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Luke 13:22-30

The Certain Gospel:
Will I be Saved?

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One of the most important questions any of us can ask is this. **Will I be saved?** Will I go to heaven? How can I know God will save me? Will I be saved when I die? Can you think of a more important question with such longterm implications? I mean, we're talking eternity here. How do people answer?

- 1) **I'll go to heaven because all paths lead to heaven.** It's like we're all hiking up the same mountain we're just taking different paths. It doesn't matter if you're Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, or an Atheist. We'll all float on okay.
- 2) **I'll go to heaven because I have faith.** What matters is not that you believe the right thing, but that you believe in something. As long as you believe in some sense of God and the spiritual you're good.
- 3) **I'll go to heaven because I'm generally a good person.** My good deeds outweigh my bad deeds so I don't need to worry. I've never murdered anyone and I'm a happy person so I'll be safe.
- 4) **I'll go to haven because my family is religious and I attend church.** I've paid my dues. I've gone to church and given money. My parents take me to church so I'm a Christian. God will let me in.

How do you answer this question...

Will I be saved? (v22-23)

Maybe you even answer one or two of these ways. In the Bible, Jesus was on his way to **Jerusalem** when a seeker like us asked him a similar question. "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

This individual was **confused** by **Jesus' teaching**. This person was a Jew and had been raised to believe that the **nation** of Israel was favored by God.¹ That descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were special. But Jesus is saying that it's not who you are, but how you respond to him that matters (Luke 12:8-9; 13:3). Jesus answers this man's question by giving **two analogies**.

1. The narrow door - Not everyone will be saved. (v24)

Luke 13:24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to (NIV®)

The Greek word for "make every effort" sounds like our modern english word for "agonize." **Agonizomai** means "to strive, fight, struggle." It literally means "to be a **combatant** in the public **games**."² This is a word the ancients used for sports played in a **stadium** where the athletes strove against each other to win.³ It's like

¹ See Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1 for later developments. https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Sanhedrin.10.1?lang=bi accessed 5/30/18.

² Mounce Greek Dictionary.

³ TDNT, abridged.

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

today how the **vast majority** of Americans make time every weekend to watch **Crossfit**. We watch the athletes strive to be stronger and better than each other.

Jesus calls them to strive to enter through the narrow door because salvation is not guaranteed. It's not a shoe-in. Now this **doesn't mean** that we can **earn** our salvation. For this man it means that just because he's Jewish doesn't mean he's saved. For us it means that just because we have belief, or are good people, or attend church, we're not guaranteed a spot in heaven. Not everyone gets in. The door is **narrow**.

There's a place to go **caving** near my home town of **Estes Park** Colorado. There's a mountain called **Old Man Mountain** and mid-way up the mountain you can squeeze into a **crack** that leads through a series of **crevices** and caves and comes out at the base of the mountain. That initial crack determines who gets to go caving and who doesn't. The crack is about **12 inches** wide. But if you're any larger than that you're not getting in. Anytime I went there were always a few **people** who didn't get in, a **dad**, a **friend**, a **sister**. That's what Jesus is getting at. There are going to be good people, religious people, our people who don't get in. *Not everyone will be saved*. Jesus uses a second **analogy** to say there's a **limited time** for receiving salvation.

2. The closed door - The opportunity is limited. (v25a)

Luke 13:25a 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.' (NIV®)

Here Jesus isn't just speaking to this **individual**, but to **all the people** of Israel. When he says "you will stand outside knocking and pleading" he's saying "**you all** will stand outside knocking and pleading." Throughout the course of his ministry Jesus taught and instructed the people, but the Pharisees and religious elite and many of the Jewish people **rejected** him. Jesus is incredibly **patient**, leaving the door open even for them, but one day he promises it will close.

Maybe you're not a Christian but you think, I'll live the life I want now and say the **sinner's prayer** at the very **end** and God will let me into heaven. So I get to **live the life I want** and still get to go to heaven. We don't know when the door is closing. Jesus may **return** at any moment, and the door will be closed. Or we may **die** at any moment, and the door will be closed. It's only in this life that we have the opportunity to be saved, and *the opportunity is limited*.

I recently asked the **Elders** to approve me applying to the **Ockenga Fellows Program** at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, which is a two-year program for early career pastors in New England meant to equip us to do ministry. I asked the Elders if I could apply since I would need to travel up to the seminary a couple days each quarter and they said yes. When I received the initial email application, it said the **deadline** was May 31st, but when I pulled-up the application page last week it said the registration window had **closed**. My **heart sank**. How did I miss it?! I thought I had until the end of May. **I thought I had more time**. There's some things it's okay to miss, things like this, but there are other things like eternity in heaven or hell that we **can't afford** to miss. Don't wait until the last day. The **window** is closing. The Ockenga program opened up just for me and I was **accepted** into the program. This window is **still open** for you.

At the end, Jesus promises that we will all recognize he is **Lord**. Notice what those outside say, "Sir." This is the Greek word **kurie**, which means "Lord" and was often used to refer to God. At the end, we will all recognize Jesus is the Lord God, some **willingly**, many not, but it will be too late to change your mind. *The opportunity is limited*.

Those who reject Jesus will object when he rejects them. (v26, 28)

When the door shuts, Jesus says those who have rejected him will say it's **not fair**.

Luke 13:26 “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ (NIV®)

Luke 13:28 “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. (NIV®)

They object because they had Jesus in their homes and he walked their streets, but Jesus says it doesn't matter.⁴ It doesn't even matter that they are the descendants of the great **Patriarchs**, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their **proximity** to Jesus and their **heritage** will do them **no good**.

