



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 11, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

14th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Judges 7:1-8](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 72

Second Lesson: [Romans 9:1-9](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 13:22-30](#)

The Believer Hears Jesus' Warnings The Door to Heaven: Exclusive or Inclusive?

1. Many try many paths
2. There is only one way and one door
3. Many will be outside the door in darkness
4. Many will enter by the light of truth

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord: Amen.

When you need to get somewhere, how do you figure out how to get there? Where do you get your directions from? I think the answer today is a little bit easier but do you remember back a few years ago when the internet was just coming out? Maybe some of you remember that thing called MapQuest. You would print off your instructions and you'd have paper after paper of how to get where you wanted to go. We always joke about texting and driving, but then you would have instructions on full pages and you were hoping you had it in the right order and hoping you didn't lose your pages because if you did, how would you get where you needed to go? Or even before that, if you were going across the country you had big maps and you'd fold them and maybe you had the creases in there where if you really used them a lot you could even start to see through those maps. We need to know how to get where we want to go, but I find it interesting that even sometimes when we have the right directions or good ways to get there, it's still hard to do so.

My sister is kind of known not to be a great driver. She was visiting us. She is from Nebraska. She was up here in Green Bay and she was actually visiting a friend in Green Bay and then coming to visit us here. She was going to be here about 10 o'clock. She called and it was about 10:15 and said "We're going to be a little bit late." They were going north from Green Bay to get back to our house. She said "I was following the GPS." Okay, maybe, but she tends to do that a lot; follow the GPS and it still takes her way out of the

way. Sometimes you can think you have the right directions and think you know where you're going and you can still get very lost.

When Jesus talks to us here in the Gospel Lesson, there are a lot of questions about how to get where we want to go. How do we get to heaven? That narrow **door to heaven**, is it **inclusive or exclusive?** That's the question that gets asked to Jesus. They say ***"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"*** It's a great question that he asks and as we look at it, we're going to see it's not the easiest question to answer but as Jesus so often does, He is so good at taking a question and He doesn't give a direct answer usually. Usually He takes that question and then directs it to where it really needs to go. Here again, instead of focusing on so many other people (are only a few going to be saved), He really focuses it back onto the person asking the question and to each one of you. He wants for us to focus on how WE get to heaven. So as we look at Luke 13, we're going to see what Jesus' answer is.

This question that man asked is a fair question. When you look at the world, it doesn't seem like there are always a lot of believers. So he says, "Are only a few going to be saved?" Let's see what Jesus replies. When someone asked him "Lord, are only a few going to be saved," He said to them: ***"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!"*** Notice He says that many people will come and they will be knocking at the door wanting to get in. What's the problem? He says that they don't know God. The Master says He doesn't know them.

So what's the problem? Why can't they get in this door? I think the truth is that they are trying the wrong path. We see in our world today and in the history of the world that many try many varied paths to get to heaven. I think when you see the history of the world it's undeniable that it's true. There are so many different ways that people say you can get to heaven. "You can follow this one." "You can follow this one." "You can follow that one." Is that the truth? Do all these paths lead to the same place?

There certainly are many paths, but do they get to the same place? We know that you can get to a destination by going different ways, but sometimes the way to go that you are going is definitely the wrong way. Then when it comes to the door to heaven, He doesn't say that there are many paths. He says that there is one way.

Why is it that we want there to be these many paths? I think naturally we like that idea. There are a lot of people in the world and a lot of people have different answers and it's not comfortable to tell people there is a right and a wrong way. It gets us queasy to have to go up to someone and confront them or point them back to a different way. So

naturally we don't like this idea either of saying there is only one way. We struggle with that because we have friends and loved ones or many people that are on a different path and they may be very committed to that path. But why is it necessary, why is it so important to have the one way? That's the truth that we know. There is only one way and one door. That's what Jesus talks about. ***"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door..."***

When we look at those different ways, they all can't be right. Why? When they completely contradict each other or the heart of them contradicts each other, they both can't be right. One religion says "Jesus is a great prophet and He's a good teacher, but He's not God" and then Christianity says "Jesus needs to be God. He is a Prophet and He is God and that's so important." Or another religion says "Jesus died but God couldn't have died. Jesus being God, that's blasphemy. God dying, that's the worst thing we could hear." For Christians we say we need that! That's the best news to hear; that God died for our sins. So these ideas are completely contradictory. Those are just two examples, but you go on and you boil it down to either it's what you do or what God has done. There is one door that says "be good and do as much as you can. Be as faithful as you can, and that's how you get to heaven. Good people go to heaven." We love that idea. People love that idea, but is that the truth? God says through the Bible, "Believe in Me and you go to heaven," because that's really what the difference is here.

