

Truth Known Too Late

Luke 13:25-30

May 23, 2021

Let's go to Luke chapter 13. Luke 13. We're going to continue what we started last week. Luke 13, and you can find your way to verse 22. Jesus is going to expand in what we're going to cover today, he's going to expand on the thesis that we covered last week, strive to enter through the narrow door. We learned last week that the word strive, *agonizomai*, it came out of the Greek arena, the concept. The Greek arena, that's where contestants entered to put everything on the line to win.

Everything on the line to win. Many entered into the arena, many runners ran the race, but only one would win the prize. That one winner, that one runner, he wins because he sacrifices everything. From the moment that he sets his mind on the goal, he begins to train, to exercise self-control, to conduct himself and his body with mental discipline. And all that work and

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preparation, which could take years, it earns him the chance to compete.

It gains him entrance into the arena. And once he gets into the arena, having paid the highest cost, when that gun goes off, he runs. He strains at every muscle, every nerve, he puts forth his all, to gain the prize. You say, Wow, that's what Jesus is saying. Strive to enter through the narrow door. That's the concept that he wants raised in the minds of his listeners.

I remember talking to a former Mormon as I was taking him to church one day. He had left Mormonism because that cult had been taking too much money from him. He was describing all that, how much money they wanted here, and wanted there, and all the pressure to get money, money, money. And as we were walking toward the church, he asked how much money our church required of us. And I was happy to tell him our church doesn't require any money from us, we give cheerfully.

He seemed relieved until I was quick to point out that Christ requires our all, and quoted to him from Luke 9:23, "If

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anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." I said, Christ, he doesn't require just a little bit. He demands all, he owns all, and you are simply a steward of what he has put into your life. To my knowledge that was his first and last Sunday, attending our church because he loved his money.

Some love money, some love comfort and ease, some love their sins, some love to continue sampling the intoxicating pleasures of the world, to chase every distraction, to seek their fame and fortune. Some love relationships. They want to do anything they can in this life to preserve their friendships and their family relationships, and never rock the boat. Never upset anything.

Never, never say anything that might possibly drive somebody away or offend them. Some love reputation, some seek influence, some love the esteem of others. Whatever it is, whoever desires to hold on to earthly temporal things, such person is what the Bible describes as a fool. Not being

insulting, but just being honest. It's absolutely foolish, to try to strive, to hold on, to temporal passing earthly things.

Jim Elliot, the well-known missionary, wrote in his journal, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Wise words. Jim Eliot was just 22 years old when he wrote that back in 1949. Who was he thinking about, when he wrote that down? Notice he doesn't publicize it like we do today. He didn't put it on Twitter. There was no Twitter back then, but he just he wrote in his journal. This is private reflections.

He's thinking about his life. And obviously, he's reflecting on the kingdom. Obviously, he was counting the cost. That was the result of his counting the cost. He was calculating the trade off, his all in exchange for the glory of God. His life, which he cannot keep, in exchange for eternal life. He was thinking about striving to enter the kingdom of God and what it would cost. This is what Jesus wanted his audience to think about and it's what he is going to have us consider today as well.

Look at verse 22, "Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem." We said last time he was teaching about the kingdom. And we can just throw in there, even though Luke doesn't say it, he was also demonstrating the power of the kingdom. And that kingdom power was a, was a power, not of domination over people, but domination over this sin saturated world.

Domination over Satan and his demonic forces, domination over sickness and disease. And he delivered people in compassion, in mercy, delivered people from their sins, the presence of demons, even oppressive, or even possessive presence of demons. Delivered them from all manner of sickness, illness, even at times, raising people from the dead. Showing his power over death itself. Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, those villages that wanted to receive him. And he was teaching them about the kingdom of God, and he was healing them, demonstrating what that kingdom power is like.

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It is beneficial to you. Listen to the kingdom message, because God is good, the king is good, and he's kind, and he demonstrated it through what he did. Yet he was journeying toward Jerusalem because the basis of entrance into the kingdom of God would not be met without his dying on the cross, being buried in the tomb and rising the third day. And so he went to accomplish his work. Verse 23, "Someone said to him," someone from the crowd, unnamed, unknown, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

And he said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." J.C. Ryle summarized this section, this command, this way, he said, "Whatever others may do in religion, the Lord Jesus would have us know that our duty is clear. The door is narrow, the work is great, the enemies of our souls are many. We cannot sit still in sin and worldliness waiting for the grace of God, we're not to carry on in our wickedness, saying that we can do nothing until Christ draws us to himself. We're to draw near to him, as we use the means of grace. The command is crystal clear, 'Enter through the narrow door.'"

As we said last time, Jesus delivered this command out of this increasing concern for his countrymen, his fellow Jews. They were resting securely, so they thought, under an assurance, but it was a false sense of assurance. They were at rest in their consciences because they had believed and embraced a false theology, a false gospel, but it was the predominant theology, and the predominant gospel of Jesus' day.

And just like there are many false gospels and false theologies that are very dominant in our own day, and dominant within evangelicalism. It's not the true evangel though. And so in Jesus time, because the time, he knows it's running out, because the opportunity to repent is coming to an end, because the door is soon to close, he illustrates his command, and the warning he's given, with a prophetic parable and a prophetic preview. Both of them intended to scare his audience straight, straight through the narrow door.

Look at verse 25, "When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will

answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil.'"

