

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

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Luke 13:22

Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to

Jerusalem. ²³

Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?" He said to them, ²⁴ "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. ²⁵

When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then in reply he will say to you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ But he will say, 'I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!' ²⁸ 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, and you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

THINK AGAIN

Again this week we encounter some of the 'hard sayings' of Jesus. However, rather than moving quickly on to find the 'nice' parts of scripture to nourish us, it is good to take time to ponder what such texts are all about.

The question put to Jesus is one that many still ask. In his answer Jesus is not interested in talking about salvation in terms of numbers or statistics. He seeks rather to make his hearers realise that being saved is not something to be taken for granted. If we imagine that being Irish and Catholic is enough then maybe we had better think again. It is not about having a casual familiarity with the Lord. It is rather about the urgent and serious business of trying to live in the way he has asked us.

SEAN GOAN - *Let the Reader Understand, Year C*

THE CALL OF JESUS A CALL TO RESPONSIBILITY, BUT NOT TO ANGUISH

According to Luke, an unknown person interrupts Jesus to ask him about the number of those who will be saved: will they be few or many? Will all be saved or only the just? Jesus does to answer question directly. It isn't important to know how many will be saved. What matters is to be clear about living in a responsible manner to receive the salvation of a loving God. Jesus reminds all: "Make ever effort to enter through the narrow door."

In this way he cuts from the root any misunderstanding of his message as an invitation to laxity. For laxity would be ridiculing the Father.

To understand properly the invitation "to enter through the narrow door", we must remember the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John; "I am the gate whoever comes in by me will be saved" (10:9). To enter through the narrow door is to follow Jesus: to learn to live like him; to take up his cross and trust in the Father who raised him from the dead.

When we follow Jesus, we can't do just anything we wish. We must respond faithfully to the love of the Father. What Jesus asks is not scrupulous observance of the law, but radical love of God and neighbour. Therefore, his call is a source of responsibility, but not of anguish. Jesus is always an open door. No one can close it. It is we who shut ourselves off from his forgiveness.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - *Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C*

The text is largely about the inclusion of those without rights into the God's redeemed people

Verse 25 V. 25 doesn't quite seem to follow from v. 24 and most likely reflects a distinct tradition (as in Matthew's version). The narrow door symbolises the cost of discipleship. The pressure to use the present moment for that very struggle is underlined by the (future) shutting of that door (most likely indicating the second coming). The question remains as to why the Lord should reply in this way.

Thought for the day

For a long time, Western Christianity was marked by a deep pessimism. Most were surely going to hell! In sum, we seem to have moved from clarity and pessimism to agnosticism and optimism. A necessary rebalancing, of course, but with the attendant risk of complacency, convinced as we are, and ought to be, of God's boundless mercy, love and compassion. These gifts, on the other hand, should not trigger a kind of lazy confidence but should invite even greater engagement, commitment and costly discipleship. God desires the whole person, *all that I am*.

Prayer

God of costly love, help us to take up the path of discipleship and respond to your Son's call by giving our whole selves to you and the Gospel. Amen.

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA - tarsus.ie

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The question put to Jesus is one that many still ask: "Will many be saved?" In his answer Jesus is not concerned about numbers but warns his listeners about complacency. Just as his listeners could not regard the mere fact of being Jews as sufficient for salvation, neither can we regard being Christians as enough. That entitlement will come from our acceptance of Jesus. For any relationship to be alive – either with God or with another human person – the real question is "Is my heart in this relationship?" What does your experience tell you of this?

2. "Strive to enter by the narrow door". Jesus himself is on his journey to Jerusalem, purposeful and determined. His true followers will also be purposeful and determined. That is true in any journey, career, or relationship if there is to be growth or progress. Do you ever find that you have lost your enthusiasm for life and become a bit bored? What can you do to recover some of the enthusiasm you once had?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - *Intercom*

Many today think that failure was a necessary part of Jesus' purpose for a real life for his followers. This was not the fact however. His individual teachings were quite different. He wanted us to succeed and to have a full life. He wanted us all to have a life of goodness; he planned for a healthy life for everyone, no matter what our personal gifts.

Jesus is asked a question. It is one we are always inclined to ask - how many will be saved? Jesus responds by insisting on one important point. The people who succeed must make a real effort to do so.

The entire passage appears as warning us against a complacent acceptance of ourselves as close to the kingdom of God.

This can be a real help against any form of self-righteousness.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - *Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels, Year C*

Through his ministry, Jesus has show us what the Kingdom of God is like. This dream of God motivated all that Jesus said and did. We are told the Kingdom is within us, or in our midst, to be achieved in our time and space. This Kingdom will therefore require an inner transformation.

This parable warns against complacency, encouraging us to go deeper. It demands that we strive continuously to grow in our awareness, discovering new depths about ourselves and our humanity. This Way requires effort and inner freedom. There are many obstacles and distractions that can prevent us from progressing on this path, which is why the Way is narrow and crowded. Yet, it is not an impossible task.

"Jesus says, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is with you' (that is, here) and 'at hand' (that is, now). It's not later, but lighter - some more subtle quality or dimension of experience accessible to you right i the moment. You con't die it it; you awaken to it." (Cynthia Bourgeault)

Reflect this week on your spiritual life. Are you bored? Have things become stale? Sometimes we need guidance from a friend or spiritual companion, or we might make a retreat. Think about what you can do to cultivate a deeper awareness.

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - *Go Deeper*