In Verse 27 He says, ***"I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!"*** Shouldn't we be considered evildoers as well? We're sinful. We make mistakes. We fall short all the time. We hurt people in relationships. We don't do the things that we're supposed to do. We don't live up to God's standards. So why can God look at us and not say "Go away from me evildoers"? He says to those people, "Go away from me evildoers," but we have entered, not because of what WE have done, but we are entering through the door of Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life. [\(John 14:6\)](#) He washes over our sins and says "You're redeemed. You're perfect." In God's eyes, we are no longer evildoers. It's so important to us that there is this one way because if there wasn't this one way, then we would certainly be lost. We need this truth that Jesus died for us and there is no other way to be saved because if it were up to us, we know we couldn't be saved.

But did you notice a little bit of what the people said? In Verse 25: ***"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'"*** What do you think about that? What do you think about their reasons for why they should get to go to heaven? I think that there is going to be many who are outside the door in darkness because they continue to lean on these different excuses. For the people at Jesus' time, they used this kind of silly excuse. "Well, we ate with you and you taught us. So of course we will enter." That seemed like a reason that they should be able to enter.

I think that is something that happens so often. People will lean on all of these different things. They'll justify why they should go to heaven, or why they are a good person in so many different ways. "Well, I gave to this charity." "I sacrificed in this way." The list can go on and on and anytime we justify ourselves and say "I should go to heaven because of this thing that I did" or some other silly thing; "God should just send us all to heaven," we can have all these different excuses like these people are doing, "We ate with you and you taught us," but they are in darkness because they are not looking to the truth. They are looking to their own reasons.

Whenever you have to put something together or you get something new, you know what is always in there? It's an instruction manual. I was just talking about this with another pastor. We started this new thing this week of doing an online Bible study and we're using this streaming software, the same one that we use he uses. We are talking about trying to figure stuff out. Then we joked and said "We could probably read the instructions." But who does that? Isn't that interesting that there are so many things in life where we have the instructions but we think we know better or we don't need to do that? Isn't that kind of how it is with God's Word?

God has given us His truth and it's clear in the Bible of how we get to heaven. It's not through our own works but through what He has done. Yet so many people have just thrown that out and say "I know better" or want to pick apart God's Word and say "That can't be the way." But we need to know that it IS the way. God tells us exactly that. Many will enter by the light of truth is what He is telling us in these last words. In Verses 28-30 He talks a little bit about how there will be many outside but then many will come in through this Word. Verse 28 says: ***"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."***

We had a men's study earlier this week and we were talking about this passage in there. What does it mean that "those who are first will be last and those who are last will be first"? I think there are two interpretations of that. These words get spoken a few different times in the Gospels but every time they are used, you have to really connect it to what they are talking about beforehand. Here it is saying that those first ones, those Israelites, they are going to be last and many will come, the Gentiles, the ones who are people were far away and maybe didn't really even know the Gospel, God will bring them into the kingdom. There are kind of two interpretations to it. The last will be first and the first will be last. Everyone who believes is going to get in, even those who are far off or the ones who are struggling. Because of Jesus, the last will be first. But the first, the ones that are struggling, are still going to get in.

The other interpretation is that there are some who won't enter. Those last will be first will get in but the first will be last, because it speaks about a door being closed. So will they

enter? When will that door be closed? We don't know. That's kind of the urgency in all of this because we often think the door being closed is going to be sometime far off but God works in different ways and God knows when His time is. Yes, Judgment Day for all of us but when He calls us to Judgment Day, our day, we don't know when that is, so we earnestly want to share this message with others.

We can think about many other people who are maybe far off, but God always wants us to point these words to us. And as we focus on how we can make every effort to enter through the narrow door, I found this important quote that I think helps us. It says:

"To be sure, one does not earn salvation by striving and fighting but one may certainly lose the salvation one has by faith by NOT striving and fighting. Only too many look for an easy road to heaven realizing too late that no such road exists."

It's saying we are not saved by striving and fighting. We aren't saved by our works. But if I don't see that there is a battle, if I'm not striving to stay on that narrow road because there are all these other things that are attacking me, that can be an issue.

If you ever lived in the footsteps of some beautiful nature, maybe a mountain or a lake or you go to a cabin often where it is just very beautiful, maybe you start to take it for granted. You have a visitor come up and they say "Oh, this place is so beautiful!" "Yes, you're right, it is." Do we get that way with God's Word? These words that God has given us are the words to eternal life. They are the light of truth that give us peace and hope now but also for eternity. But have we become complacent? These words that many will come from far off are really speaking about us. Gentiles, non-Israelites, who are getting to enter heaven.

But also, as much as it is an encouragement for us, there is a little bit of a warning there too, because right now we're close to God; we're close to Him and there are others who maybe don't know that and haven't experienced that great mercy and we have to ask, do we take that for granted at times? We want to continue to strive and to see how important His Word is for us; that these are the words to eternal life; that through Christ, we have forgiveness and hope; that there is no other way to heaven. This is that great message that He gives us to hold onto day in and day out and to share with others because without it, there is darkness. There is no hope. But we know that through Christ, we have salvation, peace and forgiveness forever. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7.\)](#) Amen.