That's the parable and the preview. "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." The parable, verses 25-27, along with a preview of what it will be like to experience judgment, to be cast out, to be excluded, verses 28-30.

Look, this is how Jesus evangelized his people. This is how Jesus presented the gospel, and pressed the demands of the gospel on a slumbering, self-assured people. This really shows such a deep, deep love and concern in the heart of our Lord. Because he was willing to offend their sensibilities. He was willing to make them uncomfortable. He loved them to that

degree. He knew so many of these people, that they would not obey his command, that they would not heed the warning, they wouldn't hear the parable, they wouldn't be frightened by the preview that he was giving them.

That's what leads to his lamenting over Jerusalem in verse 34. Sees a city, having rejected its Messiah, is going to suffer devastating judgment. So Jesus in his time here, in this passage, he speaks with increased urgency. He amplifies the prophetic warning. He strengthens his words, he even adds a preview of what it, what it's going to be like to be shut outside the kingdom. And that's a terrifying scene, once again, as I said, intended to scare his audience straight.

It's not popular in even, evangelicalism today, to scare your audience straight. They say that's, that's using fear tactics. You're just fear mongering. You're trying to, to get people to repent on the basis of being afraid. Uh, yeah, that's exactly what we're doing. And what, what we're doing is, we're trying to follow Jesus model of evangelism to a self-assured people. I know that our Red Team experiences this all the time.

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And I experienced it too, as I talk to people, you know, every single person in Greeley goes to church. It's an overstatement.

Everybody goes to church. And they can all tell you what church they go to. Their life looks nothing different than the rest of the world. They're pharisaical, and they're thinking, they're antinomian and they're living, their libertarian. They love their freewill, and they don't want anybody telling them what God requires. That's legalism. To speak to people like that who are inoculated against the Gospel of Grace because they've taken such presumption with God's grace, to speak with them about the fear of the Lord, that's the greatest offense.

How dare you make me uncomfortable? How dare you make me examine myself? How dare you make me question that decision I made as a sincere boy at four years old, and then getting wet in the baptismal afterwards. How dare you question that? So my friend, as you listen today, I, I know all of us have grown up in the same culture. We've experienced that same false sense of assurance, it's supposed to settle our minds and make us not think about anything difficult, because God is so gracious.

He's like a benign grandfather, would never, in love, he would never correct us. All that's been done in Jesus. Just live the way you want and trust in Jesus. Listen, as you listen today, consider whether or not what Jesus tells these Jews might pertain to you as well. Does striving for godliness characterize your life. Are you straining? Almost sometimes it feels like with every nerve. Does it, does it grip your soul? That you still see indwelling sin and you want it gone? Are you fighting against worldly mindedness? Are you struggling to kill pride in your life? Are you struggling to fight against covetousness?

Seeing such selfish ambition, do you excuse your sins as, well, that's kind of the way I am? I grew up that way. Grew up in a hard time, hard parents, hard whatever. I'm just kind of a little rough around the edges. You should be seeing an increase of the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Other people should be seeing an increase of the fruit of the Spirit in your life. You should be passionate about the Lord's work, engaging in his passion to build his church.

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Your mind should not be set on this passing world, shouldn't be fancying a theology that sends, sets your mind on temporal things, that excuses your worldly mindedness. So my friends, listen to Jesus today. And as you listen, listen with humility, with an eagerness to understand him and obey him. Don't have any thought about clinging to your pride, and clinging to any false assurance, only to find yourself shut out at the end. Because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Allow yourself to take a strong dose of what Jesus prescribes today. And this word that he speaks, it is for those who are not yet Christians. But it's for, for many who are religiously so, and I could say evangelically so. They live under a false sense of assurance, having embraced a false gospel that just puts them at ease. This message is for those, this message is also for those of you Christians, true Christians, that you've kind of gone to sleep, frankly. As the years have passed, it's just become easy to make everything easy.

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You've grown comfortable with being comfortable. And you don't really want to break out and do anything hard, I, I get that. So let this awaken you. Let it bring you to a, a renewed sense of striving for the kingdom, to strain against anything that would hold you back, lethargy, laziness, let it cause you to struggle once again against sin and pride. And for those of you who do find in yourself a struggling sense, this *agonizomai* concept that you, although not perfect, you are struggling. You do struggle, you do strive, man, let this encourage you.

Let this encourage you, that this is what it's like to be entering in through that narrow door. That you have found Christ, and that his power, his spirit is resident and operative within your life. So, number of ways to apply this to yourself today. Listen carefully. We'll start with the first point, got three points this morning. Start with the first point, number one, look at the result of false confidence. Number one is look at the result of false confidence. And again, let this provoke some fear in you.

This is the prophetic parable, it starts in verse 25, "When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, you begin to stand outside and to knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' and then he will answer you, 'I don't do, 'I do not know where you come from.'" I mean, what a terrifying picture and a pathetic picture. I was trying to think about the pathos of this section and how to illustrate this for us. Because when Jesus said this to the Jews, and what follows to the Jews, man, this had them shivering in their boots, their sandals.

But I was trying to think of some way for us Americans, living two millennia past this time, how do we illustrate this for us, and, and, this is an imperfect illustration, but just try to give you the sense, try to get you into the picture. Imagine you have traveled and come home for the holidays, and the whole family typically every year gathers at mom's house for Christmas. It's cold outside, single digits, snowing, you've been driving all day through treacherous mountain roads to arrive on Christmas Eve.

