we use the means of grace. The command is crystal clear, 'Enter through the narrow door.'"

As we said last time, Jesus delivered this command out of this increasing concern for his countrymen, his fellow Jews. They were resting securely, so they thought, under an assurance, but it was a false sense of assurance. They were at rest in their consciences because they had believed and embraced a false theology, a false gospel, but it was the predominant theology, and the predominant gospel of Jesus' day.

And just like there are many false gospels and false theologies that are very dominant in our own day, and dominant within evangelicalism. It's not the true evangel though. And so in Jesus time, because the time, he knows it's running out,

because the opportunity to repent is coming to an end, because the door is soon to close, he illustrates his command, and the warning he's given, with a prophetic parable and a prophetic preview, both of them intended to scare his audience straight, straight through the narrow door.

Look at verse 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.' Then 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.'"

That's the parable and the preview. "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. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." The parable, verses 25-27,

along with a preview of what it will be like to experience judgment, to be cast out, to be excluded, verses 28-30.

Look, this is how Jesus evangelized his people. This is how Jesus presented the gospel, and pressed the demands of the gospel on a slumbering, self-assured people. This really shows such a deep, deep love and concern in the heart of our Lord. Because he was willing to offend their sensibilities. He was willing to make them uncomfortable. He loved them to that degree. He knew so many of these people, that they would not obey his command, that they would not heed the warning, they wouldn't hear the parable, they wouldn't be frightened by the preview that he was giving them.

That's what leads to his lamenting over Jerusalem in verse 34. Sees a city, having rejected its Messiah, is going to suffer devastating judgment. So Jesus in his time here, in this passage, he speaks with increased urgency. He amplifies the prophetic warning. He strengthens his words, he even adds a preview of what it, what it's going to be like to be shut outside the kingdom. And that's a terrifying scene, once again, as I said, intended to scare his audience straight.

Allow yourself to take a strong dose of what Jesus prescribes today. And this word that he speaks, it is for those who are not yet Christians. But it's for, for many who are religiously so, and I could say evangelically so. They live under a false sense of assurance, having embraced a false gospel that just puts them at ease. This message is for those, this message is also for those of you Christians, true Christians, that you've kind of gone to sleep, frankly. As the years have passed, it's just become easy to make everything easy.

You've grown comfortable with being comfortable. And you don't really want to break out and do anything hard, I get that. So let this awaken you. Let it bring you to a, a renewed sense of striving for the kingdom, to strain against anything that would hold you back, lethargy, laziness, let it cause you to struggle once again against sin and pride. And for those of you who do find in yourself a struggling sense, this *agonizomai* concept that you, although not perfect, you are struggling. You do struggle, you do strive, man, let this encourage you.

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Let this encourage you, that this is what it's like to be entering in through that narrow door. That you have found Christ, and that his power, his spirit is resident and operative within your life. So, number of ways to apply this to yourself today. Listen carefully. We'll start with the first point, number one, look at the result of false confidence. Number one is look at the result of false confidence. And again, let this provoke some fear in you.

This is the prophetic parable, it starts in verse 25, "When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, you begin to stand outside and to knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' and then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.'" I mean, what a terrifying picture and a pathetic picture. I was trying to think about the pathos of this section and how to illustrate this for us. Because when Jesus said this to the Jews, and what follows to the Jews, man, this had them shivering in their boots.

And it just begins to scratch the surface of how these Jews would react to being shut out of a kingdom that all along, they've been taught from the very earliest ages, it's theirs

because they're Jewish. It's theirs by their birthright, it's theirs by their ethnic privilege. It's theirs by their spiritual heritage. At some point in the future, Jesus is telling these Jews, this door that I've invited you to enter in and strive to enter in, it's going to close and it's going to be shut tight.

The opportunity to enter into that kingdom is going to end. The master of the house will rise up, shut the door, and that's it. The verb *apokleio*, the door is shut, means it's closed tightly and locked. It's secured to prevent any reentry. So that whoever seeks to enter at this point, verse 24, they will not be able to. When that door is shut, shut by an all powerful, almighty Master, it is too late and you have no strength, no power, to, to even make a crack in the door. When's this gonna happen? When's this gonna happen?

