



Second Sunday of Lent
Light of Christ Anglican Church
The Rev. Mike Moffitt
March 13, 2022

Will You Be Known When You Knock on the Door?

Text: [Luke 13:22-30](#)

When I was growing up both of my great grandmothers on my mother's side were still alive. I was always welcome to visit each of them but the experience between the two was like night and day. I called one "Momma Bessie" and the other "Grandma G-G"; her last name was Gillespie. When we visited Grandma G-G I was always amazed by her energy and the joy that she showed when I walked into the room. She and my great grandfather always seemed very grateful when I was brought to see them. Even today I smile to myself when I think of them.

However, with Momma Bessie you didn't just show up, you made an appointment, or you were summoned. From my young perspective she was very old and clearly the Matron of the Riley family. There was a regal bearing about her. Her sons and daughters held her in very high esteem and displayed a reverence when around her. There didn't seem to be much laughing and joking around with that side of the family. When we went to see her, which wasn't often, I was led into a large room where I was presented to her. She had seven children but was always surrounded by two of her daughters who never married but devoted their lives to caring for their mother. She had a chair in the middle of the room that she sat in, and it reminded me of a throne. Even as a small child I knew that I wasn't allowed to go running into the room and jump up in her lap. To be truthful I don't recall wanting to. She would smile and ask me questions about

what I had been doing and then when she was satisfied with my answers she would turn to one of her daughters with the instructions that I be taken into the kitchen for a cup of hot Dr. Pepper with lemon. I loved that part. I wasn't taken back in to see Mama Bessie again, not on that trip. The visit was over for me, so I would sit in the kitchen waiting for my mother to finish being questioned by her grandmother. Years later before she died I received notification from one of her daughters that someone in the family had seen me and reported that my hair was way too long. Mama Bessie sent word that I was to cut my hair. I didn't and therefore never heard from her again, or her entourage, my two great aunts. However, when I was ordained a priest my Aunt Jean, Bessie's last remaining daughter, and Helen her last remaining daughter-in-law, were there for the ceremony. They knew that I was no longer on the road but had gone into the ministry. They were very proud and wanted to let me know that.

I didn't realize that the family communication network was still alive and well. I went to see Helen later, after Jean died and I was very welcome in her home. When she died I was grateful for the time I had catching up with her.

Oddly enough, I thought of that this past week as I considered our gospel reading from [Luke 13:22–30](#). It seems that once again Jesus had given me the entrance I needed to cross the threshold within my own family, and it was because at His invitation I walked through the narrow door of [Luke 13:24](#).

This is the second Sunday of our Lenten journey that leads us to Holy Week, and memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The setting of our gospel reading is a part of what is called the "Jerusalem Discourse" that begins in [Luke 9:51](#), "*When the days drew near for him to*

be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem” and ends at [Luke 19:28](#) where Jesus entered Jerusalem in the Triumphal Entry.

During this section Jesus turned his focus away from the crowds that were following him and onto his disciples to prepare them for his departure. During this journey Luke records Jesus sending out the 72 to announce that the Kingdom of God was near and to demonstrate the power and authority of God’s kingdom by healing the sick and casting out demons in Jesus’ name.

It is in this section that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in [Luke 11:1–4](#). From this we get the model, the Lord’s Prayer, also found in [Matthew 6:9–13](#).

Jesus didn’t have much time left and He knew that their spiritual battle would be intense when He ascended back to the Father. In preparation He promised that everything they would need to continue his mission would be provided. But towards the beginning of this discourse Luke quotes Jesus’ warning to them, in Luke 9:62, *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

Naturally there would be some reluctance as they considered what Jesus was teaching because He made it clear that the kingdom of God would require them and all who followed them to move forward in faith when they were called and to not look behind.

Our gospel reading this morning is preceded by Jesus comparing the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds that would grow into the largest of all garden plants, actually big enough for birds to build their nest.

Also the kingdom could be compared to yeast that works through the entire large lump of dough. In each of these parables Jesus revealed that the

kingdom of God would start out small but then would move throughout the world, and like yeast would work invisibly yet have power to transform lives.

This morning's passage begins with Jesus continuing to head towards Jerusalem and that He taught them along the way. There were discussions among the Jews as to how many people would be saved and it was generally believed by them that all the Jews would be saved with the exception of those who were really bad. One person in the crowd following Jesus asks him, "*Lord are only a few people going to be saved?*"

Jesus answered this person by changing a theological debating point into a personal challenge. Jesus changes the focus of the question away from numbers of people and instead places the focus on the limited amount of time available. He is pointing out that there is a time limit to the offer of salvation and that it must be accepted while the offer is being presented. He also reveals that the door that must be entered for salvation is narrow and that many will try to enter but will not be able to, and once the door is shut that's it.