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And though you're cold and very tired, being there now just awakens you to life. You think about getting inside, you're gonna see family, close friends, who have gathered, you're gonna warm up by the fire. So you turn off the engine, close the door, walk to the front door, you see that inviting glow of soft light that shines through the windows out into the darkness where you're walking up and approaching the home. You smell the smell of fresh baked bread, roasted turkey, your stomach starts to grumble. You hear sounds of laughter. Little kids are giddy about the presents and opening that one on Christmas Eve, and the adults enjoying, enjoying their coffee and some Christmas calorie free treats, and conversation with other adults while the kids are playing.

So you hurry up the walk, knock on the front door, and your dad answers, and you say, "Dad, I'm home." He looks at you as if he doesn't recognize you at all. That's odd. His answer seems like he's pulling your leg. He says, I'm sorry, I think you've got the wrong house. He shuts the door. You knock again. He answers the same way, denying your claim that you are his son and he's your father. And as you keep on knocking, he no longer

answers, now you're like, it's siblings come to the door. They ask you to go away because you're disrupting a family gathering.

They say, if you keep disturbing us, we're gonna, we're gonna have to call the police. The doors slam shut that final time, and when that deadbolt locks, the shutter is closed to keep you from looking in on the inside, it starts to dawn on you, this is no joke. None of your family or friends seem to know you at all, this can't be happening. It's like an episode of The Twilight Zone, but it is happening. It's like you've woken up in an alternate, alternate universe, and what happened?

But it is happening because you realize after a little bit of reflection, reality is, you're standing outside, and it's still cold, and it's still snowing. There's a party going on, on the inside, and you're not there. Just imagine how bewildering that would be for you. How painful that would be, relationally, it would rip your heart apart. But then how terrifying it would be to think, Well, then who is my family? Turned away by your closest kin, your family. Take that thought, if there's, if

that's had any effect at all, take that thought and amplify it, and ratchet it up by 10,000 times 10,000.

And it just begins to scratch the surface of how these Jews would react to being shut out of a kingdom that all along, they've been taught from the very earliest ages, it's theirs because they're Jewish. It's theirs by their birthright, it's theirs by their, their ethnic privilege. It's theirs by their spiritual heritage. At some point in the future, Jesus is telling these Jews, this door that I've invited you to enter in and strive to enter in, it's going to close and it's going to be shut tight.

The opportunity to enter into that kingdom is going to end. The master of the house will rise up, shut the door, and that's it. The verb *apokleio*, the door is shut, means it's closed tightly and locked. It's secured to prevent any reentry. So that whoever seeks to enter at this point, verse 24, they will not be able to. When that door is shut, shut by an all powerful, almighty Master, it is too late and you have no strength, no

power, to, to even make a crack in the door. When's this gonna happen? When's this gonna happen?

Commentators disagree on the exact time that Jesus indicates here, but we need to remember, he's not actually trying to indicate an exact time he's giving a parable. It's a prophetic parable, but he's got one main thrust in this parable. When that time is exactly, precise, that's not the point, it's, it's actually the uncertainty about when that's going to be, that compels us to strive to enter. When the master shuts the door, whenever that will be.

So it's uncertainty that compels us, now is the time to strive to get in. The only time that is important to us, is now. That's what he's saying. There's a future time, and in that future time, when that door is shut, and your arrival is too late, that time has passed, the opportunity is over. But asking the question about when, when is this going to happen for the Jews? When's this going to happen for every individual? It's not an unimportant question.

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We know from Jesus' teaching, and from the rest of the scripture, that time has certainly run out for every individual at death. When, when you have no breath, and have no life in your body, it's appointed for man, man to die once, and after that the judgment. We also know that time runs out for everyone at the second coming and judgments follow. Time can also run out for an individual, even before death, even before the second coming, it can run out for any individual in their own life, and how would that be? By a judicial hardening of God. That's a terrifying thing, to fall underneath a judicial judgment of God, where he hardens your heart.

That happens when God chooses to hand someone over to their hardened, impenitent heart. They have been the recipients of his grace, they've gobbled up, gobbled up all his good gifts, and they refuse to repent. That happened with Pharaoh. God hardened his heart, and in the face of God's signs, and wonders, and grace, and truth, Moses and his prophetic ministry, all the warnings, Pharaoh kept hardening his own heart in response, refused to obey God, refused to repent. So God hardened his heart too. And there are some, who, like Pharaoh, ignore God's truth, spurn God's kindness, and that is evidence that they

have, they are hardening their hearts, and that, it may turn out that that is, they do that one too many times, and God calls time on their opportunity. They, like Pharaoh, become object lessons in their reprobation.

Says in Romans 9:17-18, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose, I have raised you up that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then God has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills." It's a terrifying thing, to take out the name Pharaoh, in your mind's eye as you read that, and insert your own name. The scripture says to Travis, "For this very purpose I have raised you up that I might show my power in you, and my name might be claimed, proclaimed in all the earth," doing that by a hardening of heart.

Beloved, this is why we must examine ourselves, to see every evidence of hardening pride, to see if self-centeredness is taking over, to see if our love for the world is waxing and our love for God and his righteousness is waning. So what's the point here? Don't wait to repent and believe. I mean, strive to

enter the narrow door while there's time. You've been invited, strive to enter, "for many I tell you will seek to enter and will not be able."

