



# THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: “Fully Engaged.”

“The Door.” *Luke 13.22-30.*

□ **Day #1—Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 13.22-23. –Encounter: God’s Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

Our text for this week begins with Luke’s description of Jesus “journeying toward Jerusalem.” Jesus is walking resolutely to the cross to fulfill His divine mission to redeem and reconcile you—me—this whole world! In this text and what follows, we will hear Jesus’ teachings about entering the *Kingdom of God*.

In *v.23*, Jesus is asked how many people will be saved? Far from an arbitrary question, this question about salvation was similar to the question on divorce (*Matthew 19:3*), and was debated among the religious leaders/teachers of the day.

Are only a few people going to be saved? This question was sometimes discussed in Jewish literature. 2 Esdras (*4 Ezra*) 8:1–3 reads: “The Most High made this world for the sake of many, but the world to come for the sake of only a few... Many have been created, but only a few shall be saved.” It was a common belief among the Jews that all Israelites would be saved... The only exceptions are those who deny the resurrection, who deny the divine origin of the Law, who read heretical books, who utter charms, who pronounce the divine name YHWH, and Epicureans (*m. Sanh.* 10:1). “Epicureans” here does not refer to the Greek philosophy of Epicurus, but was a common designation for Jews and Gentiles who opposed the teachings of the rabbis<sup>1</sup>

Notice here that Jesus takes a *general question*, which focuses on *other people*, and re-directs it to the *individual*. As R.H. Stein notes, “Jesus did not speculate on the abstract question, which belongs in God’s domain, but instead addressed the personal dimension of this issue, i.e., the individual’s responsibility.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus was (is) concerned that people take responsibility for themselves, now. While Jesus will answer the question indirectly in what follows, the decision to surrender to God’s call in Christ must be made now!

Apparently His followers were somewhat discouraged that His message of the kingdom was not sweeping the nation as they thought it would. They saw that Jesus continually met opposition as well as acceptance. Jesus’ teaching was clear—a person must accept what He was saying in order to enter the kingdom. To a Jewish mind salvation was related to the kingdom, that is, a person was saved in order to enter into God’s kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Though the kingdom of God has humble beginnings, it grows to embrace all creation. Like Jesus’ first hearers, we, too, tend to wish for a more powerful kingdom and more rapid growth. But this kingdom is God’s, not ours. He extends His realm in His way with His timing... Jesus directs His followers’ attention away from the plight of others and toward an honest self-appraisal and spiritual housecleaning...”<sup>4</sup>

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 13.24-25. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

Jesus answers the person’s question with a challenge and some “mini-parables” about the nature of responding to God’s calling to enter the Kingdom. Jesus urging His followers to “strive to enter through the narrow door” reflects the reality that there are multiple options when it comes to choosing one’s way of living the spiritual life. The Greek word translated as, “strive,” is ἀγωνίζομαι (*agonizomai*), which reflects an intentional “laboring” to get in. This implies that there is a *specific way* by which to enter the Kingdom. The “door” is Jesus Himself! Jesus as the “door” is similar to the Gospel of John where Jesus describes Himself as the “gate.” In other words, Jesus is the way to enter the Kingdom of God and only through Him! R.C.H. Lenski is helpful here:

1 C.E. Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan, 2002).

2 R. H. Stein. *Luke* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

3 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

4 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

“Struggle to go in through the narrow door!” The kingdom is conceived as a great house, entrance to which is obtained through a door, and this door is narrow. Our effort is not to be to push open the door; it is open to begin with, but it is shut and locked after a time. So we are to let nothing deter us from entering while it is open. It is readily seen why Jesus pictures the door as being narrow; this portrays the *μετάνοια* or repentance by which we enter Christ’s kingdom...Hence we have the strong verb “struggle,” which is taken from the ancient athletic contests, from which we still have “to agonize” and “agony.” The durative imperfect recalls Luther’s first of the famous 95 theses that repentance is to be constant. We are to exert ourselves to the utmost to enter the kingdom by true repentance. This is the opposite of indifference, being languid or careless, or living in false security.<sup>5</sup>

In *v.25*, Jesus uses a similar but different word picture. A master (owner) of a house closes the door. Here the “emphasis is less on the individual seeking to enter and more on the Lord’s control over who enters and that the time when it is possible to enter will come to an end.”<sup>6</sup> When He (the master of the house) “shuts the door,” those that rejected Jesus, those who would not enter through Him (the “door”), will not be let in!

