

**“LOVE SPEAKS PRECISELY: ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR!”**

Luke 13:22-30

This weekend is the time when most churches have their own kick-off. Not the one on the gridiron, but the one on the schedule when services, classes, and numerous groups resume their respective ministries and service. It's an appropriate time on Rally Sunday weekend to begin a series of worship services and Bible studies under year 4 of our synod's **“Christ's Love, Our Calling”** stewardship program. This year's series reminds us that when we ponder Christ's love and our calling, **it's a natural thing for love to speak**. We'll have a refresher course from God's Word just how love speaks so we can take Jesus' words to heart that speaks precisely about what it is all about.

Throughout this series, as we consider the reasons why and the ways in which love speaks, remember about what it is we are speaking. It's all about a door and that door is Jesus.

**“LOVE SPEAKS PRECISELY: ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR!”**

1. Because The confusion is great
2. The door is narrow

## 1

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He knows what will happen there. But on the way he tours towns and villages speaking precisely about his love. He has to break the Jewish notion that obeying the law will bring salvation. He has to **speak precisely** because the confusion of how to be saved is great. The teachings of the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees were so spiritually damaging.

As Jesus' love was speaking through his teaching, someone asks the question: **LORD, ARE ONLY A FEW PEOPLE GOING TO BE SAVED?** And it's a great question. **“What about those other people—on the other side of the world that haven't ever really studied the Bible, or even heard of it?”**

Jesus doesn't answer the question directly with an exact number because he knew that we sinners would take that as a losing cause for ourselves. We'd probably conclude **“well, that number is already used up and so I don't have any chance at heaven – what's the use?”** Rather look at Jesus' point when he says, **“MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR.”** You are asking how many will be saved. The real question is **ARE YOU SAVED? ARE YOU FINDING THE RIGHT DOOR?** Jesus makes the issue so personal. **“You, the one asking the question about all the others, you . . . MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR.”** . . . because there are plenty of people who think they are in but will find themselves outside.”

Now that's a scary thought, isn't it? The people of Jesus' day did not get it. In the section before our text in Luke 13, Jesus told them that the crippled woman they figured must have been a worthless sinner was actually a child of Abraham. And the synagogue ruler they thought had his spiritual act together didn't get it at all. What?! Their minds were spinning, so they wonder **ARE ONLY A FEW PEOPLE GOING TO BE SAVED?**

The key word in this man's question is the word **“saved.”** Looking at how Jesus answers, they did not understand what that word means. Sadly, too many today don't get it either. **The confusion is great** about what being saved means.

In our day, we clearly see both extremes, with the disciples of Oprah on one side, who are **“spiritual but not religious”** saying that they have inner spirituality but don't need to really spend time in God's Word or worship because it's all **about a feeling** they have. To be sure, it sounds good to be spiritual. The problem is - just calling yourself spiritual doesn't one spiritual any more than calling yourself a pilot makes you a pilot.

And then there are those that are **“religious but not spiritual,”** the ones going through the motions, doing what appears to be good, and following all the rules—saying all the right words—but they don't get that word “saved” either. What they are doing looks pretty good but the truth about sin & grace is not really there. Most TV preachers cram their listeners down to the “feel good” religion by skipping the part about God's law which condemns sinners. No one feels good being called a sinner, (it's not exactly music to our ears) so stick to the positive. But the positive won't cure anything for the soul unless we realize how sick our souls are!

Look at Christ's answer. Jesus says **MANY WILL TRY TO ENTER AND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO. ONCE THE OWNER OF HOUSE GETS UP AND CLOSSES THE DOOR, YOU WILL STAND OUTSIDE KNOCKING AND PLEADING, “SIR OPEN THE DOOR FOR US!”** When Judgment day arrives, many will claim: We're OK, Jesus, aren't we? **WE ATE AND DRANK WITH YOU,** We hung out with you. **YOU TAUGHT IN OUR STREETS.** Your teaching was right there.” We've always been yours. The Pharisees claimed that. Jesus was right there and yet they didn't get it. Their total reliance on SELF was their salvation and Jesus twice has to tell them, **“I DON'T KNOW YOU.” AWAY FROM ME YOU EVILDOERS!**

That's the battle today. Many think they are spiritual, but hear nothing of God's Word. Other thinks they are religious because of all the good things they have done or the evil that others do which they don't do. The problem is they are out for a calm spiritual swim in life, not realizing that they are three feet under water and their lungs are beginning to fill.

Ever notice those orange life saving rings on the wall at the hotel pool or on the deck of a cruise ship? You think nothing of them until you are the one gasping for air before you are about to drown. As your arms are thrashing and waving around, you can't do anything to keep the water from filling your lungs and snatching your life. Then, all of a sudden, that life ring is tossed to you and you cling to it to be rescued.

That's when you clearly understand that word "**saved.**" Your salvation is not about a decision you made on a certain day. It didn't come from money or goods or even one's shallow religion. You were saved by the total reliance on that life ring, who is your Savior, Jesus Christ. He died on that cross to **rescue** you from hell and rose to give you heaven. He took you out of drowning in the judgment and pulled you to the safety of his LOVE. Through the Word, **LOVE SPEAKS PRECISELY** what salvation really is. It's all about Jesus, His love, His work, His grace, His mercy, His redemption – nothing else and nothing more. He is the narrow door to enter through in heaven.

Thank God that Jesus speaks precisely to us—to enter through the narrow door"—because **there's confusion** out there about what door leads to heaven. All doors do NOT lead to heaven as is the common claim. Only Jesus Christ is the only door to enter and there is no other. Jesus still is the **WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE, NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT BY HIM**, John tells us. Let's not be confused, but rally around God's Law which shows our sins and God's Gospel which shows our Savior from sin to truly know we are saved!

## 2

**LOVE SPEAKS PRECISELY.** The way to heaven is narrow. It is only through the One who calls himself the "DOOR", Jesus Christ. Enter heaven through that narrow door.

This picture is the Church of the Nativity, a massive church in the little town of Bethlehem today. If you look closely on its exterior you can see the arch from a grand entrance that once welcomed hundreds of worshippers through it. Then, sometime during the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century, the wide arch entrance to the church was filled in with stone and now in its place stands what is known as "**The Door of Humility,**" a door so short and narrow that you have to enter one at a time. Every person coming to worship there must bow before the alleged place where Jesus was born. There, in that manger the life ring was thrown into the water of this earth to rescue souls from drowning.

That's why we sing in one sermon hymn: "**You are the way, the truth, the life; Grant us that way to know, That truth to keep, that life to win, Whose joys eternal flow.** (CW 356, v 4) In the other hymn the choir sings: "**In Christ alone—who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe. This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save. Till on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied, For ev'ry sin on him was laid, Here in the death of Christ I live.**" (CWS 752). That thought makes our hearts bow in thanks to our God that he has pointed us to Jesus Christ, the narrow door.

This Rally Sunday officially kicks-off another season of digging into the Word to see Jesus, our Savior. Sunday spiritual growth of all five levels from pre-school to Adult is planned to get us through the narrow door by learning and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus says, "**People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.**" **Will you be included in that?** Today, the narrow door is open and every time you enter through those glass doors back there, you're pointed to this door [**cross**]—to this door [**font**], to this door [**Bible**] and to this door [**the communion altar**].

May God bless you as you enter heaven through him. And when you go out from these doors today, let your **LOVE SPEAK PRECISELY** of Jesus to others. Then come back next week as we see our **LOVE SPEAKS CONFIDENTLY** because **Christ's love is our calling.** AMEN