So to illustrate the inability to enter, Jesus shows us those who are shut outside, who make a couple of futile attempts to get the master of the house to open the door. And this is where the parable turns from parables, spoken in the third person, about a situation, it turns into the second person, as Jesus points the finger at his audience. He starts using the second person plural, you all, you all, you all. Now we start to see that the master of the house in the parable, it's none other than Jesus himself.

In fact, notice how the late comer addresses Jesus as Lord in verse 25 at the end. And when he comes to that door that's shut, he does three things. He begins, there's a verb there, begins to do three things. He ought to have begun back when Jesus gave the invitation. He didn't begin then, he put it off, he procrastinated. Now he begins to do three things, and Jesus says, "You, you all, you begin to stand outside and to knock at

the door." That's two things, and then one more thing, he pleads, saying, "Lord, open to us." As he stands outside, as this, take, take one of these individuals, this person stands outside, a late comer, he's standing there in disbelief, bewildered, trying to figure out what just happened to him.

We can imagine that after some reflection, after some time, it begins to dawn on him. These words of Jesus begin to haunt him, as they start to, in his memory, take shape, that what Jesus said to me, that day has now come true. He just never cared to apply it to himself. How many people in our churches sit Sunday after Sunday, hearing sermons, faithful sermons from God's Word in so many churches, even weak churches that aren't really doing ministry well, and they're giving, even the weak churches giving some scripture, and how many people come in, go out, unaffected, unchanged. They come in as those who are used to being entertained. They come in as passive listeners. They sit, maybe they think about it, maybe they don't.

They leave, no applications, zero application. Hmm. That's these people. Very religious, hearing truth every single week,

never applying it, never doing the hard work of repentance and application. So standing in the cold, on the cold dark precipice of eternity, of finality. This late comer begins to panic at the horrible implications of what he's coming to realize. He starts knocking on that door furiously. And the verb tense means he just doesn't knock once or twice or give a rat-a-tat-tat, he keeps on knocking.

Now that he fears the Lord, now that he wants to take action, regrettably, the truth has come to him too late. To the panicked knocking, he adds an urgent appeal, and notice the use of the title, Lord, *kyrios*, Lord, open to us. That term Lord goes right back to the guy who asked the question in the first place, "Lord, are there few being saved?" Speaking to the questioner, you call me Lord, but is this you? Now, knocking on my door?

"Lord, open to us." And actually, that verb there is a bit stronger, it's an aorist imperative. So it's, Lord, open to us at once. He's not being irreverent here, this is craven terror, where he is calling the Lord, Lord, but then commanding him with

imperative. Lord's response, it's not fooled by the profession, "I don't know where you come from." Basically, that's a idiomatic expression. I don't know you, I don't know where you're from either. He's idiomatically, he's saying, your total strangers to me. A stranger. So, this guy gets a running start, comes back for attempt number two. He thinks maybe the Lord simply needs a little reminder.

Takes another run at getting him to open the door, verse 26, "Then you will begin to say, 'We, we ate and drank in your presence. You taught in our streets'" I had your picture in my home. During their lifetime, Jesus had pointed them to an open door, narrow to be sure. Guaranteed to make sure that they can only squeeze in, carrying no sense of self, no sense of ambition, no sense of baggage, no sense of, no, no sin brought through that narrow door. It scrapes everything off. It's narrow by design, by intention. But it's wide enough to receive all invited guests who desire to come.

And they didn't come then, when hope was open wide. Now they seek hope. And they seek hope, interestingly, in the Lord's

rejection. You're strangers to me. I don't know where you're from. Oh, oh, oh, let me tell you where I'm from. Strangers, we're not strangers. We had a meal together. We shared a meal, we ate and drank in your presence. You know where I'm from, you taught in our streets. You were there. I heard your teaching. The very appeal condemns them yet again, doesn't it? Because these are people that Jesus had visited.

These are people that, where he had been in their streets during his earthly ministry. These are the people in that very audience. He's teaching them, this is happening right in front of them. He'll probably, in customary fashion, be invited over after he preaches. Invited over for a meal, he'll eat and drink with them in their presence, and they will be fooled into thinking familiarity with Jesus means salvation in Jesus. So many people think the same thing today.

These are people standing right in front of him, they're listening to him at this very moment. In fact, chapter 14 verse 1, he is going to dine once again, in the house of a ruler of Pharisees. They, these people enjoyed his company. They listened

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to his teaching in the streets, they got a chance to follow up with a Q&A session over a meal. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Such privilege, such opportunity, to benefit from his miracles of healing, his acts of compassion and kindness.

And even now, they're presuming upon his grace, they're trampling his kindness at the place of judgment. He had invited them in and all they needed to do was hear, obey, strive to enter, now. And now, when he's told them what would happen has happened, they say, We would like you, at this point, even though the door is shut, even though we never did anything you said when we were living, we want you here to ignore our disobedience. Give way to our presumption, give way to our insistence, accept that familiarity with you is good enough, that we've heard your teaching, good enough, and let us in.'

They're still sinning outside of the shut door. This is why Jesus responds in verse 27, saying, "I tell you," repeating it, "I don't know where you come from. We're strangers to one another." And then he says this, shocking, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil." "Depart from me," you know the verb there?

