

CAPITOL STUDIES

MAY 28, 2025 • WEEK 20



LUKE FOR LEGISLATORS

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Theme Verse

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to **seek** and to **save** that which was **lost**.



The Narrow Door



RKENT HUGHES SHARES THE FOLLOWING: “Pastor Alistair Begg shared a heartening encounter he experienced in Massachusetts. He had risen early and found a restaurant next to Harvard Yard where he planned to apply some ‘finishing touches’ on his message. As he worked, he watched Cambridge wake up, and the restaurant fill up with a variety of weird and wonderful people. Some had slept in the street. Others were apparently regulars. He was out of his element. The university culture was overwhelming, and he felt insignificant.

“He began to muse about his insignificance and how foolish the gospel seemed in such a setting. He was feeling small. But two things that happened encouraged him. When a sparrow landed on his table *inside* the restaurant, he thought of Christ’s words about sparrows. Then he looked across the aisle and saw an Asian girl intently reading what appeared to be a Bible. He watched further and saw that she was indeed studying the Scriptures. So, he asked, ‘I see that you are reading the Bible. Are you a Christian?’ She smiled and replied, ‘Oh yes. I’ve found the narrow way.’”¹

Arin Hess

Pastor Arin Hess
Chaplain, Capitol Studies



“Her answer was remarkable. [Pastor Begg said,] ‘In all my years in ministry I had never heard anyone answer like that.’ In the ensuing conversation she explained that she had come from Korea to study at Harvard, and she was the only Christian in her family. Here was a young Christian woman 10,000 miles away from her Buddhist home (with its three million gods, the antithesis of ‘the narrow way’) in the midst of Harvard’s aggressive pluralism (which tolerates everything except the narrowness of the gospel) who so profoundly understood her Christian faith that she expressed it with unabashed acumen as ‘the narrow way.’”¹

INTRODUCTION

Luke, who also authored the book of Acts in the Bible, wrote about “the Way” (Acts 19:23) and its effect on the culture at Ephesus. This narrow “Way” was turning that world upside down. This is what happens when the good news of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in a community of needy sinners. The aforementioned Korean student understood the door through which she entered was a narrow door to a narrow way.

In our passage today, Luke records some of Christ’s experiences as He journeyed to Jerusalem. Large crowds still came to hear Him speak, but the committed followers were few for the Way is narrow that leads to Life.

Luke 13:22

And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.²

Remember that beginning in Luke 9:51, Jesus’ ministry moves from Galilee. He now has one destination—the cross. In Luke 13, Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem. He is committed to completing the job for which He was sent. Providing rescue for fallen man is foremost on His mind. He is still connecting individually with people in the towns and villages along the way, sharing the Gospel of salvation with those He meets. It is a ministry of hope and help—more teaching, less healing. This teaching, often through parables, goes below the “surface,” desiring to prick the heart and stir the will.

Luke 13:23a

And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?”

Perhaps this question was asked because of the smaller number of faithful followers in Jesus’ band. Perhaps it was because Jesus often spoke of the Way being narrow, and few people finding it.

Few means that the large masses of people are going in a *different* direction. They have not experienced the turning of repentance mentioned earlier in the chapter (vs. 3-5). That repentance would cause them to turn toward God and flee from idols (1 Thess. 1:9). This person basically wants to know why more people are not being saved.



I. THE NARROW DOOR

Luke 13:23-24a

And He said to them,²⁴ “Strive to enter through the narrow door;”

Jesus immediately turns the conversation from “Why aren’t *others* being saved?” to “Are *you* entering the narrow door?” *Strive* means to commit to a life-long agonizing effort, a striving which will only end when we enter into glory. “Jesus uses the present imperative which is a command calling for continual striving, striving that is evidenced as one’s lifestyle, one’s habitual practice. And continual striving calls for continual dependence upon the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. The picture is one of a continual contention, a lifelong war (manifest by many “battles”). But with whom are we to be continually contending and/or warring? Until we see Jesus face to face, our intractable, unyielding, inveterate, unyielding, entrenched, incorrigible, obstinate, powerful and wily enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil. In other words we must never, ever let down our guard (Matthew 26:41), for our mortal enemies never lay down their arms and call a truce!”³

“The image of the narrow door most likely refers to the small entryway set within a larger door of a house.... To protect the property from intruders, a reasonably well-off family home featured a walled courtyard with a large, solid door, which they opened only to allow animals or carts to enter and leave. Family members and guest routinely entered and exited through the smaller, inset door.”⁴

The word “strive” is not addressed just to the one who asked the question but to everyone, including you and me. Your and my entire future—our eternal destiny—will be determined by whether or not we enter the narrow door. Jesus is very specific about that door.

