

FOLLOW JESUS ON HIS WAY
14th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LUKE 13:22-30
AUG 21, '16

²² He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, ²⁴ "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 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.' 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!'" ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

In VBS last week, children & adults learned truths from Ps. 23, also illustrated by other farm related Bible stories. That Jesus wants to call and gather us all as his sheep, that he compassionately cares for us as when he fed 5000, that he leads us through his word, although not all respond or grow as when a sower sowed his seed that we all need to be restored by forgiveness as when prodigal son ended up with the pigs and that we need to recognize him as the way to eternal life as when Mary saw Jesus in garden after resurrection. These themes are found throughout Bible so is no surprise this is also message of today's text:

THOSE GATHERED ARE BOTH MANY AND FEW
THE WAY IS BOTH CLOSED AND OPEN
BEING WITH JESUS IS BOTH EASY AND DIFFICULT

THOSE GATHERED ARE BOTH MANY AND FEW
²³ And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, ²⁴ "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
²⁸ 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. ²⁹ And people will come from east

and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.

In American culture today, inclusiveness has become
a primary value by which everything else is measured.

Anyone can become or accomplish anything they want.

No one will be left behind.

However you identify yourself or your desires,
you should be free to do whatever you want.

No is to be excluded from anywhere, whether bathroom,
classroom, workplace, courthouse or heaven.

Although there is counter reaction desiring to exclude
anyone who may seem a threat to this way of life.

Some even say Jesus never excluded anyone.

Christians are left scratching their heads.

On one hand that sort of sounds good because
God has made and loves us all.

But on the other hand, it doesn't sound quite right.

Jesus says it is true that heaven is open to all.

As O.T. lesson also pictures, people from all nations,
north, south, east, west, are invited & encouraged
and welcomed into the kingdom of God
and given not just a seat at the table but a recliner.

God sincerely wants and has provided for
everyone ever born to be with him forever.

Yet, the answer to the question: will those saved be few?

is obviously "yes." There will be empty seats at table.

Anybody can join the party but not everybody will.

While some are inside noshing on treats non-stop
others will be outside gnashing teeth in agonized grimace
because they have been cast out like the demons.

We are not all going the same place.

Not all religions are basically the same.

Not every lifestyle is compatible with God's kingdom

Not every choice is a viable option.

Why? THE WAY IS BOTH CLOSED AND OPEN

²⁴ "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 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.'

Few weeks ago I was riding my bicycle around Lake Erie.
Two towns along shore are Sandusky and Toledo, OH.
I met another person on bicycle intending to ride
to Toledo through Sandusky.
I pointed out you can't because there is big river
and only bridge over it in Sandusky is freeway,
you can't cross it under own power, on bicycle.
You have to go many miles inland to a small bridge.
Those living in Mankato are used to this kind of thing.
You may be on street headed straight for destination
but is little gap on street map caused by ravine or bluff.
The way to get there is another way around.
These ravines and bluffs were caused by erosion.
Same is true of gap between us and God.
Sin has eroded the way God designed world & us to be.
We cannot get to God under our own power.
There is a way, a bridge, but it only one, it is the cross of Jesus.
Jesus is the door. Only way to God the father is through him.
This door is open, but there comes a day when it is shut.
You surely had it happen when you are on busy freeway
with multiple lanes, one lane is exit to your destination.
There are signs pointing to it ahead of time.
It is open and maybe even empty.
If you stay in fast lane, don't get in that lane soon enough
you see your exit going by but can't get there.
It is like when opportunities knock but only once,
and the time to speak is before decisions are made,
the time to buy is before prices go up,
the time to help is before it is too late.
The time to be helped by God is before it is too late.
There is one lane to being with God and the banquet
of his love, peace, joy and hope.
It is the grace and forgiveness that is found only in Jesus.
Jesus says get in this lane now.
Otherwise, at the end of life or end of time,
many find that they have cruised right by
and it is too late to do anything about it.
Jesus says this is because God does not know us.
How can that be when God knows everything.
This knowing does not mean just identification but intimacy,
like when Bible says Adam knew his wife.

It comes from being open with someone so that
they don't just know your name but who you are.
God wants to know us in a way that happens when we
openly confess our faults and failures to him,
come to him in every trouble, also come to know him.
This is the kind of knowing Jesus meant when he said
I know my sheep and my sheep know me & follow me.

BEING WITH JESUS IS BOTH EASY AND DIFFICULT

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In Olympics, events like triathlon, decathlon are difficult because you have to be good at several things.
In winter Olympics is event called biathlon, doing 2 things.
one is skiing really fast on a course,
other is stopping and shooting gun at target.
This is really hard to do when breathing hard from exertion.
It is hard to focus and aim carefully.
Jesus says, "Strive to enter through the narrow door"
This striving is working hard to do a lot of things,
it is aiming and focusing carefully on this one thing:
the narrow door of what only Jesus can do for us.
It which takes striving to shut out Devil's temptations
and worlds distracting shouts,
and our own nature's deceptive desires.
First verse says Jesus was going through towns & villages,
headed toward Jerusalem. He stopped to teach & help,
but was not meandering he was focused on goal.
Jerusalem is where he suffered and died in our place.
It is where he defeated sin & death and rose again.
This is the one way we are able to be with God.
So v. 22 says, "Jesus went on his way."
Only way to heaven is to follow Jesus on this way, his way."
We can only get to where we are going
because Jesus got to where he was going.
Door is open for us because Jesus' tomb is open.

When we stand at the crossroads of difficult choices,
there is a way that leads to life
because Jesus took the road to the cross.
But we cannot live in a way focused on this world
and then end up in heaven.
We are like those in v. 27 who are workers of evil.
we do things that are wrong.
Jesus has taught in our streets, he seems familiar.
but the difference is how we respond to his teaching
with repentance for our evil works.
The difference comes from not just eating in his presence
but receiving with faith the forgiveness that comes from
his real presence when he feeds us his body & blood.
Christ has a great banquet waiting for all in heaven.
but why wait?
He hands out free samples in his word & sacraments.
The narrow way to heaven begins with Baptism, it continues
in hearing God's word, Confession & absolution.
If we stay on this path, we don't have to worry
about missing the door.
I was talking the other day about the one road from the east
into Fairbanks, Alaska.
It is narrow with no shoulders, steep drop-offs, tight turns.
I have been on it but let a professional do the driving.
Strive to take the one narrow road to heaven
by letting Jesus do the driving.

THOSE GATHERED ARE BOTH MANY AND FEW
anyone from everywhere can be saved but not everyone will.
THE WAY IS BOTH CLOSED AND OPEN
Jesus is the exit from sin but we must not pass it by.
BEING WITH JESUS IS BOTH EASY AND DIFFICULT
We must constantly strive, not to do anything we can
but to focus on what Jesus has done for us
to serve a banquet for us in heaven
which is already being served here and now.