Does this understanding about “striving” to enter and “knocking” to be let in, indicate that we somehow “work for” or “achieve” our salvation? That we “choose” Jesus?

But does this not contradict the teaching that man is spiritually dead and cannot struggle and strive? This struggling is not one on the part of man’s corrupt natural powers—they never could or would struggle to enter that narrow door. This struggling is caused by the law and the gospel when they operate upon and in the heart and move it mightily. The Scriptures are full of urgings to men who are still without faith just as the law and the gospel go out in all the world to those who are still far from God. The thought is never that man’s dead powers are to move and to save him, but the very Word itself offers what it demands, bestows what it requires, brings those it calls to come. “Struggle!” says Jesus, and in the very saying of his words there was the narrow door that was open to receive and the power to produce the struggling which is called repentance. So Jesus cries, “Believe!” And by his very call he reaches out to kindle faith.<sup>7</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (Jn 14:6). All other hopes are misplaced...The time to repent and receive the Lord is fleeting...Accordingly, people need to make entry into God’s kingdom their first priority, before the door to life suddenly slams shut...[and we hear]...I do not know where you come from.”<sup>8</sup>

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, August 27<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 13.26-27. –Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus’ words and imagery become particularly tragic. Those arriving late to the house appeal to the “master”(Jesus) that they should be let in because they heard Him teach and He was with them at one time (eating and drinking). However, not only will the master not let them in, he refers to them as “evil doers!” What is being described here? R.H. Stein writes that this mini-parable from Jesus is...

...an obvious reference to Jesus’ ministry among the people of that generation. Jesus’ point in telling the story was that the people had to respond to His invitation at that time, for a time would come when it would be too late and they would not be allowed in the kingdom. The mere fact of being physically in Jesus’ presence or being acquainted with him is not sufficient for entrance into God’s kingdom, any more than membership and participation in church is sufficient today. One must repent and believe.<sup>9</sup>

The word, “evil” in *v.27* can also be translated “unrighteous.” Only through Jesus (the master of the house, the “door”), do we receive forgiveness of sins and His *righteousness*. According to Lenski, these “workers of evil/unrighteousness” are...

...prove[ing] it to the last: they are demanding that the righteous Judge shall act unrighteously, unjustly, break his own, oft-given word, reopen the door which he said he would shut forever, and without repentance let them in beside all the repentant. So the rich man cried even in hell, “*Nay*, father Abraham!” and demanded that a new way of salvation be invented for his five brothers and thereby secretly charged that, if something like that had been done while he lived, he, too, would not have landed in hell. They who die in unbelief remain morally as base as they were when they died. As Jesus once walked among the Jews, so in his Word he now walks among us and teaches us in the identical words—shall it again be in vain?<sup>10</sup>

5 R. C. H. Lenski. *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1961).

6 R. H. Stein. *Luke* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

7 Ibid.

8 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

9 Stein, *Luke*.

10 Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*.

**Consider/Reflect:** “Mere acquaintance with Jesus and His teachings will not avail on Judgment Day; a wholehearted trust is needed. Luther: ‘For even though you know that He is God’s Son, that He died and rose again, and that He sits at the right hand of the Father, you have not yet learned to know Christ aright . . . [until you also] believe that He did all this for your sake, in order to help you’ (AE 30:30).”

□ **Day #4--Thursday, August 28<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 13.28. — Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The contrast between those *inside* “the house” and *outside*, is intensified, with the description of the *outside* being a place of “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*.” This phrase reflects suffering, horror, and hopelessness. “People would weep over their damnation (Judith 16:17)...[and the]...*gnashing of teeth*. can depict anger (Job 16:9; Ps 35:16; 37:12; 112:10) but here may reflect anguish.”<sup>11</sup>

The anguish of those “outside” the house (the kingdom) will be heightened when they see the Patriarchs “inside.” Why? Many people in that time believed that by being a descendant of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—symbols of Israel), as well as “all the prophets,” they would be given entrance into the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ unrepentant hearers are contrasted with the faithful patriarchs and believing Gentiles. The Patriarchs and righteous Gentiles responded to Jesus’ call; the unrighteous have been “cast out.” “This should be understood as exclusion, for they are not expelled after entry but are not allowed to enter the consummated kingdom.”<sup>12</sup>