II. THE CLOSED DOOR

Luke 13:24b

“...for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

“Those who fail to enter by that door, even though they desire to get in, will not succeed. Once the door is shut, it will be too late. For individuals, the door shuts at death—if not before, because of the hardness of one’s heart.”⁵ Jesus taught “I am the door” (not “a” door, but “*the*” door; Jesus is the *one* and *only* door to heaven). “If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

Jesus’ words must have quickly perked up the ears of the Jews in the crowd: “Many [of you Jews] ...will try to enter and will not be able to.” Jewish people in Jesus’ time considered themselves to be privileged because they received “God’s Covenant” through Abraham. They heard from the prophets. The law was given to them. Their “God” had a magnificent temple, like no other. Surely heaven was made for them. To hear Jesus say that “many” of them would not get there was, undoubtedly, an affront. Paul refuted this thinking in Romans.





Romans 2:17-21

But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God,¹⁸ and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,²¹ you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?

“Jesus’ point was, your Jewish privilege had better make a difference or it is all for nothing. Sadly, *many* did not have personal faith in Christ and so were lost.”⁶

Seekers Who Do Find God	Seekers Who Do Not Find God
Those coming God’s way	Those coming their own way
Those who come in time	Those who wait too late
Those coming in repentance (sorrow effecting change of behavior)	Those coming in remorse (sorrow at being caught)

Lukes 13:25

Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, “Lord, open up to us!” then He will answer and say to you, “I do not know where you are from.”

“The Lord drew a graphic picture of multitudes who never bothered themselves much about their soul’s salvation until the door was shut and it was too late. The time is now! The classic biblical illustration is found in the story of Noah’s ark. Too long they scoffed. Too long they sinned away the day of grace. Suddenly, the day came, and the door was shut (Gen. 7:16). Those who were shut in went through the judgment unscathed; those who were shut out were doomed.”⁷ Like the people of Noah’s day, many of those who were invited waited too long. It was too late! The door was no longer open.

A. Excuses Denied

Luke 13:26

Then you will begin to say, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets”;

Observing religious feasts, going to church, and listening to the Bible can be very good, but they will not get you into heaven. Only a child of God may enter God’s home in heaven. Heaven is dependent on your relationship. Are you a child of God? The Pharisees of Jesus’ day faithfully observed the feast days, attended services in the synagogue, and even read the Word of God from scrolls daily, but they were not children of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, shortly after Jesus urged His hearers to enter through the narrow gate in Matthew 7:13-14, He warned: “Not



everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:21–23).

“We may be preachers and have perhaps ministered to thousands. We may be Sunday school teachers and point many little ones to Christ. We may be missionaries and are held up as paragons of sacrifice, and yet end up as castaways. Why? Because, as Charles Spurgeon says, ‘Mighty works do not save us, but only vital union with Christ through real faith.’ So, the burning question is, ‘Does Christ know you? Are you in authentic relationship with him?’”⁸

B. Evildoers Expelled

Luke 13:27

...and He will say, “I tell you, I do not know where you are from; ‘depart from Me, all you evildoers.’” [The inner quote is from Psalm 6:8a, which says, “Depart from me, all you who do iniquity.”]

“*Depart* - literally means to stand off from (English = apostasy) means ‘to withdraw, forsake, depart from or remove oneself from’. Depart (Do this now! Do not delay!) from me all you evildoers (literally workers of iniquity).”⁹ These are the people who may have appeared to be “religious” and “righteous” but who never had a real relationship with Jesus. Though they now call Jesus “Lord” out of desperation. They have never repented of sin and trusted Jesus as their only hope of heaven. Their hearts are full of corruption, and all their “good” works are not enough to gain them heaven.