The narrowness of the Christian faith is a matter of great controversy to many and is seen as biased, unfair, and ungodlike. By and large most people want to do whatever they want and have God put his stamp of approval on it. They want to live life in their own way and come to God on their own terms. His job is to bless and protect them and when bad things happen he is seen as not keeping up his end of the bargain. Jesus was teaching that there is only one door, it is very narrow and if you want to be saved that is the only way. However, in this morning's text Jesus actually spoke to an even more focused problem of believing—that you are saved because of religious affiliation.

Listen again to Luke 13:24–27,

“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 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.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will say, ‘I tell you; I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’”

Jesus made it very clear that having social fellowship with him and hearing his teaching was not enough. Their attitude toward him was superficial and they had not bought into the fact that he was the Lord who had come to save them. They had been following him and marveling at his power over sickness, disease, and demonic possession. They recognized that he spoke with authority and something about him was compelling, but Jesus was saying that even that is not enough; they must turn and follow him in faithful obedience. They assumed that they were safe because of their national identity and blood relationship with Father Abraham but Jesus removes that confidence as being misplaced. Luke 13:28–30,

“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. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

Jesus exhorted the crowd to not focus on how many will be saved but “Will you be saved?” If they were not prepared to enter through the door offered

by Jesus then what they could expect was finding themselves in a place where they could see all the famous great ones with whom they had found their identity, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, King David and the prophets but they would be unable to be with them. Instead they would be weeping in grief and gnashing their teeth in frustration and anger, but the door would be closed forever. To further drive home his point Jesus told them that there will be people coming from all over the world to take their places at the feast in God's eternal Kingdom, both Jew and Gentile. This kingdom would be comprised of those who had come through the narrow door in obedience to the call of God and anyone who tried to come in another way would find that there is no other way.

Matthew records Jesus giving a similar example: Matthew 7:13,

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.”

We can find countless examples in Scripture of those who saw themselves as righteous and God-fearing but turned away from God because they did not want to do what he asked of them and saw his law as a burden and confining.

There always seemed to be a big crowd of people who enthusiastically followed Jesus wherever He went. Sometimes there were likely 10–15 thousand who would tag along with Him for days on end. It really is quite remarkable.

Remember that in Luke 10 Jesus sent 72 disciples two by two. They were sent out in the power and authority of Jesus to heal the sick and proclaim that the Kingdom of God was near. They came back reporting all the amazing things they had accomplished in Jesus' name. Luke 10:17,

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"

Each of them had experienced the wonder, power, and authority of Jesus' name and seen miracles happen right before their eyes and demons cast out from those who were in bondage to the demonic. Amazing, yet that brings up a serious question: 72 returned and yet in chapter 13 there are the 12. Where had 60 of them gone? Was the door too narrow and not worth the risk?

Were they like the hundreds in [John 6:53–54](#) who walked away from Jesus when He began talking about being the Bread of Life,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

John writes that at this saying ***"many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him."*** Then Jesus turned to the twelve and asked them,

"Do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God'".

The twelve heard the same words that the crowds heard, yet they stayed. Was it because they understand what Jesus actually meant by saying they must eat of his flesh and drink of his blood? Nope, not yet and yet they stayed. They stayed because they believed that He was who He said He was, Messiah. The crowds had not followed Jesus out of faith in who He was, they came for the show, not a life-changing commitment. The majority of Israel followed God through Moses until they didn't like the cost of

fidelity to Him. This had been their history and was still very much a part of them in the time of Jesus' incarnation. You'll find that it is still true of Jews and Gentiles alike today.

When the presentation of the gospel leaves out the narrowness of the door and the cost of following Jesus, the result is that many who felt comfortable with their relationship with God will one day find out that they never had one.

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'"

Jesus closes out his answer to the question,

"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" with this,

"Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last." Luke 13:30

Jesus' answer is given as a warning. Many will get to the table, including some surprises because all are on the same footing. In today's context the warning of this passage might be that those who are first, (who have exposure to Christ through attendance at the church) may turn out to be last, (excluded from blessing) if they do not come through the door by personally receiving what Jesus offers.

Many in our society have rejected the concept of absolute truth and believe that there are many ways to God if there is a god at all. Christians are often seen as narrow-minded bigots who hate those who disagree with them, especially on moral issues. Our response to them should not be one of compromise but lovingly continuing to speak the truth of God's word and pray that it penetrates their hearts. Theologian, writer and speaker Francis Schaeffer once wrote,

Truth carries with it confrontation. Truth demands confrontation; loving confrontation, but confrontation nevertheless.

Unless we are willing to tell the truth of the gospel message then many will die believing that they have entered the right door and end up in eternal damnation.

