



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 13:22-35

To understand more about the nature of the kingdom of God.

Continuing On

When reading the Luke's Gospel (or any of them for that matter), you will encounter a lot of different details along the way. It's easy to think of the Gospels as just a collection of stories about Jesus and the miracles He performed in His earthy ministry. While Luke's Gospel does include several miracles, it's important to remember that there is an end in mind to this story that Luke has been reminding us of as He tells this story. Beginning with Luke 9:51, Luke writes: "When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem." Again, in Luke 9:53: "But the people did not receive Him, because His face was set toward Jerusalem." And now, in this week's passage, our story begins with this detail: "He went on His way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem." Luke chronicles the various important interactions Jesus had with His disciples and with other people, as well as the notable miracles He performed¹, but also reminds us that Jesus is slowly making His way towards Jerusalem to the cross. There is an end in mind for the Lord. He knows the Father's plans, and He is obedient to those plans even knowing that it will lead Him to suffering and death. The story in Luke 13:22-35 continues on with Jesus and His disciples making their way to the holy city where He will be beaten, mocked, and crucified according to the Father's good will (Lk. 22:42).

¹ It's important to note that the miracles of Jesus that are recorded in Scripture are not comprehensive. John wrote in John 21:25: "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." The ones recorded, then, are recorded for a specific purpose in that they communicate something important for the church to hear and understand.

Who Will Be Saved?

Verse 22 begins with Jesus continuing His journey towards Jerusalem, “teaching” (Lk. 13:22). Jesus’ primary action towards other people was teaching over and above everything else. Even in His miracles, the point was teaching and instruction. Christ, and everything He said and did, is the revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-4). Along the way, Luke tells us that someone asked Jesus: “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” (Lk. 13:23). The impact of this question makes more sense when the historical context is understood properly. The Jews during this time believed that simply being Jewish was enough for salvation. The Sanhedrin dictated that “all Israelites have a share in the world to come” (Sanhedrin 10:1), and yet Jesus’ intense qualifications to be saved seemed to counter this idea (Lk. 9:23; 12:33; 14:26-27). Jesus answers this question with a parable of the narrow door. Below is a breakdown of some of the important aspects of it.

THE NARROW DOOR

Jesus likens entering salvation as entering through “a narrow door.” The verb “strive” is the Greek term ἀγωνίζομαι (agōnizomai), the word from which we get our word “agonize.” It’s a word that means “to be a combatant in the public games.” The idea here is that this is an entryway that will be tough to walk through, and only few will make it: “For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Lk. 13:24). It will require great difficulty to pass through it, likely a foreshadowing of the imminent persecution that His disciples (and future Christians) will face, not only from the world but from Satan himself (Rev. 12:17).

THE MASTER’S DOOR

The parable slightly changes in verse 25. The emphasis moves away from the general difficulty of entering the narrow door to the sovereignty over the master of the house where the door is located. Jesus says: “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.’” 26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ 27 But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’” (Lk. 13:25-27). There is a sense of urgency in this portion of the parable. The door is open currently, but there is a time when the Master will close the door and He will no longer allow others to come in.

DEPART FROM ME

Perhaps the most daunting words in the parable are in verse 27: “But He (the Master, Jesus) will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from Me, all you workers of evil.’” There will be some who knew enough about Jesus but never fully surrendered to His calling, and they will be met with dread when they realize the door has been shut and they will not enter it. This echoes the sentiment Jesus had in Luke 13:1-5, when he addressed the blood mingling of the Galileans and the fallen tower of Siloam. There is a sense of urgency in the fact that this door we are to enter through will not always remain open.

