

The title for today's message is: **Are You Listening?**

Jesus said: ***“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.***

Grace and Peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible is the most important book in the world wouldn't you agree. It is God's word, and it clearly reveals the truth of this world.

It is the cradle of Christ and the message of salvation. Of all the things we do in this life... work, eat, sleep, care for our families, enjoy time with friends, pursue hobbies...

It is this time, the time we spend with God in His word that is the most important. Only His word can wash away our sins.

Only His word produces faith and hope. Only His word leads and guides us in the truth.

If there is anything in this world that Satan does not want us to do, he does not want us to come to church.

He does not want us to listen to God's word. He doesn't want us to teach children God's ways.

But if he can't stop us from hearing God's word, the second best thing he tries to do is to turn us away from listening to and hearing the whole thing.

Above all he doesn't want us to listen carefully to Jesus and to believe in Him. He's fine if Jesus is just another passenger on our bus.

But he doesn't want Jesus to be the driver. Think about this as I read the Gospel lesson from Luke chapter 13. **(READ FROM BIBLE)**

Notice that this man does not ask Jesus “how one is saved.” He wanted to know how many would be saved.

Among the Jews this was a hot question. There was a debate between two famous rabbis about this.

One said that the number saved would be one third of the world. To support this he pointed to the ancient Flood in which Noah and his three sons and their families were saved.

But of these three sons, Shem, the ancestor of Israel, received the greatest blessing.

The second rabbi disagreed and said that the number saved would be much less than that.

He pointed out that there was a multitude of people who left Egypt during Israel’s great exodus.

But it was only two, Joshua and Caleb, who actually entered into the land of promise.

The Bible does tell us in many places that the number of those who will be saved will be few.

Paul, the Apostle, wrote in his letter to the Romans: “Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.’”

The number of those saved will be a “remnant,” a small portion of those who could have been saved. Jesus explains why at the end of Luke chapter 13.

He said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem... How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would

Many will not be saved because they resist God's grace. Jesus' Answer Jesus decided not to get into a debate on how big or small that remnant of people might be.

For Him it was more important to teach how a person is saved. That is certainly the more important question.

Jesus said that those who are saved are the ones who strive to enter through the "narrow door."

He says that this door is now open to anyone, but the day will come when it will close.

At that time people will knock on the door and asked to be let in. But the Master will not let them in because He does not know them or where they are from.

Then the people will complain that they did know Jesus. They even ate with Him and He taught in their streets.

But Jesus will remain firm, "I do not know where you are from. Depart from me all you workers of iniquity."

What did Jesus mean by those who go through the narrow door? The best way to answer that question is to look at the people that Jesus specifically said were saved.

Zacchaeus was one. He was a tax collector who cheated people. But Jesus came to His house.

Where Zacchaeus did repented of his sins and promised to restore all that he stole. Jesus said Zacchaeus was saved.

Another time a sinful woman came and washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

He knew she had committed many sins, but she was sorry for them, and she looked to Jesus for mercy. Jesus told her that her sins were forgiven and that she was saved.

In the Gospel of John chapter 10, Jesus simply says, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved".

So the narrow door is the door of repentance and faith in Jesus, who went to Jerusalem to die on the cross and to save all who would believe in Him.

Jesus said that we have to "strive" to pass through that door. The word "strive" in the original language means "to agonize."

But this isn't so much of a physical agony as it is a spiritual one. It is humiliating to admit of your sins.

But Jesus called us to be humble. More than that, it is degrading to admit that you need to be saved.

But Jesus promises that only those who come to that point in their lives will be saved. That is why He said, "The last will be first, and the first last."

The very essence of salvation is that it is God's work, and we have to let Him do it.

So what difference does this teaching that God calls me to repent of my sins and believe in Jesus for my salvation make in my life today?

It's true at times we may wonder whether we are saved. Often, at the point of death, Satan tempts people to question their salvation.

But at those times we need to remember the simple, narrow door. The prophet Joel said, "Whoever calls upon the name of the LORD will be saved".

There are many today who say that the way of salvation is very broad and open to anyone no matter what they believe as long as they try to be good.

But trying to be good does nothing about the problem of sin. It may sound good, but it isn't. Jesus urges us in many places not to be deceived by this.

Jesus said, in John chapter 17: "And this is eternal life that they may know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent".

It is because of this simple narrow door that people from all nations, from the East, the West, the North and the South will be saved.

People that reject this and hold to a broader view of salvation are like the ones who said to Jesus, "You taught in our streets."

They may have heard some of Jesus' teachings, but they picked and chose those teachings that were acceptable to them.

They didn't really listen, repent, and believe. The teaching of the narrow door also has an important moral application.

Many people take a very broad minded view of morality. I call the "It's okay" morality.

It's okay to be a Christian and to believe or to practice any number of things God's word rejects.

Such as: "People are just animals because we all evolved. "Unborn babies are not really babies, and we can do what we want with them."

"We can do whatever we please with our sexual relations and marriage. We make the rules, not God."

"So it's okay to take something from someone else just because they have more than I have."

“It's okay to verbally abuse others or be hard to get along with because I just can't help it.”

Jesus condemned anyone who does any of these things as "workers of iniquity."

As God brings us through the narrow door, He forgives our sins, and He changes our thinking.

We no longer say to ourselves “It’s okay,” but rather, “What is it that God wants me to do?” God grant us Your grace to listen to Jesus.

By Your Holy Spirit lead us through that narrow door. Cleanse us of our sins in the blood of Jesus, and help us everyday to do those things that are pleasing in Your sight.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.