In our Epistle reading this morning from [Philippians 3:17–4:1](#), Paul encouraged the church at Philippi to look to him as an example, as a model, and then live as he was living as it pertained to the Gospel. There were many preaching a false gospel that said that Christ was pure spirit and that the incarnation meant nothing as the spirit of Christ had merely inhabited a physical form and then left it to perish. This freed them up to live however they wanted in the body because only the spirit mattered. Such people considered themselves as living on a higher spiritual plane and could indulge the flesh however they wanted, Paul writes,

Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. Philippians 3:19

Paul calls them enemies of the cross of Christ, those who made a mockery of all that Jesus suffered in his body and made it essentially meaningless. Paul states that this perversion of the gospel brought him to tears.

18th-century theologian Charles Spurgeon thought that Paul wept for three reasons. First, on account of the guilt of these enemies of the cross of Christ, Second, on account of the ill effects of their conduct and finally, on account of their doom. He wrote

I never read that the apostle wept when he was persecuted though they ploughed his back with furrows, I do believe that never a tear was seen to gush from his eye while the soldiers

scourged him. Though he was cast into prison, we read of his singing, never of his groaning. I do not believe he ever wept on account of any sufferings or dangers to which he himself was exposed for Christ's sake. I call this an extraordinary sorrow, because the man who wept was no soft piece of sentiment, and seldom shed a tear even under grievous trials.

Paul was weeping because he knew the consequences of rejecting the true gospel message and had given his life to the message of that truth. It grieved him to see it rejected for a lie of the enemy.

Paul tells the Philippian church to follow his example not the enemies of the cross, because their (Philippians') citizenship was in heaven. Just like Philippi was a Roman colony, the church is a colony of heaven. Believers belong to heaven because that's where Christ now dwells but when he returns in glory, the wonder of heaven will come to earth and believers will find their home in the new heavens and the new earth.

Paul gave his life to protect the church from false teachers who came to do the work of the enemy of God and Paul was encouraging the true believers to follow him in giving up their lives for the sake of the gospel and for the message of the cross of Christ. There is no other way of salvation, no other door.

His final word on the matter in Philippians 4:1,

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends.

This word is timely for us in this day and time because very few are willing to stand up and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord and there is no other way to eternal life. Many if not most in our country celebrate diversity to the exclusion of truth and let it be known that they will not tolerate those

who stand firm that the Word of God as it is revealed in the Bible is the only rule of faith and practice. So what do we do with that? Do we cower or hide in the safety of our church buildings or in each other's homes? Well, again, what is the model of Christ and the Apostles for us to follow? Remember Paul's request for prayer in Ephesians 6:20,

Pray for me also that when I open my mouth words may be given me that I might fearlessly proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I will speak fearlessly as I should.

What's at stake here? What happens if we don't speak the truth to those who are perishing, and they continue to believe a lie?

1. The lie will continue to perpetuate, and it will become even harder to proclaim the truth. Right now the true gospel is seen as extreme and the ravings of fanatics, a fringe element. Multi-culturalism and the inclusion of all beliefs are seen as the gift of a compassionate god or gods. So the message of sin, repentance and judgment is viewed by many as extremism and not to be tolerated.
2. Without the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ there is no good news, and we can see the effect of that approach around the world already.

On the other hand, what if we do speak the truth to those who are perishing and speak out against the lies of our enemy the devil?

1. The word of God will penetrate the hearts of those who will listen, and they will find hope and salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord.
2. The kingdom of God will advance, and we will grow in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit. The church will return to its original intent and will once again begin to experience the outpouring of God's presence

that we have been lacking for a long time. In the areas of the world where persecution is strongest, the church is exploding in growth. Where Jesus Christ is their hope, these dear saints of God find that He is all that they need.

3. When Jesus is proclaimed as Lord of all, I believe that miracles will begin to be commonplace instead of the exception to the rule.
4. Our town, region, state, country, and world will be impacted for Christ. 12 men could not conceive of the fact that their lives could have any real impact but in the power of God's Spirit and in the name of Jesus it turned the world upside down and in many places continues to do so over 2,000 years later.
5. It will cause the enemy to come after us in ways not previously experienced by most of us. There will be persecution and trouble, but we will see the power of the unseen heavenly hosts come to our rescue. When Jesus Christ is high and lifted up by His people they experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their midst. If they don't lift up Christ as the Savior and Sovereign Lord, then they will not.

The season of Lent calls us to intentionally admit that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. However, we must not stop with that but, let that truth point us to the power and sufficiency of the cross of Christ. Our families, town, region, state, and country desperately need for Christians to rise up in God's power and authority and begin to speak and live in Jesus' name. I will close with a prayer from *The Valley of Vision* entitled "The Gospel Way."

Let's pray.