

8/17/2025

Luke 13:22-30

The only thing worse than insecurity is false security. In Greek Mythology, the story of the Trojan Horse proves this. The Greeks had tried for ten years to invade the city of Troy, but Troy was too powerful. So the Greek army built a large wooden horse, filled it with soldiers, and pretended to sail away. The Trojans took it as a sign of congratulations, took it inside, and the soldiers destroyed the city. Not because Troy was insecure- they had everything they needed to defend themselves, but because of false security. Something similar happens with Christians. The Barna group reported that in 2020, almost half of American Christians agreed with this statement: "If a person tries their best to be a good person and has faith- it doesn't matter what kind of faith, just any faith- they will be saved." You've heard the cliches. "Just try your best and God'll do the rest!" "It doesn't matter who you believe in, as long as you believe in *something*." "I'm not into the whole religion thing, I just try to be good and do good to others. I figure that will be enough." That is a Trojan Horse- *false security*. Jesus never says that. And research shows that around 50% of Christians are living with a Trojan Horse in their soul. That needs to be exposed and destroyed- and that's exactly what Jesus does today. Jesus is walking through the villages on his way to Jerusalem, and today he's stopping in Whitewater to destroy our false security by this simple phrase: **The Door to Heaven is Narrow.**

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, and he's teaching in the villages and towns on the way there- it seems these are the places where he sent his seventy servants, who prepared people to hear him, and now he himself is teaching them. And someone in the crowd offers a loaded question- "*Are only a few going to be saved?*" Based on some of the Jewish religious writings from that day, it seems that this question was hotly debated by the Bible teachers- similar to today. However, the consensus was different. Today, we tend to base it on shallow morality- "try to be a good person," but they based it on race- belonging to the right ethnic group. You could understand why- God's people were the Jews! They were the chosen race! Therefore, they are going to be saved! Oh wait- what about the ones who don't worship God? What about the ones who don't follow any of the rules? What about the tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners? Well, what about non-Jews that get circumcised and follow the Old Testament laws- can they be saved- surely they must be if non-obedient Jews are! And on and on the debate went! And so here comes a brilliant, powerful rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth- let's see what he has to say- will only a few be saved? And Jesus shows that this is the wrong question. The right question is this- Are you sure that *you* are saved? Make every effort to enter through the narrow door- because the door is narrow. It is open, but the time will come when that door is closed, and many, many people who thought they were saved will be locked out, and you- notice how he shifts it to "*you*- " are going to beg to be let in, and God is going to say, "I never knew you."

Do you see what Jesus is doing? All the people want is a theological discourse, but Jesus won't let them get away with that- he makes it personal. Are *you* saved? And notice what the people

who aren't in Heaven- they aren't saying, "Lord, we repent! We were wrong! Forgive us. Save us!" They still don't get it! They say, "You ate and taught in our streets!" *So what?* And all the gentiles who believed in Jesus, the sinners and outsiders who repented and trusted in Jesus as their savior, they enter in and sit at the table with the heroes of the Old Testament, while all the people that figured, "Well as long as I go through the motions, keep most/some of the rules, pay for a sacrifice, I'll be okay. Sure, I'm not perfect, but at least I'm not a tax collector or a Gentile." And there they sit- weeping with regret that the God they claimed to worship was calling them to actually repent, actually feel sorrow for their sins, love and serve him with joy, and they didn't- they were too busy, too sophisticated, too cool, too proud for that- and gentiles and sinners are in, and they are out. And they gnash their teeth- that phrase doesn't denote pain, but anger and hatred. Their deepest motives are finally exposed- they never loved God, they hated him, hated his law, hated his grace, and now they get exactly what they want- what they deserve. The first- those who seem righteous because they go through all the motions and seem very normal and pious and decent- they are thrown into the fire while the sinners who repent- the last- they are first. What is Jesus teaching us?

1. Ask the right question. The one thing I love about college ministry is all the questions- so many great questions. Here are some of my favorites: *Is it sinful to choke someone out in an MMA fight? Is it sinful to hack the website of an enemy government? Can psychedelic mushrooms be used to get closer to God? Is it sinful to buy a wife from a poor country? Is a prenuptial agreement necessarily sinful?* If you can't tell, it's mostly guys asking these questions. They're good questions! But the one I get the most, by far, is similar, but different from the one in today's text: "Why doesn't God save everyone? If we are saved completely by God's grace, God's election, God's Holy Spirit, then why doesn't God choose to save everyone? Why are some people not saved?" The quick answer is that humanity is sinful, and if someone isn't saved, it's not because God isn't gracious, but because that person is wicked and has chosen to reject him. At the same time, when someone *is* saved, God gets the credit. And what some people say, then, is "That's not fair. Why doesn't God save everyone?" My response: *Fair?* Is it fair that the perfect, sinless Son of God took the punishment and Hell that you deserved? No, that isn't fair. Is it fair that Jesus was abandoned by the Father so that you can be embraced, accepted, forgiven, and declared perfect all for free? No! That wasn't fair. Praise God that he isn't fair. And you ask, "Why doesn't God give that to everyone?" The better question is, why on earth would he do that for *anyone*? If God is so infinitely perfect, holy, and beautiful, and humanity is so ugly, so depraved, waging war against each other, lying to each other, killing their own children, abusing their own loved ones, self-indulgent and smug and self-satisfied- why on Earth would God save anyone? You ask, "Why doesn't God do something about this evil?" Why doesn't God do something about you and me? I'm not saying these are bad questions. They aren't. And they have answers- but God doesn't give us all the answers to all our questions. He answers the most important question that you *would* ask if you knew how sinful you were and how good he is: "How can I be saved?" And that's why Jesus came! He came to die on a hill in Jerusalem in our