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Strong verb, *aphistemi*. You hear the word there that we have in English, apostate. Jesus is telling them, apostatize from me. Act consistent with your nature, act consistent now, with who you've always been. Give up the lying profession calling me Lord, Lord, because you don't do what I say.

Apostatize from me, get away from me. All you workers of evil, more accurately workers of unrighteousness, *adikias*. Remember, these are religious people, hardworking, good neighbors, loving parents, kindly grandparents. In today's religious setting, as I'm saying, these would be the evangelicals, politically conservative, hardworking, morally upright, in many cases, living under a false delusion. A delusion of a false assurance because they have embraced a false gospel, and they called it good enough.

Workers of evil, workers have unrighteousness, why? Why does Jesus say that? What evil unrighteousness have they done? They've been good neighbors. They've been involved in all the community projects. They contributed to the building fund, they, they did all the things right. Why are they evil, unrighteous?

Because they didn't obey Jesus when he said, "Strive to enter through the narrow door." They didn't obey Jesus, when he said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me."

They didn't obey Jesus, when he said, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Again, it's J.C. Ryle, who so appropriately summarizes the scene. He says, "There comes a time when many will repent too late. Believe too late, grieve for sin too late, pray too late, be anxious about salvation too late, and long for heaven too late."

"Thousands will wake up in another world and be convinced about truths which they refused to believe on Earth. Hell, itself is nothing but truth, known too late." Jesus doesn't let his audience get a breath; he immediately moves out of the prophetic parable into what some call a prophetic oracle. He's giving a preview of what it's going to be like to experience the dread of regret, standing outside the kingdom of God. Look at, point number two is, consider the view from an infinite

distance. Consider the view from an infinite distance. We don't ever want to experience this; we want to consider it now. We want to imagine that dreadful time now, not then.

Consider the view from an infinite distance. Jesus wants these folks to imagine themselves in a place they really don't want to be. Starting in verse 28, "In that place," what place? That takes us back to verse 25. That place is standing outside the door. So, "In that place," standing outside the door, shut out, "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." We tend to think that phrase, weeping and gnashing of teeth, is one concept, as referring only to sorrow or sadness or, or a deep sense of remorse and regret, it is that, it's definitely that, but it's a little bit more than that, because of that phrase, gnashing of teeth.

That imagery gnashing of teeth was taken from the Old Testament, and in the Old Testament, without exception, to gnash one's teeth is always an expression of rage: Deep, bitter, inconsolable, unpassifiable anger. William Henrickson writes, he says, "The weeping is that of inconsolable, never ending,

wretchedness, and utter everlasting, hopelensness, hopelessness, but the accompanying grinding or gnashing of teeth is that of frenzied anger, unmitigated rage."

So, this is a picture of the place of judgment, which we know is going to finally culminated in, in the lake of fire, in eternal hell. But even at the point of death, people enter into judgment, and they enter into this condition of remorse, and anger, rage. Adding to the suffering of hell, any external suffering of pain, is this internal torment, as the soul of the damned fluctuates between feelings of remorse and feelings of rage. That's the internal thought life. That's what it feels like on the inside, being regretful and angry all the time. They're filled with sorrow and regret, but also a bitter, seething, out breaking, anger, and they will never get over the fact, that God has subverted all of their expectations.

They're remorseful as the truth hits their conscience, and they're raging because they're sinfully angry about it. Several reasons for this vacillation, oscillating between remorse and rage. I'm gonna give you several of them here, number one,

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first, there's a remorse and a rage in the sin of spiritual presumption. Spiritual presumption. Look at it there, Jesus said "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but you yourselves cast out."

Being expelled from the company of the patriarchs. That was the very ground of their identity as Jews. Being denied this reunion with the fathers, along with the progeny of their ethnic and national heritage, this is the ground of their identity. This is their spiritual privilege, but they took that privilege and turned it into presumption. They thought, We're good. And so it is a mark of divine justice, executed against them by God, for the sin of spiritual presumption, that what they expected, God has removed.

They treated the responsibility to follow in Abraham's faith as unnecessary for themselves. They treated the need to imitate Abraham's obedience as unimportant. They saw that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in tents, moving around from place to place, and they themselves want to live in paneled houses, and have comfort, and ease. They saw that Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob saw a city without foundations, whose maker and builder is God, and that's what they live for, and strove for.

And they themselves wanted to call Jerusalem, their pride and joy, an earthly Jerusalem. They chose to rely on their physical connection to the patriarchs, their association with an ethnic or national identity, instead of what those patriarchs lived for. What they demonstrated in their lives of faith. So, to ignore their testimony while trading on their ethnic identity, this is the height of spiritual presumption. They are getting what they deserve. And that's a first reason for the judgment, first reason for remorse and rage.

Second reason for remorse and rage, there's secondly, remorse and rage in the sin of self-righteous presumption. Spiritual presumption, then self-righteous presumption. Jesus said, There'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see all the prophets in the kingdom, but you yourselves cast out. Being expelled from the company of the prophets shouldn't surprise them, but it does. After all, they're the ones who honor the prophets, building their tombs, right? Making them,

making all those tombs pretty, magnificent, glorious. Think of that.

