

Guest Preacher - Mr Scott Macleod

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Preacher: Mr Scott Macleod

[0 : 0 0] With God's help, we'll turn back to the passage that we read together in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 13.! We'll read again at verse 24. Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

So we come to this passage this morning, the section that is titled this narrow door. And at the beginning of this section, you'll notice that it says in verse 22 that Jesus, he went on his way through the towns and villages, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem.

Jesus is making his way to Jerusalem, and as Luke writes his Gospel, he reminds the reader that this is where Jesus is going.

Because he mentions it previously to this verse that we've read here. He mentions it beginning in chapter 9, verse 51. He says that as the days drew near for him, Jesus, to be taken up, and he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Luke always makes a distinction here in this Gospel in chapter 9. Jesus is changing his direction. He's setting his mind, going to Jerusalem. And here again, we have that reminder.

[1 : 2 9] He's going through these towns, villages, teaching towards Jerusalem. And even in this section that we read, the latter section of it, he speaks about Jerusalem as this place where the prophets would be killed.

All those who are sent there would be stoned. They shall wait to go into Jerusalem. And he cries over Jerusalem as this place that he knew would kill him.

It also reappears in chapter 13, verse 11. Jesus is going to Jerusalem. He's heading there. This is where his focus is set.

And everything that he is saying to the people has this in mind. The weight of it is in his mind as he's speaking to the people, knowing that he's going to Jerusalem.

He's going to be crucified. He'll be killed in this place. This is where he would face the cross. This is where he must go.

[2 : 3 5] This is the cup that he must drink. But he's got things he must say to the people with this in his mind. The things he wants to tell the people as this truth weighs upon him.

Now I'm sure you know what it feels like to have something weighing upon your mind. Something that has set in your mind.

Someone maybe has said something to you. Told you some news that you cannot believe. Something that is true. Something that has ripped your heart out, as we would say.

Something that made you feel sick. Maybe it's a diagnosis. Maybe it's an accident you heard. Maybe it's a scandal of some sort that someone said to you. It's a serious thing.

It's a heavy thing in your experience. Something that was of deep concern. And something as a Christian you had a burden to pray for. Maybe it was something that even changed your life.

[3 : 41] Jesus is telling them something. As he has this great burden upon himself. He sets before them. News that he must deliver.

A message that they must hear. Something that would have great effect on them. Something that would stop them in their tracks.

News that they didn't want to hear. But Jesus knew he had to tell them. And it's the same for us today.

This message. It's a heavy thing for us. Maybe we don't want to hear it. But Jesus wants us. And needs to tell us.

We need to be told. And as we look at this passage. I want to break it into three parts. Firstly we have a man here. With a question. The man that faced an unanswered question.

[4 : 45] He was answered. He did get an answer to the question. But he didn't get the answer he wanted. The man that faced an unanswered question. Firstly. Secondly we'll have a man that faced a pressing truth.

And thirdly we'll have a man that faced an eternal reality. So the man that faced an unanswered question.

As I was saying to the children. We have many questions. And children sometimes have the best questions for us. What question would you have for Jesus today?

What question have you asked God this week? What would you ask Jesus if he were sitting right here with us? Maybe you'd ask him about creation. Seven days.

Six days. Maybe you'd ask him about sin. Maybe you'd ask him about suffering. Why is there so much suffering? Maybe you'd ask a personal question from your own experience.

[5 : 46] Asking why has this happened to me? Why did I go through this experience in my life? We often have our questions.

We all have our questions. But we don't always get the answer. But there's something there that we need to hear.

And in this passage we have a man who brought a question to Jesus. And we have it there in verse 23. Lord, will those who are saved be few?

Why he chose this question? I do not know. Maybe he had heard about Jesus. Maybe he had listened to Jesus. Maybe he had heard about the cost of following Jesus.

When Jesus commanded the people to love their enemies. He commanded them to be people that would bear good fruit in their lives. He told them and taught them to be compassionate as a good Samaritan was.

[6 : 48] He told them not to be like the rich fool to gather up riches in this world. But to place their riches in heaven. And he's maybe recalling all these teachings.