Luke 13:28

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 yourselves being thrown out.

“When sinners fail to answer *God’s* invitation to His feast, ...[t]hey are ‘thrust out’ of the joys of the kingdom and are punished with ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Luke 13:28). It is a picture of people who are overwhelmed with regret because they see how foolish they were to delay; but, alas, it is too late. One of the agonies of hell will be the remembrance of opportunities wasted.”¹⁰

John MacArthur adds that “The Jews played an integral part in God’s bringing the Messiah and His gospel, and they are yet destined to play an important role in the end times. It was integral to God’s plan of salvation that His own Son be born, live, and die as a Jew. But the fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—or any other Jew—will be in the kingdom of heaven will not be because of their Jewishness but because of their saving faith.... Those who reject Christ, even though they are physical descendants of Abraham, will have no place at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹





III. THE OPEN DOOR: ANYONE CAN COME

Luke 13:29

And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.

“The Jews despised the Gentiles. They thought that they were unclean (Acts 10:9–22:28), and referred to them as dogs. They refused to enter Gentile homes and regarded what they ate as unclean. They considered themselves to be heaven’s favorites (Rom. 2:17–24). Yet, here they come—Gentiles from the four corners of the earth, marching to Zion, crowding into the kingdom, and the Jews were shut out by their criminal unbelief.”¹²

Luke 13:30

And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.

“The kingdom of God reverses many of the world’s values. In the present context, the inversion apparently refers to the fact that believing Gentiles, though they were historically not part of God’s covenant people Israel, became the first to receive the Messiah *en masse*. By contrast, the Jews were chronologically **first** in God’s plan, but they became spiritually **last** since the bulk of their numbers rejected Christ. Jews will receive Jesus widely near the end of the age.”¹³

CONCLUSION

“Salvation requires our careful self-examination because those who assume they’re in may be out. Jesus says that there will be a great reversal. Many who thought they were first will be last. Many whom the ‘first crowd’ thought were last, will be first. The Jews of Jesus’ day despised the pagan Gentiles. They thought that if they ate with Gentiles they would be defiled. But Jesus says that many Gentiles will be in the kingdom, eating with the patriarchs and prophets, while many self-righteous Jews would be shut out.”¹⁴

Think carefully about the verses in this chapter. Maybe you have been in church all your life, and yet you, like most of the Pharisees, have only made an outward show of “religion.” There has never been a time when you personally entered the “narrow door” by coming to Jesus as a guilty sinner in need of His forgiveness and cleansing. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus alone as your only hope of heaven? If not, today is the day. Don’t wait until the door is shut.

If you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, are you growing in your relationship with Him? Are you sharing your faith with others who need to find the narrow way? Robert Frost wrote a secular poem that closely parallels Jesus’ teachings:

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Arin Hess". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and 'H'.

Chaplain Arin Hess

FOOTNOTES

1. R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Crossway Books, 1998, pg. 94-96.
2. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
3. Bruce Hurt, Luke 13:23, <https://www.preceptaustin.org/luke-13-commentary#13:23>.
4. Charles Swindoll, *Insights on Luke*, Zondervan, 2012, pg. 359.
5. Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Volume 1, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 226.
6. Hughes, *Luke*, pg. 96-97.
7. John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Luke: An Expository Commentary*, Kregel Publications, WORDsearch Corp., 2009.
8. Hughes, *Luke*, pg. 99-100.
9. Hurt, Luke 13:27.
10. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, pg. 227.
11. Hurt, Luke 13:28, quoting *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*.
12. Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Luke*.
13. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, Holman Bible Publishers, Rom. 11:25-27, pg. 1635.
14. Steven Cole, "The Narrow Door," sermon preached on Luke 13:22-30, June 13, 1999.



WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the
109th Legislature's
First Session

SENATORS

6:45 – 7:45 A.M.
Wednesdays
Capitol Office #1004

STAFF

12:00 – 1:00 P.M.
Wednesdays
NE State Office Building
Morrill Room



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