They're the ones who pour over prophetic writings, all the rabbi's studying very hard, come to teach them every Sabbath day, during the week as well. Paying attention to all the details of Scripture. Doesn't that earn them some right, some merit? Regarding honoring the prophets, Jesus said in Luke 11:47-48, "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your father's killed. So you are witnesses that you, and that you consent to the deeds of the fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs." They're self-righteously presumptuous. Not obeying the words of the prophets, but honoring them superficially, externally, thinking they can honor the prophets that they killed, thinking they can honor the prophets by their works, while their obedience tells that they don't listen to a word the prophets are saying.

As regard to the words of the prophets, John 5:39-40 Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it's they that bear witness about me, and

yet you refuse to come to me that you may have eternal life." They're self-righteously presumptuous, they think they can honor the prophets, honor Jesus Christ, putting pictures of him in their home, wearing crosses around their neck, cross themed jewelry, but they're determined to disregard him, and disobey him.

So, remorse and rage in their spiritual presumption, number one. In their righteous, self-righteous presumption, number two. Third, there's a remorse and rage in the sin of ethnic presumption. Jesus said, There'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see that people are going to come from the east, and the west, and from the north, and the south, and they're reclined at the table in the kingdom of God, but again, they themselves being cast out. The Jews, they, they could not abide this. This is just, Jesus is, he's not, he's not trying to hurt them, he isn't, this is twisting the knife.

For an ethnically presumptuous people. They often, the Jews often picture the kingdom of God as enjoying a lavish banquet in the company of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets,

according to Isaiah 25:6, Isaiah said, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, a rich food full of morrow, of aged wine well refined." Problem is, they thought only they would be at that table. Just Jews. This is a Jewish banquet. Fully kosher, no ham, Jewish expectations. They're set on an ethnic exclusion, that is, excluding all Gentile nations from sitting down at their table.

This is the predominant view, that they had no biblical warrant for it, this is the predominant view in first century Judaism. In fact, there are some rabbinical writings picturing Gentiles looking on from a place of torment, up to see in shame, at the sight of the Jews who revel in their feasting. Rabbinical writings trying to encourage the Jews in their ethnic presumption to despise Gentiles and see them as dogs suffering on the outside, while they themselves glory in feasting.

And Jesus comes into that rabbinic tradition and subverts it completely, turns it on its head. He's not being novel here, though. He's just appealing to what Scripture has taught, things

that they have overlooked and ignored. Let me just wake you up a little bit with a bit of exercise. Go back to Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 43, we'll start there. Number of passages in succession here in Isaiah, and a number of passages in other places as well.

But we have time for a few out of Isaiah. Show you a few passages that show God's clear promise about Gentile inclusion in the kingdom. And again, how did the Jews miss this? Isaiah 43, starting in verse 3, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior, I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Siba in exchange for you," Isaiah 43:4, "Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I'm with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the end of the earth," and that's where they stop.

They think sons, daughters, these are Jews. Jewish sons and daughters. We're talking about them being cast and dispersed all over the earth. Here God's gonna gather back the Jews. Great. Let's move on. Oh, but keep reading, "Everyone," verse 7, "Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." That's broader. They don't see that, and maybe in context, they would have ignored that broadness.

But they shouldn't if they keep reading Isaiah. Look at chapter 45, verses 5 and 6, "I am the Lord," Isaiah 45:5, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know." Now I equip you, Jews, that you may know, though you do not know me, you Jews, giving you covenants and promises, giving you Scriptures, giving you a history, though you do not know me, why? Verse 6, "So the people may know." People, that's broad. "From the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside me; I am the Lord, and there is no other." The Jews were pulled out from the nations that God might invest himself into them and reveal himself to them. Why, so they can be a cul de sac, holding all the blessings to themselves, so they can

silos everything, and hold on to it forever? No. So they could be a conduit of God's truth, a light to the Gentiles.

That's what he's saying there. Let's keep reading, Isaiah 49, Isaiah 49:11 and 12, "I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these shall, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." Isaiah 59 verse 19, "So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the Lord drives."

The word wind, *ruah*, same word for spirit. It's a hint, though not a full explanation of, but it's a hint of Gentile regeneration. Isaiah 66, last chapter in the book, Isaiah 66, verses 18 and 19, "For I know their works and their thoughts, the time is coming to gather...", "Listen to this, whether if it was ambiguous before in their minds, here, it's clear. "I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. Every ethnicity, every language, to

gather them all, and they shall come and shall see my glory,
I'll set a sign among them.

"And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to, Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations." What is that saying? I'm going to save Gentiles, and then I'm gonna send them out into the nations in a missionary enterprise that everybody can know. What does that anticipate? The Great Commission, that anticipates us, beloved, you and me, our work.

Go back to Luke 13, and let's just ponder this for a moment. He's previewing the fulfillment of all these passages, Jesus is, as the Jews are standing outside the door, and they're seeing the inclusion of the Gentiles. God's inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation, in the same spiritual privileges, the nation of Israel. This is evidence of the impartiality of God's grace, that he saves whomever he will.

This is them reflecting outside the kingdom, their reflecting on God's grace, that it's broad, that has a universal intent and universal reach. You know what, for them, it becomes a source of eternal remorse and eternal rage. Remorseful as their consciences tell them yeah, you ignored all that. Raging as they, they look at that, and they say, how dare God overlook me. They despise the grace of God. That's what presumption does to you.

There's a fourth reason for remorse and rage. It's in the sin of maybe just, I could just say a human presumption, human presumption. Jesus said, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth because it'll dawn on them in the end that, verse 30, "Behold, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last." Proverbial statement, summarizing everything. He's, what's happened in the previous two verses, behold, there are some who are last who will be first.