And he's asking in his mind, Who can tick all the boxes? There must only be few that will be saved. We can only speculate of why he asks these things.

But we can safely assume there is some background to this question that he wants an answer to. But the answer he gets, I believe, goes beyond numbering the few or how many it would be.

And goes right to the root of the problem that he had. Because Jesus was a master at that. Going right to the root of the problem.

Going beyond the words that were asked. And addressing what was wrong. Would it have benefited him to know if there were few or many that would be saved?

[8 : 02] Why was he asking this? Maybe he thought he was one of the few himself. Maybe he was trying to gauge how much effort he needed to put in, in his walk.

Should he have been doing more in his life? Or was he quite secure in all that he did? Jesus knew the root of the problem.

And so his answer hits it. Not the answer he was expecting. Strive to enter through the narrow door.

We have so many questions. We have so many questions. So many questions that we wish we could get an answer to. But even if we did get an answer.

Would it be a helpful thing for us to know? And in our asking, we need to be wise to understand if it would be good to know the answer.

[9 : 05] To have the answer. And in God's wisdom, he doesn't give us an answer every time. He tells us what we need to know.

Not what we want to know. Sometimes having the answer can cause as much trouble as the question that we have. Or even more so.

This man didn't need to know how many would be saved. But he got an answer that he needed to hear.

And that takes us to the next point. We have the man. It's a quite unanswered question.

But we have a man here that faced a pressing truth. That's our second point. Now as we have said, we often hear things in our lives that we wish we didn't hear really.

[10 : 05] There can be terrible weighty things that can go round and round in our heads. They don't leave us alone. Truths that are pressed as heavy weights upon us in our lives.

And here Jesus gives them the words that they need to know. Not just to the man. But you'll see that he says to all those who were there.

And he said to them at the end of verse 23. He's speaking to the crowd. He's speaking to all. And he speaks this pressing truth.

That they all need to hear. Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

And he goes on to answer this or to give this truth to these people there and this man. By presenting this image of the master. And this house or this mansion or home as it were.

[11 : 19] And this narrow door. Which all those who are saved will enter into. Because that's the context of his question. Who will be saved?

And he says those that will be saved will be the ones that pass through this narrow door. And the striving here that is spoken of.

It's a word in the Greek. Agonize. Agonizo mai. Agonizo mai. Agonizo mai.

And you can pick out the English word from it. What it means in that striving. Agonize. Agony. Agonizo mai. He's saying to them.

Strive to enter through the narrow door. It's a hard thing. It's a fight. It's a struggle.

[12 : 16] This word would have literally been used in the language of contending with one another in public games. And you can imagine if you're playing against someone else one to one.

You're doing all you can to beat the person. To get the victory. To gain the prize as it was. To bring everything you can into it.

You're giving it your all. To achieve the prize. This is the language that is used about entering through this narrow door. Salvation.

Faithfulness. Following the narrow way. As Jesus also taught in Matthew 7. It's a challenge. It's a work.

It's an exercise. It's a testing. It's an endurance. Where we give it everything. That we have.

[13 : 15] And you might think. Well that contradicts the message that I've been told of. Simply believe and you're saved. Just trust in Jesus Christ.

And that's it. As if it were just to get a badge and you're done. To become a member. And you're sorted. And yes in one respect that is true.

We must believe in Jesus Christ. We must. It's good to become a member in our church. It is good to profess a confession in him as our Lord and our Saviour.

But John Bunyan when he wrote the book The Pilgrim's Progress. He didn't picture Christian coming to the cross. Having his burden fallen off his back.

And that he sat down and took a picnic. Or that he rested in his home. No. The pilgrim Christian goes on in his journey.

[14 : 14] He strives on. And it was a sure striving. Through many difficulties. Many different places that challenged him. Many different people that tried to lead him astray.

Striving. Agonizing. Exercising. Every single step of the way. He went on. Trusting in his Lord.

Knowing that at the end the prize was all worthwhile. Each and every day. Striving.