Commentators disagree on the exact time that Jesus indicates here, but we need to remember, he's not actually trying to indicate an exact time he's giving a parable. It's a prophetic parable, but he's got one main thrust in this parable. When that time is exactly, precise, that's not the point, it's, it's actually the uncertainty about when that's going to

be, that compels us to strive to enter. When the master shuts the door, whenever that will be.

So it's uncertainty that compels us, now is the time to strive to get in. The only time that is important to us, is now. That's what he's saying. There's a future time, and in that future time, when that door is shut, and your arrival is too late, that time has passed, the opportunity is over. But asking the question about when, when is this going to happen for the Jews? When's this going to happen for every individual? It's not an unimportant question.

We know from Jesus' teaching, and from the rest of the scripture, that time has certainly run out for every individual at death. When, when you have no breath, and have no life in your body, it's appointed for man, man to die once, and after that the judgment. We also know that time runs out for everyone at the second coming and judgments follow. Time can also run out for an individual, even before death, even before the second coming, it can run out for any individual in their own life, and how would that be? By a judicial hardening of God. That's a

terrifying thing, to fall underneath a judicial judgment of God, where he hardens your heart.

That happens when God chooses to hand someone over to their hardened, impenitent heart. They have been the recipients of his grace, they've gobbled up, gobbled up all his good gifts, and they refuse to repent. That happened with Pharaoh. God hardened his heart, and in the face of God's signs, and wonders, and grace, and truth, Moses and his prophetic ministry, all the warnings, Pharaoh kept hardening his own heart in response, refused to obey God, refused to repent. So God hardened his heart too. And there are some, who, like Pharaoh, ignore God's truth, spurn God's kindness, and that is evidence that they are hardening their heart. They, like Pharaoh, become object lessons in their reprobation.

Says in Romans 9:17-18, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose, I have raised you up that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then God has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills." It's a terrifying thing, to take out the name Pharaoh, in your mind's eye as you read that, and

insert your own name. The scripture says to Travis, "For this very purpose I have raised you up that I might show my power in you, and my name might be claimed, proclaimed in all the earth," doing that by a hardening of heart.

Beloved, this is why we must examine ourselves, to see every evidence of hardening pride, to see if self-centeredness is taking over, to see if our love for the world is waxing and our love for God and his righteousness is waning. So what's the point here? Don't wait to repent and believe. I mean, strive to enter the narrow door while there's time. You've been invited, strive to enter, "for many I tell you will seek to enter and will not be able."

So to illustrate the inability to enter, Jesus shows us those who are shut outside, who make a couple of futile attempts to get the master of the house to open the door. And this is where the parable turns from parables, spoken in the third person, about a situation, it turns into the second person, as Jesus points the finger at his audience. He starts using the second person plural, you all, you all, you all. Now we start to

see that the master of the house in the parable, it's none other than Jesus himself.

In fact, notice how the late comer addresses Jesus as Lord in verse 25 at the end. And when he comes to that door that's shut, he does three things. He begins, there's a verb there, begins to, do three things. He ought to have begun back when Jesus gave the invitation. He didn't begin then, he put it off, he procrastinated. Now he begins to do three things, and Jesus says, You, you all, you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door. That's two things, and then one more thing, he pleads, saying, "Lord, open to us." As he stands outside, as this, take, take one of these individuals, this person stands outside, a late comer, he's standing there in disbelief, bewildered, trying to figure out what just happened to him.

We can imagine that after some reflection, after some time, it begins to dawn on him. These words of Jesus begin to haunt him, as they start to, in his memory, take shape, that what Jesus said to me, that day has now come true. He just never cared to apply it to himself. How many people in our churches sit Sunday after Sunday, hearing sermons, faithful sermons from

God's Word in so many churches, even weak churches that aren't really doing ministry well, and they're giving, even the weak churches giving some Scripture, and how many people come in, go out, unaffected, unchanged. They come in as those who are used to being entertained. They come in as passive listeners. They sit, maybe they think about it, maybe they don't.

They leave, no applications, zero application. Hmm. That's these people. Very religious, hearing truth every single week, never applying it, never doing the hard work of repentance and application. So standing in the cold, on the cold dark precipice of eternity, of finality. This late comer begins to panic at the horrible implications of what he's coming to realize. He starts knocking on that door furiously. And the verb tense means he just doesn't knock once or twice or give a rat-a-tat-tat, he keeps on knocking.

