

“Look Out” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 11 – August 21, 2022

- I. **Luke 13:23-24** - 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.
- II. **It’s happened to all of us...**
 - a. We approach a door that is supposed to be unlocked, and we try to open it, only to find that it’s locked... (sigh)
 - b. Michele and I recently went to Indianapolis to participate in our son-in-law Andy’s ordination and installation.
 - i. It was several days of celebration and blessing – but also, as with any trip, we were ready to get home.
 - ii. Now, in our remodel, I added a keyed lock to our primary bedroom in order to let house sitters use our home, but the primary bedroom and bath are locked off...
 - iii. Wouldn’t you know, I somehow put the keys to the lock... inside the bedroom when I left town.
 - iv. Envision getting home after a long trip and heading upstairs to unpack and unwind... and the door is locked.
 1. Of course I tried alternate routes – getting out the ladder and checking all the windows... nope... locked up tight.
 2. Michele and I were forced to spend one more night living out of suitcases in our guest bedroom until we could get a locksmith.
 3. Getting locked out is no fun at all... especially when you expect to just walk in the door.
 - c. Let’s consider an even worse scenario – someone is in the room and won’t open the door.
 - i. You knock... “hey, it’s me, open up...”
 - ii. A voice from inside says, “who?”
 - iii. You say, “don’t be silly, it’s me... open the door.”
 - iv. They say, “I have no idea who you are... get out of here or I’ll call the police...”
 - d. Ouch – talk about shock and confusion.
- III. **Jesus receives the classic question...**
 - a. How many people get to go to heaven?
 - i. We’ve heard it asked in many different ways –
 1. Does everyone go to heaven because God loves us no matter what?
 2. Can murderers and horrible people go to heaven?
 3. What about the people who never had a chance to hear the Gospel, are they going to heaven?
 - ii. So the question is posed to Jesus, “Will the saved be few?”

1. Jesus' response turns the question inward – what about you?
2. Jesus essentially says, “You wonder if those who will get to heaven are few... but what about you?”
 - a. In other words, it's easy to look out on others – but let's personalize this situation... what about you?
 - iii. Jesus tells the man to strive to enter the narrow door... He doesn't say “look out there and envision the world – they need to strive to enter the narrow door...” – no, Jesus says “you all” need to do this.
- b. But wait a minute Pr Jim, I thought you always told me that we cannot do anything to get into heaven by our own works – now I'm reading Jesus say I need to “strive” to get there!
 - i. Yes, it would seem that Jesus is teaching us to work for our salvation – but it's good to look at the word, strive.
 1. You see, this is the word for “effort” in Greek, and it is where we get our English words of agony and agonize.
 2. Paul uses this word when he says to “fight the good fight of the faith” in 1 Timothy 6:12
 3. The truth is that the Christian life takes effort and struggle as we live our lives for Jesus.
 - ii. We don't always want to give up our sins that make us comfortable, to walk away from things that make us happy in the moment, or own up to the places we are not living right by God's standards...
 1. Yet, this is where the very God who gave us faith to begin with now convicts us to change – to repent and come back home to Jesus.
 2. Now, you might say, “I decided to repent and turn away from those sins” – but you would never even care about any of that if God hadn't called you into the faith in the first place.
 3. All I'm saying is that God is at the root of your “striving” or maybe a better word is “repenting”.
 4. You see, repenting is the action of turning away from sin because God stirs up in us a desire to turn toward Him
- c. When Jesus says to strive to enter through the narrow door, it means that the narrow door of grace requires faith and trust in Him – and a willingness to know Him as the Lord of our lives.

IV. **Our greatest blessing in this life and the next is that we know Jesus.**

- a. Listen to what St. Paul writes in Philippians 3 - (Phil. 3:8-10 NLT) ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ ⁹ and become one with Him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying

the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ."

- b. It is only through Christ that we have any chance to enter the narrow door in the first place...
 - i. Consider the way He strived for our salvation – in fact, the better word is agony – His agony was our gain.
 - ii. The agony He felt upon being betrayed by a close friend.
 - iii. The agony of His torture.
 - iv. The agony of being nailed to a cross.
 - v. His agonizing death was the key to opening the door of our salvation.
- c. I cannot overemphasize that Jesus is not telling us to work hard and we can get through the narrow door –
 - i. The work of our salvation was won through Jesus and what He did... nothing we bring to the table is able to help us in that way.
 - ii. Yet, with faith – a gift of God – we are able to go through the narrow door
 - 1. We are able to continue to strive, repent and seek God's continued grace in the Lord's Supper and His Word.
 - 2. By grace through faith we will be the few who enter.

V. **Make no mistake, it is a limited time offer.**

- a. For those who do not know Jesus through faith, the day will come when there are no more chances.
- b. Jesus tells us that people must know Him before it's too late.
- c. Perhaps you have run to the store on a last-minute errand right before closing.
 - i. You know it's going to be close, but you drive up and see the lights on...
 - ii. As you approach the front door, there are some workers busy inside.
 - iii. You grab the handle and it's locked... you cup your hands to peer inside and then knock, hoping to grab their attention inside.
 - iv. "Hi, remember me? I shop here all the time... can you let me in for one quick thing?"
 - 1. "Sorry, the store is closed..." (in other words, no, we don't really know you, and it's too late, the day is over.)
- d. This is the fate of millions upon millions of people who do not have faith in Christ – those who die without faith, and those who are living without faith when Jesus returns.
- e. Jesus calls on us to look inwardly when it comes to our own faith and entering the narrow door, but He wants us to always look out for those who do not know Him.

- i. We are called to look out into the world and carry the name of Christ and His saving grace to them... whether it is here in this community, in the region, or even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).
- ii. In a lost and dying world, our blessed Jesus has laid down His life in order to be known by you...
 - 1. Always look out for those who need to know Him as well, because the table is set for the banquet, and it is a limited time offer. Amen.