

## Enter through the narrow door (Luke 13:22-35)

We have been studying the gospel of Luke together. Today we will study the latter half of chapter 13. The theme is “Enter through the narrow door”.

1. Those who will try to enter but will not be able to

### 22-24

<sup>22</sup> Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" <sup>24</sup> He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

In this context, it is natural to understand that they are talking about “being saved and enter into the kingdom of God”.

It is not that the numbers of people who will get saved are limited. But there are many who will try to enter the kingdom of God, but will not be able to. Why does it happen? It is not because there aren't enough numbers of vacant rooms in the kingdom and the door is closed until the next vacant room is available. It is because the way to enter is wrong.

Jews were aware that they were God's chosen people. They had the law of Moses. And by observing it, keeping ritual and burning animals, they tried to reach the righteousness of God, be saved and receive eternal life.

Earlier in this chapter, there was the account of Galileans who suffered under Pilate. Some people thought they suffered like that, because they were worse sinners than others. In other words, they thought they were not as sinful as those Galileans, because they observe the law, and every year they offer sacrifices for forgiveness of sins according to the law. But Jesus said to them, “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

### Rom. 9:31-32

<sup>31</sup> but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. <sup>32</sup> Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."

Indeed, they sought after the righteousness of God, tried to achieve eternal life and enter into the kingdom of God. But we cannot enter into God's kingdom through the door of observing the law, keeping ritual and burning animals.

"Enter through the narrow door, because many will try to enter, but will not be able to." Jesus told a parable to explain what it means.

### 25-30

<sup>25</sup> Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' <sup>26</sup> "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' <sup>27</sup> "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' <sup>28</sup> "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. <sup>29</sup> People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

In short, our relationship with the master will determine whether we can enter or not.

Let's look at this parable closer.

Why were the people not allowed to enter? It is because the owner of the house didn't know them or where they had come from.

Why did they think they could enter the house, or the house owner would open the door to let them enter the house? One reason is that they ate and drank with the owner of the house. Another reason is that they had listened to the owners teaching on the streets.

Jesus ate with many different kinds of people. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law criticized Jesus, "This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them." (Luke 15:2)

Here is a Bible quiz. Did Jesus eat with the Pharisees and the teachers of the law? Don't say "possibly". If you say "yes", what is the basis? Where can you find it in the Bible?

The answer is "yes". At least three times, Jesus was invited by a

Pharisee and ate at the Pharisee's house, in the Gospel of Luke.<sup>1</sup>

Just because someone ate with Jesus, we cannot say the person is saved or accepted into God's kingdom. Needless to say, just because someone heard Jesus' teaching, we cannot say the person is saved and accepted as a child of God.

However, once people assume they will be allowed to enter, they lose sight of their reality. And when they realized their misunderstanding, it is too late. "Many will try to enter and will not be able to."

Let's go back to the parable.

What will the owner of the house do to those who will try to enter after he closed the door? They will be thrown out.

Whom will they see in the kingdom of God? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets, and people from all direction.

In v.30, "those who are last" means "gentiles". And "those who are first" means "Jews." Gentiles are not blood relatives of Abraham. They didn't receive the law. On the other hand, Jews had the awareness that they were God's covenant people. They received the law and had kept it for many generations. As "those who are first", Jews ought to lead gentiles, "who are last", into the kingdom of God. But, this verse is saying their positions are reversed.

This is Jesus' message. Look at the gentiles. They have repented. And they are taking their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Follow them before the door is closed. You may think, "I am observing the law, keeping ritual and burning animals. I am Abraham's descendent, so I should be okay," but unless you repent, you will be thrown out. That is the warning.

It is too late when the day of judgment has come. The door is only open for a limited time.

Let's see the relation between listening to the Word of Jesus and Abraham's descendent.

### John 8:30-32

<sup>30</sup> Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him. <sup>31</sup> To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. <sup>32</sup> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 7:36, Luke 11:37, and Luke 14:1. In Luke 11 and 14, some teachers of the law were there too.

Now Jesus is speaking to the Jews who had believed him. They had some knowledge about the Scripture. They listened to Jesus and believed. If we truly believe Jesus, we will remain in his word.