The end result is “weeping” and “gnashing of teeth,” a sense of pain and frustration at having missed the moment. Though their birth made them excellent candidates, they did not respond and have missed the blessing. What is especially painful is seeing the fathers of the faith—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets—but not being able to sit at the table with them.<sup>13</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Jesus describes the present situation. It is as though a door is open, through which God’s family may enter his house. The door is narrow, to exclude all greed, pride and hypocrisy; and one day God will close it altogether. Jesus is saying bluntly that the Jews can’t take their salvation for granted. They must repent. Some Gentile believers will surprise them by going into the Messiah’s banquet ahead of them.”<sup>14</sup>

□ **Day #5— Friday, August 29<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 13.29-30. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus summarizes His teaching, now describing the Kingdom of God as a “banquet.” As Darrel Bock notes, “The concept of such a feast in heaven as a celebration with the Messiah is alluded to throughout the OT and other Jewish literature over a long period of time (cf. 14:5).”<sup>15</sup> C.E. Arnold adds...

The feast in the kingdom of God (13:29)...refers to the messianic banquet, a symbol of God’s eschatological blessings for his people. The imagery has its roots in the promise of Isaiah 25:6: “On this mountain [Mount Zion] the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.” The emphasis is on God’s eternal and bountiful sustenance for his people (Ps. 22:26; 23:5).<sup>16</sup>

The “many” people coming from the “east and the west and north and south” was a common Old Testament image. It was believed that...

...when the kingdom is established, the Gentile nations will stream to Jerusalem to worship God (Isa. 2:2; 55:5). Isaiah 25:6–9 provides the closest parallel since it combines this image with that of the messianic banquet... While in Judaism the point is often the subjugation of the nations to Israel’s authority (*Ps. Sol.* 17:30–31; cf. Isa. 45:14), here Jesus indicates that the Gentiles will be full participants in the blessings of the kingdom—even to the exclusion of many Israelites.<sup>17</sup>

Jesus’ assurance and description that the “last...first” and the “first...last” was a proverb used to describe the acceptance of

11 C.S. Keener and J.H. Walton, Eds. *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016).  
12 Stein, *Luke*.  
13 D.L. Bock. *Luke* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).  
14 A. Knowles. *The Bible Guide* (Minnesota: Augsburg, 1989).  
15 Bock. *Luke*.  
16 C.E. Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan, 2002).  
17 Bock. *Luke*.

those usually considered outside the realm of God’s mercy (tax collectors, sinners, the poor, the sick, the lame, the blind) and the exclusion of the religious elite (Pharisees, scribes, lawyers, priests). Stein comments that Luke and his readers would have understood this in terms of the unbelief of much of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles. Additionally...

...the lack of the article before ‘last’ and ‘first’ indicates that neither all the last nor all the first would experience this reversal. Some Jews (the disciples and the church of Acts 1–9) did believe. The saying contrasts not all the last and all the first but “last ones” kinds of people and “first ones” kinds of people.<sup>18</sup>

To the crowds and the religious leaders, Jesus makes it abundantly clear the consequences of rejecting His Lordship, as well as His call to enter the kingdom. D.L. Bock summarizes this unit of Jesus’ teaching...

Many will come from every direction to feast with them, but some who have had the greatest opportunity will miss the blessing. This alludes to a shift in fate for those in Israel and those in the nations, so that the last become first and the first become last (v. 30). This final theme of the parable is common in the Gospels (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31). The effect of Jesus’ remarks has altered the theoretical nature of the original question to a practical level. The question, “Will the saved be few?” has become, “Will the saved be you?”<sup>19</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “People can enter God’s kingdom only through Jesus Christ. Moreover, the time for every human being—and indeed the world—is quickly slipping away, and soon the door will slam shut. Accordingly, the Lord beseeches one and all to come into the great wedding banquet of His Son, without cost and without delay. ‘Today Your gate is open, And all who enter in Shall find a Father’s welcome And pardon for their sin. The past shall be forgotten, A present joy be giv’n, A future grace be promised, A glorious crown in heav’n.’ Amen. (*Lutheran Service Book* 915:2)”

□ **Day #6-Saturday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. Read: Psalm 118.1-14.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the “Daily Order of Prayers” from *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Read and mediate on *Psalm 118.1-14* and:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

*Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

**(Morning)** I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

**(Afternoon/Evening)** I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.<sup>20</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Luther: “This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore I call it my own” (AE 14:45).<sup>21</sup>

18 Stein, *Luke*.

19 Bock, *Luke*.

20 Martin Luther. “Luther’s Small Catechism.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

21 Quoted in, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.