

Sermon Luke 13 22 30 14th Sunday after Pentecost series C

Sermon: 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 13:22-30

Theme: The narrow door

Goal: A strong warning and a big promise about how to enter the narrow door that leads to the heavenly banquet

Dear Friends,

Introduction: A question raised a teaching. Instead of answering directly the question raised, Jesus warns severely people of His time and of nowadays, and adds a big promise to comfort all of us. *It seems as if Jesus replied: 'Do not waste your time debating that question, "Are only a few people going to be saved?" Look to yourself: Are you to be saved?' In other words, rather than speculating about the fate of others, each person must make sure that she or he will enter the door, however narrow and difficult it is; because at the last day many people will want to enter but will find that they have left the decision until too late.* (ABC 1232).

I – A strong warning

This is not the only time Jesus warned His people. In spite of the many opportunities they had to listen to Jesus' teachings and to see the miracles He was performing as signs of His Messianic characters, only few really believed in Him. At the end of the times many will say, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets," but He will say, "I don't know you..." Faith is more than just to have some knowledge about Jesus or to see Him sometimes. Faith is to follow Him very close, even through the cross, or, as Jesus says in our text, to enter the narrow door.

This warning is first directed to the Jews of Jesus' time. They had a self-confidence that they were 'children of Abraham' and they thought this was enough to guarantee their entrance in the Kingdom

of God. Jesus challenged them several times about this false confidence and told them that a child of Abraham should bear the same good fruits as Abraham had borne. To be member of God's Kingdom is not just a matter of status, but it's a way of life as result of the true faith.

Everything in the Bible was written to teach us. What can we learn from this warning? The Christians are God's people of the New Testament. It is not just a matter to be a registered member of a church, but to live according to the Christian faith. *Mere casual acquaintance with Jesus and His Word is not the same as faith* (Series C 222). Faith is a gift of God and must be put into practice in the daily life. And this is not an easy task. Therefore Jesus warns His people of then and His people of now: "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door."

Part of our efforts is to fight against temptations and against the sin. God gives us the weapons and the strength, and Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". Paul encourages us: "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). *It is a call to sanctification flowing from faith.* (Series C 221).

It is not easy to be a Christian nowadays, when so many churches who are totally against the Holy Scriptures are preaching controversial issues, and others are deceiving people promising blessings that God never promised. The focus of many churches is not just on Christ, but on healings, social issues, prosperity and whatever more. They know Christ, they have the Bible, but they are not following the right paths. Jesus will say to them, "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, you evildoers."

God's grace is available to everyone. We can accept it, or we can delay our decision till when, or we can reject it.

II- The big promise

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem when this question was raised. He was conscious of what was to happen in the Holy City: His death as sacrifice on behalf of each of us. He had to pay the ransom to set us free. He was the Lamb of God, accomplishing all the sacrifices and promises of the Old Testament to reconcile God with humankind. And we know from the Bible that everything happened according to God's plan. After Jesus' cry from the top of the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), He rose again from the dead on Easter Sunday. His life is the guarantee of our eternal life!

The big curtain of the temple in Jerusalem "was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51) when Jesus died. The way to God was now open to all through the blood of Jesus! Not only the Jewish people had the privilege to worship God as it was in the Old Covenant, but Jesus sent His disciples to make disciples of all nations, without distinction of race, tribe, colour, language, age or gender. And this is the good news in our text when Jesus says: "People will come from east and west, and north and south, and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God... with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets." It echoes the Old Testament reading, when God promised: "I am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory... I will send some of them to the nations... and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations" (Isaiah 66:18,19).

Only those whom Jesus, the master of the house, 'knows' will sit at the banquet table (Series C, 222). This is a big comfort for us, because Jesus knows our heart and our faith. I cannot see your faith but only your deeds; and you cannot see my faith. But Jesus knows who really trust in Him and makes the effort to live according to His will. When we

were baptized, as Hunter August was baptized today, our names were entered in the Book of Life. Jesus does a follow up through the parents and the church, so that His children grow healthy and become faithful adult citizens of His kingdom. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come”, we pray for *His Holy Spirit to believe His Holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity* (Small Catechism). God wants to preserve each of us in His grace till we reach the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls and finally the resurrection of our body. Our place is reserved at God’s table to feast with God’s children from all around the world and from all times since the beginning of the world. It is worthy to “make every effort to enter through the narrow door”, even if it means suffering because of our faith. The reading of Hebrews 12 calls the Christian suffering as “the Lord’s disciple” to His beloved children and an “encouragement” to our Christian life and to our hope.

Conclusion: God *empowers us to strive continuously to enter through the “narrow door”* (Series C 223). His Word and the Holy Sacraments are the food to nourish us on our way and in our fight. When we hear Jesus’ voice, He forgives those repentant and guide us on the right paths. - When we remember our Baptism, we can be sure of God’s love and that the door is still open for us to come back if we go astray, as the father received back the prodigal son. The Baptism is always a comfort that God accepted us as His children and wants our best. We shall not despise this privilege. – And *in the Lord’s Supper Christ already gives us a pledge and foretaste of His banquet... Our participation in the Sacrament of the Kingdom now is a pledge that we will enjoy the kingdom’s banquet then* (Series C 223). Amen.