### John 8:39-40

<sup>39</sup> "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would <sup>40</sup> do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.

They were Abraham's descendents physically. But they were not inheriting Abraham's faith. Abraham believed in God. But they are denying the word of Jesus, who is telling the will of God.

Jesus told them if they were Abraham's children, then they would have believed God just as Abraham had believed God. However, on the contrary, they did not do the things Abraham did in his faith in God, but they were trying to kill Jesus, who told them God's will and truth. They were doing something completely opposite of what Abraham was doing.

Jesus said to them, "Enter through the narrow door." He also said, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." (John 10:9) There is no other way to salvation other than this gate, Jesus. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. (John 14:6)

## 2. Jesus as the narrow door

### 31-33

<sup>31</sup> At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." <sup>32</sup> He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' <sup>33</sup> In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

Jesus was heading for Jerusalem. (Luke 9:53) Jesus knew that he would

die in Jerusalem. But it was not that he would be killed, but he chose to die in Jerusalem.

Jesus knew that John the Baptist was killed by Herod. He knew that Herod heard about Jesus' work and now he was trying to kill him. Jesus told the Pharisees to tell Herod, "Look. I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal."

What does this mean?

At one time, John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask, "Are you the one who was to come?" Then Jesus replied like this.

#### Luke 7:21-22

<sup>21</sup> At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. <sup>22</sup> So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

That is, Jesus shows that he is Christ and that the kingdom of God is near. He is presenting that to Herod. Jesus wouldn't run away or hide before Herod. On the contrary, he is declaring before Herod, "I will fulfill my mission as Christ. I will keep advancing toward Jerusalem for this purpose. And you cannot prevent that."

Jesus would not be killed because he failed at his mission. But Jesus chose the death on the cross in order to fulfill his mission as Christ. And it would be fulfilled on the third day. This shows that Jesus would be raised on the third day after his death on the cross.

#### Rom. 4:25

<sup>25</sup> He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Jesus death is not a defeat. It is the turning point that leads to the victory of resurrection. The Lord was raised to life so that we can be received as righteous. In order to have the victory of resurrection, the Lord had to go through the death on the cross before that. In order to fulfill his mission as Christ, Jesus

went to Jerusalem, of his own will, and received the death on the cross.

But according to human wisdom, this message, the gospel of the cross sounds foolish (1 Cor 1:18). It doesn't make sense that the man who was crucified with criminals is Christ, who brings salvation from sin. This dead man was raised to life, and he is both man and God. He is the truth, the eternal life, and the glory of God. This message sounds nothing but foolish! Jesus is the narrow door.

### 34-35

<sup>34</sup> "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! <sup>35</sup> Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

God gave Israel the covenant of blessing through Abraham. But people of Israel turned away from God, forgot their mission and went their own way. God gave them warnings again and again, trying to recover their faith. Sometimes they turned back to God for a while, but again they rejected God's Word and went their own way. (2 Chr. 36:15-16)

God doesn't want to destroy them. He wants to bring them back to himself somehow. But if they reject his mercy, they cannot be saved.

Earlier in this chapter, there was a parable of the fig tree that doesn't bear fruit. The man who looked after the fig tree would try his best, fertilizing it, pulling out weeds, and pruning it, so that it would bear fruit. But if the fig tree rejects to receive his care, what will happen? The land remains to be desolate and the tree will not bear fruit. And when the time comes, the tree will be cut down. It will make him so sad.

Israelites had been listening to God's messages through prophets. Prophets had been witnessing God's works. But they kept rejecting the prophets and the messages sent through them.

Jesus is the Christ those prophets pointed out. He is the fulfillment of God's promise, the way of God's salvation, grace and truth. But for them, Jesus is the narrow door which is not popular, not attractive, and which they don't want to go through.

The time is surely coming. When the door is closed, they cannot enter.

Jesus reveals himself as "the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6) He is still inviting, "Enter through the narrow door."

### 3. A person who entered through the narrow door

#### 29

<sup>29</sup> People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

A person who entered through the narrow door will be added to God's family and receive the glory as God's child.