place, so we don't have to be afraid- Jesus kicked out so we could enter through the narrow door. And because Jesus has promised us this place in his house with all his saints and angels, he asks us to *agonize*.

2. Agonize. The word translated into "make every effort" is actually the Greek "*agonizesthe*" and you can hear the word, "agonize." That word in Greek is an athletic word- the athlete training to compete as a boxer, wrestler, or runner *agonizes* during training. If you want a good picture of this- you may have seen me on my daily run around town. If you have- I'm sorry you had to see that. Because it's *agonizing!* It's saying "no" to every desire in my flesh to stop this painful run and grab a beer at Second Salem, a muffin at Sweet Spot and take a nap, and instead *keep going*- and that means saying no to myself. That's painful. It's agony. It's the Christian life. Why? Because although we are absolutely saved by God's undeserved grace, we still are prone to sin and desire everything that would steal us away from Jesus, and we need to fight it. Because the danger is real. There were Jewish people in Jesus' day that had the Word of God, the sacrifices, the teachings, and even Jesus himself, and listened to him, but didn't actually believe. I'm personally convicted by this- there are going to be many pastors on the last day who are not in Heaven- and they will cry out, "Lord, we brought so many to faith, baptized so many, taught so many to believe in you, guided so many to Heaven," and Jesus will answer, "No. I did that. You were my instrument. You taught my words, but you never applied them to yourself and repented." There will be many, many American Christians who are not in Heaven who cry, "But lord, I was confirmed in a church. I was married and buried in a church- I was a member of a church my whole life!" So what? "I sent my kids and grandkids to be baptized, to a Christian school." So what? "I donated this much to the church." So what? What good is being confirmed in the Christian faith if you don't have faith? What good is it to be a member of a church if you don't go, or go but don't listen, or listen but don't believe? Many, many people will be exposed as doers of unrighteousness- going through the motions- and sometimes barely doing that- all for themselves- not for Christ, because they weren't repentant, weren't trusting in Jesus, and weren't saved. *Agonize- fight your pride, fight your selfishness, fight your laziness, fight your lust, fight your temptations so that you are not one of them.* And remember what you are agonizing for.

3. Remember What Lasts. It's not enough to simply say, "agonize" We have to show that you have something worth agonizing for. Jesus points out that those who are in Hell suffer not only from being removed from the loving presence of God- the one thing we all desperately desire whether we know it or not- but the howling regret of knowing that they settled for something so much lesser than what they could have had. The Jews settled for an ethnic pride and relative moral superiority over all the filthy gentiles and sinners, when they could have had the joy of being infinitely purified with nothing to hide- beauty in the presence of a holy God. They settled for the approval of their powerful neighbors when they could have had the praise of the Most High God. God promises you, whatever it is you desire here on Earth, whether it's riches, success, pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, health, prosperity, reputation, rest, all these things are *yours in Christ!* Christ has given you all these things on the Cross- they are all infinitely yours all by grace, all through believing in Christ, they are all yours. And they are worth agonizing for.

Worth sacrificing for. Worth waiting for. Worth denying yourself for. The runner agonizes because he knows the glory that awaits him. The only difference is that your glory and crown don't depend on you- they are already yours. So run. Agonize with joy. Yes, the door is narrow. But it's wide open for you. Consider this quote from Johan Gerhard: *O soul, you should not set your heart upon this fleeting life, but rather upon that life that shall endure forever and ever. ... If beauty here has any charms for you, remember that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father. If a long and healthful life seems especially desirable to you, there you shall rejoice in eternal health. If music charms you, there the angelic choir shall chant the praises of God forever and ever...If Wisdom attracts you, there the infinite wisdom of God will be revealed to you. If friendship is delightful to you, there you will love God far more than you love yourself, and God will love you more than you love yourself. If Christian fellowship and concord please you, there among all the hosts of heaven there will be but one heart and mind. If power, there all things shall be easy to you, as you will share in the very power of God. If honor and riches are attractive to you, there God will make his faithful servants rulers over many things. If you long for true security; in heaven it is just as certain that eternal happiness will never fail you. Whatever the elect can possibly long for, there they shall find to their infinite satisfaction, for then shall they see Him face to face, who is all and in all.*

There is no false security that compares to the security that God has given you. The prize is yours. The door is open. Run with joy. Amen.