FROM EVERY DIRECTION

Jesus then turns to another illustration, this time regarding the kingdom of God and who is and is not included. He says, “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 of God but you yourselves cast out” (Lk. 13:28). The inclusion of the great patriarchs coupled with the rejection of these unbelieving Jews would have been shocking to hear, but then it gets worse: “And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God” (Lk. 13:29). This picture of the kingdom of God including people from all corners of the world is not unique to the canon of Scripture (Is. 43:5, 49:12; Ps. 107:3; Mal. 1:11; Rev. 14:15). Jesus finishes His illustration by reminding them: “And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” Usually the first/last language refers to a radical reversal of values in

the kingdom of God in contrast to the world, but this does not seem to be what Jesus is saying in this specific passage. Rather, the last and first seem to be connected to Jesus' previous statement regarding Jews and Gentiles. It's not the *all* of the last shall be first nor *all* of the first shall be last, but only *some*. The "first" refers to the Jewish people, and the "last" refers to Gentiles. In other words, some of the first (the Jews) will be first (will be included in the kingdom of God) in the sense that they have already believed (i.e. the disciples, the patriarchs, etc.) and some of the last (the Gentiles) will be last (will not be included in the kingdom of God) in that they will never believe. However, as a general rule, the rejection of Christ by the Jews is followed by an outpouring the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles. This is not to say that the Gentiles were somehow a "backup plan." God has always intended for His kingdom to include them. It's simply to say in the sequence of time, the rejection of Christ by the Jewish people (Lk. 23:18-25) is chronologically prior to the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles (Acts 10).

An Unusual Interaction

In verse 31, Jesus is informed that "Herod wants to kill you" by none other than some Pharisees. The Pharisees are mentioned over 25 times in the Luke's Gospel and in every instance it is a negative interaction. However, the translation "some Pharisees" may be better understood as "certain Pharisees" (Gk. *τινες Φαρισαῖοι*). It might be that Luke is drawing a distinction to these very specific Pharisees who, unlike their party, are in collusion with Jesus, not Rome. Jesus refers to Herod as a "fox" in verse 32, a common metaphor of His time for someone who is deceitful and cunning. Jesus then doubled down on His continued journey to Jerusalem, and what awaited Him: "Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Lk. 13:33-34). Jesus knows He will be rejected and killed by His own people in Jerusalem, and for this reason He says to them, "your house is forsaken" (Lk. 13:35), a reference to Jeremiah 12:7 and 22:5.

What About Now?

One takeaway is the stark reminder of how difficult Christian discipleship truly is. The life of a Christian was never intended to be easy (Ja. 1:2-4). It is much like striving to enter through a narrow door that only few will find and enter. Beyond that, again, there is a sense of urgency in the word of Jesus. There is a time when the door will be closed and it will not be reopened. Christians ought to have a sense of urgency in telling others about Jesus. Finally, this passage provides a good reminder that the kingdom of God is much bigger than our culture, race, or language can contain. The Gospel is intended to go out to all peoples, not just some. That means the church should reflect that reality.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 13:22-23. Where did Jesus go, and what was He doing? What question was asked of Him?

2. Read Luke 13:24. What does Jesus command us to do?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 13:25-27. In your own words (and with the help of the above notes), summarize this parable.

2. Read Luke 13:28-29. Why will there be “weeping and gnashing of teeth?” Who is Jesus referencing when talks about those who come “from east and west, and from north and south?”

Day Three

1. Read Luke 13:30. What does this verse mean? (Hint: See above notes)

2. Read Luke 13:31. Who approached Jesus and what did he say? Why is this significant?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 13:32-33. What does Jesus tell them to say to Herod? What is the meaning of this?

2. Read Luke 13:34-35. Why does Jesus say that Jerusalem “kills the prophets and stones those who were sent to it?” What does He mean by their house being “forsaken?”

Week 53 Discussion: The Good Fight

In Luke 13:22-35, Jesus talks about the difficulty of entering “the narrow door;” it’s a fight! Talk as a group about how challenging discipleship really is, and in what areas you need more consistency.

1. Icebreaker: What is the hardest thing about following Jesus?
2. How often do you do the Christian disciplines (e.g. prayer, Bible study, journaling, etc.)?
3. How often do you attend Sunday church service/Bible study? Do you need help being more consistent?
4. Who was the last person you invited to church? When?
5. How can you better live out your faith? What kind of resources would help you the most?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus speaks about the difficulty of entering the kingdom of God.
2. Jesus confirms that His journey to Jerusalem will lead to His death.