Agonizing. With himself. With all the temptations in this world. things that are in us things that are outside of us battling against the enemy of the devil the flesh, the world that make their attack on the Christian to make them fall it is a fight for the Christian to go on to strive to battle against our own temptations our sins come out of us sins that are presented to us in this world it's a challenge to put other people before yourself it's a challenge to put down your phone and to pick up your Bible it's a challenge to set time aside every morning to pray to God to pick a verse and to take it with you into the day it's not an easy thing the Christian life the truth is that the way is hard and he's telling them strive to go on strive to enter the narrow door he's telling them as he has told and I am the way, the truth and the life the narrow door is there as a sure truth this is the way this is the truth in this you will have your life go on Christian he says strive every day be faithful to God because there is a time when this door is open there is a time when this door will be closed and as we read through this image it would appear that as this door is closed it becomes a surprise to those who are locked outside there are people that want to be saved there are people that didn't respond rightly to the message of God when they heard it they didn't take it seriously they cry out in verse 25 when the door is shut

Lord open to us they acknowledge in us Lord they know his name they have even people that they acknowledge we ate and drank in your presence and you taught us in our streets does that claim not make it all the more worse in their eyes as a hard truth for them to swallow Jesus taught them in their hometown they heard from his mouth they knew him as Lord he is the master that he knew all about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and if he was a Jew he would have assumed his salvation by heritage by family line by promise of circumcision and if that is the case for this man

[18 : 27] Jesus is warning against that the door will be shut on those who have known the Lord to be the Lord shut on those who have heard Jesus teaching them shut on those who provided for them shut on those who have that family heritage but you yourselves cast out I remember walking down streets of Inverness and I bumped I didn't bump into a man I surveyed a man that I knew he didn't see me walking down the middle of the road in Inverness right in the middle and I just shouted over to him jokingly highlighting the danger of his position where he was in the middle of the road he wasn't crossing it he was walking down the middle on it and in the following conversations I don't know how we got onto it but we were talking about salvation and being saved and well he was keen to tell me that he was part of a particular domination denomination and he was baptized within that denomination and it seemed as if he was putting all his security on that heritage that he had that's where he placed his values it seemed

I cannot say for sure but I do know for sure that the door suddenly closed on his life before I never saw him again we walk a dangerous road in this life and we do not know when the door shall close upon it this is a pressing truth for us all a truth that is told in love in the gospel and a truth that is told here and a truth that is taught by Jesus Christ even today he communicates this truth to us warning us that this should be a heavy thing that rests upon us the door will one day close on our opportunity to enter in to the house of God it's a truth that he needs to tell the people it's a truth that we need to hear today those who have sat in my presence many times and did not respond to the message rightly how many times have you sat here in

Barra's free church you've heard the gospel you know Jesus to be Lord and yet you did not respond to him will you take up the cross will you take him to be your savior will you strive against every sin in your life Jesus says those who are faithful will enter into the narrow door and enter into his rest how many shall be saved don't worry how many shall be saved many shall be lost many shall have the door shut upon them but many will be saved you don't need a number but he's pressing a truth upon him and those that are there to strive to enter the narrow door and he's only telling that because he knows he won't be with them much longer he knows they must hear this thing it's a heavy thing it's a weighty thing it's a truthful thing is there a pressing truth upon your life this morning knowing that the door is open to you today knowing that the door will one day close and we don't know when that door will close on it's a pressing truth that he sets before the people it's a pressing truth set before each one of us today because he knows it has eternal significance for all who hear it so we have a man that faced an unanswered question we have a man that were faced with a pressing truth and we have finally a man and briefly a man that was faced with an eternal reality we picture this man in this image being locked outside the master house a place where those who are in receive a great feast a place where they called out too late to the master and the master says to them in verse 25