The Gentiles, those who were, Ephesians 2:12 says, "Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, without God in the world."

And yet, because they heeded Jesus' warning, because they obeyed his command, they picked up the Bible written to the, to the Jews, and they said, huh, there's some promises for me too. They start striving to enter through the narrow door when it was open, and they turned out to be first, ahead of the nation of promise.

On the other hand, some were first who will be last, there are these Jews. As Paul said, in Romans 9:4 they have a priority among the nations, they do. They're Israelites, to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, the promises, and all the rest. And yet, because they did not heed Jesus' warning, because they didn't obey him as their Messiah, but crucified him instead, because they did not strive to enter through the narrow door when it was open to them, and the Messiah looks them in the eye and invites them in. So they turn out to be last, they lose, they fail to enter at all.

Listen, sinners hate this turn of events. They hate it when their expectations are disappointed. They hate it when what they

presumed to be true is subverted on them. They despise that. God's grace does exactly that. It subverts human expectation, human pride, human presumption.

That's a characteristic mark of his amazing grace. It's a fact of divine sovereignty, the sovereign prerogative of God, the sovereign initiative of God, the sovereign decision of God, the sovereign election of God, it's his prerogative, turns out to be a form of poetic justice, to punish the sin of human pride and presumption.

Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 1:26, it's how God operates when he chooses us. He subverts all worldly human expectation, "Consider your calling, brothers: Not many of you were wise according to worldly, worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But this is what God does, God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low in despise in the world, even the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

If it hasn't been apparent to you for decades, it ought to be apparent to you in these last few years especially, that the true evangelical message, the message of God's amazing grace to save repentant sinners, wholly by his own initiative and his own work and his own regenerating grace, justifying them in the work of another, declaring them righteous because of Christ, not their work, but Christ's work. Calling them to obedience, to the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. It ought to be apparent in the last decades, but especially in the last few years, this is not popular in today's world.

It's called foolish by the world. It's viewed as weakness by the world. It's called low and despised. I heard a comedian one time saying, she said, "If Jesus comes again, we'll kill him again." Shocking. That's the attitude right now toward our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. What we see as wise, they see as folly. What we see as power, they see as the most pitiable weakness. What we see as noble, and majestic, and high, and lifted up, they want to rub into the gutter, associated with the most vile things.

And God comes in and he loves to upend, all of that, to subvert those who are proud, and in particular, the spiritually proud, the religiously proud. Again, folks, I say, think carefully about yourselves. There may not be too many today who are prone to rely on ethnic heritage. What about other ways you may be guilty of sinful presumption, spiritual presumption, self-righteous presumption. These sins are so subtle, that they can insinuate themselves into our lives, in our thinking, with hardly, within any notice.

If we're not constantly examining ourselves and fighting daily against pride, against self-righteousness, and self-interest. You take pride in your knowledge, your theology. Do you come and listen to sermons with a critical censorious spirit, trying to figure out all the things that the preacher got wrong that doesn't align to true theology? Or do you listen in humble gratitude, seeking what the Lord would want you to hear, and listen to, and obey with earnestness? Are you casual in your thoughts about Christ in his Church? Do you elevate your family, and your personal goals, and ambitions over Christ's

will for building his church? Do you love son or daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, more than him?

Do you think like a Pharisee and live like an antinomian? Because that, after all, has become the American Evangelical way. Well, if Jesus, if what Jesus says here fails to awaken the fear of God in you, then pray and ask the Lord God to have mercy. Because you're not without hope while you have breath. There's still time to repent at this moment, and believe, and strive. For those of us with faith, I know if you're anything like me, Jesus' word send shivers down your spine as you imagine yourself being locked out.

And yet, even as we tremble, we immediately fly, as all Christians do, to the refuge of the cross, to apply the balm of the ospel, where all fears and uncertainties are washed away, in the objective truth of what Christ accomplished on the cross. Of what God accomplished in Christ, and secured when he raised him from the dead, and elevated him to sit at his right hand. We rejoice in God's justifying grace. It doesn't have anything to do with our own feelings, doesn't have anything to do with where

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we may be on the sliding scale of, of spiritual sanctification, which is always in an upward trend, but sometimes doesn't it do this a little bit.

May the Lord comfort us in the gospel, amen. As we close, I'd like to speak with you who might be stirred from spiritual slumber. Any of you who may be starting to sense the fear of God that's awakening in your heart, and we'll call this point three, I just want to encourage you to, number three, seek hope through the narrow entrance. Seek hope through the narrow entrance.

I'll just give you a list of reasons, you can have hope. First, since Christ has commanded us strive to enter through the narrow door, that means the door is still open. I'm still reading this, it's still true. The door is open. See, this as an invitation and you, being invited by a king no less, therefore waste no time, run to the open door. Number two, since Christ prophesies of a judgment and it's still future to us, many will seek to enter and will not be able, that means the opportunity to strive is still before you. So strive.

Look at the contrasted language in verse 24, between the command and the warning, the command is, strive to enter, it's in the present tense, it pertains to present time, now. Those who obey the command in present time, now, they're not in danger of being shut out of the kingdom, isn't that good news. By contrast, the warning is in the future tense, many I tell you will seek to enter, that's future. Will not be able to, that's future. So the warning pertains to future time, those who refuse to strive now will in the future seek to enter, but too late. So Jesus' prophecy of judgment, it hasn't happened yet. Therefore, take the opportunity to strive now.