Now that he fears the Lord, now that he wants to take action, regrettably, the truth has come to him too late. To the panicked knocking, he adds an urgent appeal, and notice the use of the title, Lord, *kyrios*, Lord, open to us. That term Lord goes right back to the guy who asked the question in the first

place, "Lord, are there few being saved?" Speaking to the questioner, you call me Lord, but is this you? Now, knocking on my door?

"Lord, open to us." And actually, that verb there is a bit stronger, it's an aorist imperative. So it's, Lord, open to us at once. He's not being irreverent here, this is craven terror, where he is calling the Lord, Lord, but then commanding him with imperative. Lord's response, it's not fooled by the profession, "I don't know where you come from." Basically, that's a idiomatic expression. I don't know you, I don't know where you're from either. He's idiomatically, he's saying, your total strangers to me. A stranger. So, this guy gets a running start, comes back for attempt number two. He thinks maybe the Lord simply needs a little reminder.

Takes another run at getting him to open the door, verse 26, "Then you will begin to say, 'We, we ate and drank in your presence. You taught in our streets'" I had your picture in my home. During their lifetime, Jesus had pointed them to an open door, narrow to be sure. Guaranteed to make sure that they can only squeeze in, carrying no sense of self, no sense of

ambition, no sense of baggage, no sense of sin brought through that narrow door. It scrapes everything off. It's narrow by design, by intention. But it's wide enough to receive all invited guests who desire to come.

And they didn't come then, when hope was open wide. Now they seek hope. And they seek hope, interestingly, in the Lord's rejection. You're strangers to me. I don't know where you're from. Oh, oh, oh, let me tell you where I'm from. Strangers, we're not strangers. We had a meal together. We shared a meal, we ate and drank in your presence. You know where I'm from, you taught in our streets. You were there. I heard your teaching. The very appeal condemns them yet again, doesn't it? Because these are people that Jesus had visited.

These are people that, where he had been in their streets during his earthly ministry. These are the people in that very audience. He's teaching them, this is happening right in front of them. He'll probably, in customary fashion, be invited over after he preaches. Invited over for a meal, he'll eat and drink with them in their presence, and they will be fooled into

thinking familiarity with Jesus means salvation in Jesus. So many people think the same thing today.

These are people standing right in front of him, they're listening to him at this very moment. In fact, chapter 14 verse 1, he is going to dine once again, in the house of a ruler of Pharisees. They, these people enjoyed his company. They listened to his teaching in the streets, they got a chance to follow up with a Q&A session over a meal. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Such privilege, such opportunity, to benefit from his miracles of healing, his acts of compassion and kindness.

And even now, they're presuming upon his grace, they're trampling his kindness at the place of judgment. He had invited them in and all they needed to do was hear, obey, strive to enter, now. And now, when he's told them what would happen has happened, they say, we would like you, at this point, even though the door is shut, even though we never did anything you said when we were living, we want you here to ignore our disobedience. Give way to our presumption, give way to our insistence, accept that familiarity with you is good enough, that we've heard your teaching, good enough, and let us in.

They're still sinning outside of the shut door. This is why Jesus responds in verse 27, saying, "I tell you," repeating it, "I don't know where you come from. We're strangers to one another." And then he says this, shocking, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil." "Depart from me," you know the verb there? Strong verb, *aphistemi*. You hear the word there that we have in English, apostate. Jesus is telling them, apostatize from me. Act consistent with your nature, act consistent now with who you've always been. Give up the lying profession calling me Lord, Lord, because you don't do what I say.

Apostatize from me, get away from me. All you workers of evil, more accurately workers of unrighteousness, *adikias*. Remember, these are religious people, hardworking, good neighbors, loving parents, kindly grandparents. In today's religious setting, as I'm saying, these would be the evangelicals, politically conservative, hardworking, morally upright, in many cases, living under a false delusion. A delusion of a false assurance because they have embraced a false gospel, and they called it good enough.

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They didn't obey Jesus, when he said, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Again, it's J.C. Ryle, who so appropriately summarizes the scene. He says, "There comes a time when many will repent too late. Believe too late, grieve for sin too late, pray too late, be anxious about salvation too late, and long for heaven too late. Thousands will wake up in another world and be convinced about truths which they refused to believe on Earth. Hell, itself is nothing but truth, known too late."