I do not know where you come from and these words are repeated in verse 27 I tell you I do not know where you come from depart from me you workers of evil that is that not something that presses upon us if we were to hear these words because we didn't respond to the gospel today we didn't respond to Jesus when he held the door open for us we didn't respond to him when he told us to fight and strive against every sin in our lives follow the narrow way be a pilgrim that progresses trust in his word how would you feel to hear these words depart from me and outside the door it is a place that is described where people will weep rightly so and gnash their teeth which implies the great sorrow of their own condition but also an anger within them maybe for themselves for not being willing to receive this message maybe an anger against

God for I've shut the door upon them he's locked out he didn't receive Jesus as his saviour he didn't trust in him he wasn't willing seems like he can see those even that are in that house he sees people that he knows he sees these of his family heritage Abraham Isaac and Jacob he sees many coming from east and west from north and south meaning that it wasn't just for the Jewish people it was for all to come and all he believed went in and they reclined at the table the kingdom of God to a great feast a great banquet every day every year every century for all eternity can you imagine how the weight of the truth of having never responded to the man that taught you in your own streets the man that provided for you every day of your life the man that held the door open to you this morning to hear the gospel the weight of that truth because you weren't willing you didn't hear it you didn't receive the man that died on the cross for you for all eternity maybe you're thinking that this way is too hard maybe you're fearful that you would not be able to strive with such endurance how can

[28 : 03] I live the Christian life maybe you're recalling your sins of your youth sins of even yesterday and you're thinking God would never forgive me maybe you're thinking no one could ever love me well he loves you enough to tell you this truth today it may not be the most comfortable word for us to hear there may not be the answer you're expecting when you came to church this morning but the master the Lord Jesus Christ is setting this truth before you as an eternal reality and a truth that we all need to hear because he loves you and he has promised to forgive the weight of your sins and he has promised to keep you every step of your journey he will not leave you nor forsake you

Jesus tells us what we need to hear even if it's a heavy thing even it's a weighty thing even it's a thing we don't want to think about and we don't want to hear but it's important that we do this is the gospel this is the truth how will you respond to it maybe all your questions haven't been answered but there's an answer for you here today and the gospel sets before us this present truth to be believed because we face an eternal reality of either heaven or hell this is the truth we need to hear and a truth that must be proclaimed to all people the master is holding the door open to you will you respond today is the day of salvation today his great mercy is extended towards you to come to follow him miracle that he is the way, the truth, and the life.

The door is there for you this morning. Tomorrow is not promised. We don't know when we will enter into the reality of our eternity.

And so respond to this truth with great striving. With everything you have, run to him, to the narrow door, to Jesus Christ, in whom you'll find your peace for all eternity, in whom you'll enter into joy for all eternity.

Hear this truth and respond to it, I pray. Our Lord and our God, give us ears to hear.

[32 : 03] The questions that we have, may you answer us from your truth. And Lord, may we place our faith and trust in Jesus for the great love that he has for us and dying on the cross and providing us a way to be saved and to enter into the presence of our eternal rest and joy.

we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll conclude by singing in Sing Psalms 36.

Sing Psalms 36. And we'll sing from verse 5 to verse 9. You'll find that on page 44 of the blue psalm book.

Psalms 36 from verse 5. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord. It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful, extending to the sky.

Your righteousness is very great, like mountains high and steep. Your justice is like ocean depth, both man and beast you keep. How precious is your steadfast love, what confidence it brings.

[33 : 25] Both high and low find shelter in the shadow of your wings. They feast within your house and drink from streams of your delight, for with you is a source of life.

In your light we see light. So we'll stand to sing in conclusion these words to God's praise. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord.

It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful, and standing to the sky.

Your righteousness is very great, like mountains high and steep.

Your righteousness is very great, like ocean depth, both man and beast you keep.

[34 : 58] O precious is your steadfast love, what confidence it brings.

O thy love, thy shelter in the shadow of your wings.

The beast within your eyes and drink from streams of your delight.

For with you is the source of life, in your light we see light.

Conclude in prayer. Our Lord and our God, may your truth weigh upon us. May your truth be ever present in our lives and our experience, shaping us and even changing us.

[36 : 26] And Lord, we pray that your Spirit would bless your word to us and bless your people, all who have heard it. May your blessing be upon them, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Okay.