You can have a **Bible** in your home. You can pray to bless your **dinner**. You can go to **church** regularly. You can hang a **cross** over your mantle. You can be **friends** with the Pastor. Your **grandma** may go to church zealously and pray for you. You can get **confirmed** or go to **Sunday School**. You can even say you're **saved**. But none of those things will matter when we stand before God. We can be in **close proximity to the truth** without the truth doing us **any good**.

The CDC reports, “More than half of the people killed in car crashes were not restrained at the time of the crash. Wearing a seat belt is the most effective way to prevent death and serious injury in a crash.”⁵ So that means that over half-of the people who died in a car crash were literally touching the object that may have been able to save their lives when they died, but instead of wearing their seat belts they either **forgot** to put them on or **chose** not to. You may think you're not rejecting Jesus by **forgetting** about him or **postponing** your decision, but you are. We either **choose** him or **reject** him. There's no middle ground.

Those who reject Jesus will object when he rejects them. So this is pretty grim. Where's the hope? How can we be saved? How can I know I will go to heaven?

The key to salvation is knowing and being known by Jesus. (v25b, 27)

I want you to notice how Jesus gives the same reason twice for why so many will not be saved. He says that he doesn't “**know**” them in verse **25** and again in verse **27**.

Luke 13:25b ...“But he will answer, ‘I don't know you or where you come from.’ (NIV®)

Luke 13:27 “But he will reply, ‘I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’ (NIV®)

Jesus gives two reasons why they won't get in. First, he doesn't **know** them. They don't have a **relationship** with him. They haven't let him into their lives and tried to get to know him. One of the **elders** in the church I **grew up in** preached one of the few sermons I remember from my childhood. He preached on the **parable of the ten virgins** in Matthew 25 and he pointed out that when the five foolish virgins show up late to the wedding banquet, the bridegroom won't let them in because, he says, “Truly I tell you, **I don't know you.**” (Matt 25:12b). It doesn't say “you don't know me” but “I don't you know.” Does Jesus know you?

Maybe you've heard the **expression**, Christianity isn't a **religion**, it's a **relationship**. Well, there's a lot of truth to that. The difference between someone who is saved and someone who is not is whether or not they know Jesus and are known by him. *It's who you know that matters.*

⁴ When Jesus ate and drank with sinners they called him a “a **glutton** and a **drunkard**, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt 11:18b). When the **Pharisees** ate with Jesus, they were often criticizing or testing him (Luke 7:39; 15:1-2). His hometown of **Nazareth**, the place where he walked the streets the most tried to murder him by throwing him off a cliff (Luke 4:29-30).

⁵ CDC. Policy Impact: Seat Belts. <https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/seatbeltbrief/index.html> Accessed 5/31/18.
MA Specific: https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pdf/seatbelts/restraint_use_in_ma.pdf Accessed 5/31/18.

If you're not sure that's you, and you want to know him, **pray from your heart with me**, "Jesus, I want to know you. I want to know your goodness and your truth and your grace and your love. And I want you to know me. I want you to know my heart, the good parts and the bad. Please forgive and change the sinful parts and cultivate my love for you and others. Amen."

The second reason Jesus denies them is he doesn't **recognize** where **they're from**. To not recognize where they're from is him saying that he does not recognize their identity.⁶ Just because they're from Jerusalem or Judaea or Israel doesn't mean he'll show them **favoritism**. It doesn't matter where you're from, or the good things you've done with your life. It's all about **who you know**, not me, or other Christians, but **Jesus**.

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (NIV®)

But maybe you're thinking you're not good enough or it's too late.

Anyone can know Jesus and be saved. (v29-30)

It's not about being good. It's not about coming from a Christian family. *It's who you know that matters.*

Luke 13:29-30 People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last." (NIV®)

This would have been **startling** to Jesus' audience, the Pharisees, the crowds, and even his own disciples because Jesus is talking about the **Gentiles** (the non-Jews). He's saying that people are going to come from all over and enter into God's kingdom. He's **flipping** their expectations. They expected to be first, but Jesus says they will be last. And they expected God to **judge** the Gentiles **harshly**, but he says he's going to give them **grace**. That means there's hope for us, for all of us. *Anyone can know Jesus and be saved.*

It's who you know that matters.

I'm going to transition us into a time of **communion** now. We're going to take the Lord's Supper and I want to apply our sermon to communion. In the Lord's Supper, we're going to eat and drink. You can do this **routinely** and **mechanically** by just taking the elements and eating and drinking them without thinking about what you're doing. But don't do that, then you're just like the people in this passage who were **so close** to the truth but **missed it**.

Instead, **open your heart to Christ**, pray, talk to him, confess your sins, receive his grace and love, as you receive the bread and the juice. Jesus told us to **remember him** in this supper. I think he meant for us to not just remember that he lived and breathed and walked the earth, but that he is still living and breathing and we can be in a relationship with him today. Remember your **love** for him.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (ESV)

1 Corinthians 11:25-26 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (ESV)

⁶ Wilkins, Michael J.. *Matthew, Mark, Luke: Volume One* (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Book 1) (Kindle Locations 13920-13921). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

It's who you know that matters. If you don't know Jesus, then this supper isn't for you. But for those of you who do know him, maybe even just recently or not real well, come and take this meal as a way to get to know Christ Jesus. ***It's who you know that matters.***

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church.

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