Number three, it's a word of encouragement, find hope in that narrow open door. Even though, number three, Christ has previewed what is going to happen for those who refuse to strive, a future of vacillating between remorse and rage. He has planted a kernel of hope in the beloved grammar, follow the grammar here. And I have to unpack it for you, and I rejoice to do this, even if you, at the end, will lament.

Verse 28, "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," future tense verb, you can see the, will, there, right? So you know, that's future, it's in the indicative mood. Greek verbs have something called mood. It's telling us about the relative certainty of something, the mood, the Greek mood is. So Jesus uses the indicative mood that presents what he's saying as settled fact. In that place, excluded from the fellowship of the banquet, outside the kingdom, it's an established fact, weeping and gnashing of teeth will ensue. That's going to happen. He changes from that certainty of what will happen then, to the subjunctive mood, which introduces some uncertainty.

He says, when you see Abraham and the others in the kingdom, but you yourselves cast out, that verb translated, when you see, that's not the indicative. When you certainly see, that is, you all are there and you're seeing it. Instead, he says, with a subjunctive mood, instead of when you see, which seems to indicate certainties; he says, like you indeed will see but you're cast out. The actual idea is, should you see, perchance you might see, you may see. There's a sense of uncertainty that they might be the ones seeing, in that place, weeping and

gnashing of teeth will ensue, done deal, indicative mood; it's happening, that's certain, and you might be there to see it.

Communicates potentiality about the outcome. It allows some uncertainty about the future, on a spectrum, ranging between what's possible in the future, and what's probable in the future, subjunctive mood leans toward probability, because he's speaking in plural terms here to this whole crowd, and he knows in probability, many of them will be seeing that site. But there are some who won't. So when he moves through the grammar like this, he conveys uncertainty about the future, and a sense of subject, a subjunctive mood, conveying a probability about the future. He knows that some will repent. You know, if some will repent, latch onto that. That's hope.

What about me? Why not me? The door's still open. Opportunity to strive is still before you. Hope is clear, in the command itself, it's clear in the warning, it's clear even in the grammar, and the details of the grammar that is lost to our English eyes.

Fourth, notice in verse 29, the table, it will be full, that ought to give you hope, as well. The love, and goodness, and kindness of God is on full display, by inviting any guests in the first place into his kingdom, but also by the impartiality that's on display when he invites them from the four corners of the earth. Every ethnicity included, every language included, every tribe, tongue, and people.

This is hope. This universal concern of God, this impartiality, a magnanimous generosity, reveals this master of the house, he's an extremely gracious host. So it's when we hear that, we bank on his nature, that he is good, and he is generous, and he is kind, and he's impartial, and he is hospitable, and he is inviting. We bank on that. And we believe in it, and we wholly trust in it, and we act out on it in faith. So since many will dine at his table, why not you?

Fifth, and finally, notice how much room there is for those who strive to enter, verse 30. That is how much hope there is in the fact that Jesus says some will enter. Yeah, some Gentiles whom the Jews perceived to be last, will be first. Good news of

hope for the Gentiles. Vice versa, some Jews also, whom the Jews perceived to be first, they will be last. They won't make it through the narrow door. But Jesus said some, not all.

So whether you're a Jew, whether you're a Gentile, whatever you are, there is hope for you. Go back to the question asked by that unnamed questioner, verse 23. "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" Did Jesus ever answer that? He did. He ultimately answered the question, not in the way the guy expected, but he ultimately answered. What's the answer? Many will seek to enter but too late, and they will not be able to enter. That's one part of the answer. But verse 29, as we said, promises there are going to be many, many, many people who hear the invitation. People coming from east, west, north, south, that narrow door is a shining beacon of hope.

The narrowness of it doesn't, doesn't drive them away, it compels them to strive even more. They're striving to enter, they rejoice in the privilege they've discovered that there is a door, that Jesus has invited, that God has, has amazing grace. Beloved, what about you, now is the time to strive to enter. Now

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is the time to embrace a life of striving against all sin, against self-centeredness, against blinding pride, and all worldliness.

Now is the time to obey his voice, come to him, because you've been invited by a king. He says in another place, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden." Who are those? Those who have awakened to the heavy burden of their sin, selfishness, and worldliness, and defilement with a, with a troubled conscience. Is that you? Do you labor? Are you heavy laden under a guilty conscience? Jesus says, "Come to me and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart. You'll find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." That's how Jesus describes striving.

It's wearing his easy yoke, its shouldering his light burden. It's the rest he's promised to us, and you enter into it right now, while we're in this life, while we strive against sin, and all that holds us back, it is struggling, but it will one day be consummated in the fullness of rest, where there's no

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more striving, no more straining, no more struggling. But nothing but joy evermore.

Let's pray. Father, we long for a time that is not yet. But we rest in the knowledge that you are the sovereign God and you know what's best. You're all wise, your providence rules over all things, and by your decree, you will sovereignly bring everything to its predetermined end. We trust you wholly.

We love you so much. We thank you for this great salvation you have revealed to us in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. May you awaken many to faith, may you stir many out of slumber into striving, and may you encourage all those who are striving. We thank you for that open door, though narrow. It is you, Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except through you, the open door. It's in your name that we pray, amen.