"People will come from east and west and north and south." People from all over the world, from every ethnic group, can enter into God's kingdom. They can enter through the narrow door, regardless of ethnic group, age, sex, academic background, occupation, social status, or achievement. That will be experience as total reality when the kingdom of God will be completed by Christ's second coming. (Rev. 7:9)

God is still telling the message of salvation to the whole world. He is telling, "Enter through the narrow door." He is inviting every people, every ethnic group to His kingdom. The time is drawing closer. But the door is not closed yet. It is still open.

When we look at the world today, we know that we live in the last days. The last days are the difficult times for those who believe in Jesus. (2 Tim 3:1) The moral standard of the world will fall, people love evil as if it was good, some even describe sin as happiness. (2 Tim 3:2) The power of evil spirits will be stronger and people will be caught by the evil power more and more. (1 Tim 4:1)

How can we remain faithful to Jesus in this difficult time? What foundation do we need in order to remain faithful in this difficult time? How can we keep lifting up the banner as Christians, saying "I'm not ashamed of the gospel."? It is certainly not our feelings that help us to remain faithful.

"It is a mark of true witness that one does not rely upon one's own subjective feelings. ... There has to be some objective reality, amid our confusion and the heat of our emotions. So at the heart of the Christian faith there is the final and absolute aliveness of Jesus Christ after his death. There is

the certainty that the resurrection did take place, and that the tomb was really empty."<sup>2</sup>

The Cross and resurrection are the foundation of our faith, the basis of our hope.

“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Tim 3:12) But, we will not be left with hurt, pain and tears. On that day, the Lord Jesus Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes. (Rev. 7:17)

We can experience Jesus daily in our relationship with Him. But moreover as we are connected with His body, the church, we can truly experience Him who is resurrected and alive. We can receive Jesus' comfort and encouragement, strength and courage through our fellowship with one another in church. And on that day, we will receive complete comfort and healing in His kingdom.

And as we receive the Lord's comfort and encouragement, and continue to stand with Him in faith, in the midst of hardships and battles, we can show the reality of Jesus in these last days. That way of living itself is the message, “Enter through the narrow door.”

Today we are studying "Enter through the narrow door." For closing, let's think about the woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, in Luke 8.

As people were crowding and pressing against him, Jesus suddenly stopped and said, “Who touched me?” Hearing this, one woman trembled, and hoped that she could get away unnoticed.

She just wanted to be healed. She didn't expect Jesus to touch her or get to know her, nor did she expect him to say a kind word to her. She just wanted to be healed without being noticed by anyone, and go home.

But, because Jesus stopped there, she couldn't go unnoticed. While Jesus was looking for the person who touched him, she might have become more and more anxious and fearful. “Why is he asking this? For what? He has been healing so many people. Why does he ask only in my case? I don't want people to know about me. That's why I touched him secretly from behind in the crowd. I don't want to experience any more shame. If this happens, I should

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<sup>2</sup> James Houston, *The Heart's Desire*, Regent College Publishing, 1996, P.171

have just remained sick. I shouldn't have touched Jesus. I shouldn't have come closer to him." She might have thought.

It was a hard time for her. There was no way she could know what would happen next. But the atmosphere got heavier and heavier. And she felt the pressure that she couldn't go unnoticed.

But it was not to blame her, but to bless her that Jesus stopped there. He talked to her, and waited for her response. While she was afraid and anxious, Jesus was with her all the way through. He had already forgiven her and accepted her, which she never ever thought of. He doesn't want to let her go in fear, shame and guilt, but he wants to give her new life. So he waited.

When she came before the Lord, trembling, and told everything, she not only received healing, but also forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Her relationship with Jesus turned from fear to peace. Why would she go back to the old way of life? Surely she would remain in Jesus' love. (Luke 8:43-48)

Jesus is the narrow door. Enter through the narrow door. Remain in Jesus' love, and fear will turn into peace, tear will turn into joy. Our new life in Jesus declares that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, that He is real, and that the kingdom of God is here. And it encourages others to enter through the narrow door.