

Daily Reading & Meditation

Sunday (August 25): **Do not risk being shut out** **Scripture:** *Luke 13:22-30*

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 by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' 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 iniquity!' 28 There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. 29 And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit 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."

Meditation: What does the image of a door say to us about the kingdom of God? Jesus' story about the door being shut to those who come too late suggests they had offended their host and deserved to be excluded. It was customary for teachers in Jesus' time to close the door on tardy students and not allow them back for a whole week in order to teach them a lesson in discipline and faithfulness.

Who will be invited to enter God's kingdom?

Jesus told this story in response to the question of who will make it to heaven - to God's kingdom of everlasting peace and eternal life. Many rabbis held that all Israel would be saved and gain entry into God's kingdom, except for a few blatant sinners who excluded themselves! After all, they were specially chosen by God when he established a covenant relationship with them.

Jesus surprised his listeners by saying that one's membership as a people who have entered into a covenant relationship with God does not automatically mean entry into the everlasting kingdom of God. Second, Jesus asserts that many from the Gentile (non-Jewish) nations would enter God's kingdom. God's invitation is open to Jew and Gentile alike.

Jesus is the door to the kingdom of heaven

But Jesus warns that we can be excluded if we do not *strive to enter by the narrow door*. What did Jesus mean by this expression? The door which Jesus had in mind was himself. *I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved* (John 10:9). God sent his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to open the way for us to have full access to the throne of God's grace (favor and blessing) and mercy (pardon for our sins). Through Jesus' victory on the cross he has freed us from slavery to sin and hurtful desires and addictions, and he has made us sons and daughters of God and citizens of his heavenly kingdom. We are free now to choose which kingdom we will serve - the kingdom of truth and light ruled by God's wisdom or the kingdom of falsehood and darkness ruled by Satan and the world system or society of people who are opposed to God and his laws.

Following the Lord requires effort and commitment on our part

If we want to enter God's kingdom and receive our full inheritance which is stored up for us in

heaven, then we must follow the Lord Jesus in his way of the cross through a willing renunciation of our own will for his will - our own life for his life - our own way for his way.

Why did Jesus say we must *strive to enter* his kingdom of righteousness and peace? The word *strive* can also be translated as *agony*. To enter the kingdom of God we must struggle against every force or power of opposition - even the temptation to remain indifferent, apathetic, or compromising in our faith and personal trust in Jesus, our hope in holding firm to the promises of Jesus, and our uncompromising love for God above all else. Paul the Apostle reminds us that our hope in God does not disappoint us because "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

The Lord is with us to strengthen us in our trials and struggles

The Lord reminds us that when we face difficulties, trials, temptations, and even failures, we do not struggle alone. He knows our weaknesses even better than we know them, and he is always ready to help us in our struggle to overcome sin and wrongdoing. God's grace is sufficient! As we *strive side by side for the faith of the Gospel* (Philippians 1:27) Jesus assures us of complete victory! Do you trust in God's grace and help, especially in times of testing and temptation?

Daily Quote from the early church fathers: *To enter the narrow door*, by Cyril of Alexandria (376-444 AD)

"'Wide is the door, and broad the way that brings down many to destruction.' What are we to understand by its broadness? ...A stubborn mind will not bow to the yoke of the law [the commandments of God]. This life is cursed and relaxed in all carelessness. Thrusting from it the divine law and completely unmindful of the sacred commandments, wealth, vices, scorn, pride and the empty imagination of earthly pride spring from it. Those who would enter in by the narrow door must withdraw from all these things, be with Christ and keep the festival with him." (excerpt from *COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 99*)

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OPENING PRAYER "Lord Jesus, may I never doubt your guiding presence and your tender love and mercy towards me. Through the gift of your Spirit fill me with persevering faith and courage to trust you always in all things and in every circumstance, I find myself in. May your love set my heart aflame with love for You who are my All." **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER:- World Peace, .

Dear God, I claim peace for all nations now, and to begin I ask to let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me.

May divine love and wisdom work together in the hearts, minds, and lives of all people to bring this peace about.

I know that with God all things are possible, and I see those who seem to be full of hate and fear allowing God's love to penetrate their very being, filling them with love, peace, and God's guidance. Thank you, God, for answered prayers. **Amen.**