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Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
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Jesus says: “My Door is NOT Always Open”

Luke 13:22-30

INI

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. Amen. (1 Peter 1:3–4)

That Scripture which was recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for our meditation today comes from...

***Luke 13:22–30 (NKJV)** – 22 And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?” And He said to them, 24 “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are 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 you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ 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 yourselves thrust out. 29 They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. 30 And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”*

Let us PRAY: Dear Lord Jesus, we give thanks for Your gracious invitation to hear Your Word in this sacred moment; send now Your Holy Spirit to work upon our hearts that we may be led to repent of our sins, to believe on You in life and in death, and at last to recline eternally at the feast of Your heavenly kingdom. In Your saving name we pray. Amen.

In that same sacred, saving name, dear brothers, sisters, and all who seek to enter the narrow gate to life,

Do you know me? Do I know you? One of the reasons for a pastor to set up home visits with members is to build a sense of mutual trust and understanding. To really know someone takes more than just outward observation. It takes personal experience within a person's life and vocation. As a pastor, I try to emphasize the fact that my door is always open. What I mean is – I'm at the ready to make an appointment, to answer a phone message, to respond to an email, to know you and have you know me. God has called me to do so. You have called me to do so.

The situation is urgent – for all of us and for all people. Even more important than the question “do you know your pastor?” is “do you know Jesus?” Does He know you? That door to eternal life, or “gate” as it is translated in the New King James, will not always be open. We need to make an appointment with Jesus today. As He indicates in the words before us, “**MY DOOR IS NOT ALWAYS OPEN**” – His door is narrow to begin with; His door could be shut any day; but His door is open RIGHT NOW!

Jesus says: My Door is NOT Always Open

1. It is narrow to begin with
2. It could be shut any day
3. But it *is* open RIGHT NOW!

1. It is narrow to begin with

You've probably seen one of those semi-trailers hauling pieces of someone's house down the highway. It will usually have a flag or sign on the back saying: “WIDE LOAD.” Those drivers have to plan their route carefully. There are not that many roads that such a wide load can travel on. What happens when that truck reaches a narrow bridge?

v.23 Are there few who are saved? What do you suppose Jesus' answer should be? *v.24 many will seek to enter and will not be able.* Entrance is not a matter of ability. *v.30 the first will be last.* Think of what we carry with us. How wide is our load compared to the narrow bridge we approach? Think of those sins we cling to, that bulk load of selfish pride that weighs us down. Perhaps it is a bit of a stereo type, but most men don't like to ask for help. But it is not just men. It is the child saying, “I'll don't want to apologize.” Its the wife saying, “He'll never change.” Its the father saying, “You didn't follow my advice, you're on your own.” Pride lurks within every one of us, deceiving us into thinking we'll find another way. We'll skip this bridge and go on to look for the next one. Maybe I can just come back and try the bridge later.

Entrance to eternal life requires that all those sins be dealt with, paid for, unloaded, and left behind. The door is narrow because it is exclusive ... not according to who you and I are, but according to who Jesus is ... not according to who God saves, but according to how God saves. So Paul writes that "The cross is foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

To get in the door, you need to know the one who opens and you need to know yourself. A general sense of who this Jesus is just won't do. A general sense of who you are won't do.

They were seeking. They were knocking. They were asking. But it was too late. To think that Jesus is just here to give you a nudge in the right direction or to give you a pat on the back when you do something good is to not know Him at all.

To know Jesus is to know Him on His journey toward Jerusalem. Why does Luke mention in v.32 that Jesus was going toward Jerusalem? Isn't it enough to know that Jesus was busy teaching people? The Holy Spirit wants to drive this point home. Teaching alone was not Jesus' office. There on that mountain lay His work, His calling, His mission. Jesus has sought, has asked, and God has opened the door to the only righteous man who ever lived. Yet in Jerusalem, the door will be shut to Him. In Jerusalem, His mission is to die your death. In Jerusalem, He will be cut off from the living, cut off from His Father in heaven. In Jerusalem, He has opened the door that was once shut. He rose from death to prove that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. In Jerusalem, we find the only means to cross that narrow bridge.

Here is where we journey today. In Jerusalem, we unload all that hinders us from entering. In Jerusalem, God squeezes us through the narrow door to life. Narrow as it is, the door is open to you through faith in Jesus.

2. It could be shut any day

While I often say that my door is always open, that is not totally true. There are times like in the next three days when I'm out of the office and the door is shut behind me. Of course, God willing, I will return. You can still leave me a message and I'll get back to you. I'm happy to set up an appointment for when I return. With Jesus this is not true. When He shuts the door, there will be no more chances, no more appointments, no more meetings of grace. When Jesus shuts the door, it will be shut forever.

v.24 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, "Lord, Lord, open for us," and He will answer and say to you, "I do not know you or where you are from."

The door could be shut any day. And how do we know this? Because the Master has risen up. Jesus has declared all things now ready and His window of grace is closing. He has sent out his messengers to the four corners of the earth - to the east, west, north, and south. In just the next chapter Luke will recount the parable of the Great Banquet. The Master is hosting a banquet sends out His servant to gather those who have been invited. "Come for all things are now ready." Those who are first invited begin to make excuses, and Jesus tells His servants to move on. *14:23 – Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled, for I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.*

The Jewish people in Jesus' day were standing right in the presence of the same Lord who would one day be their judge. Once the door is shut, all the knocking and asking will do them no good. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the call to repent. The door will NOT always be open. It will do no good for us to put off this urgent call. He has risen, ascended, and will come again.

So when they say, *we ate and drank in your presence*, they are pronouncing their own judgment. This is what leads to weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is an agony of knowing Jesus has stood right in front of them; taught this glorious gospel of salvation right to their face; journeyed to Jerusalem for them; opened His door to them. And they made excuses. They mocked Him; they found something better for themselves; they crucified the Lord of glory. He says to them, "I do not know you."

3. But it is open RIGHT NOW!

But, dear Christians, thanks be to God that He has not slammed the door shut on you. As narrow as the door might be – it is open RIGHT NOW!

To the east, west, north, and south, Jesus is journeying. And He has arrived right here, right now in Batavia IL. He has made an appointment with you – that you might know Him better and you might be assured that He knows you better than yourself. He has opened the office of His Word so that RIGHT NOW, here He gives you eternal life.

But notice how this is accomplished...

- Not by my knocking from outside, but by His opening from the inside
- Not by my asking open, but by His opening the door freely, before you even thought to ask
- Not by my seeking or ability, but by the giving of His works, by His death, by His resurrection, by His invitation, by His Spirit

- Not by sounding the word "Lord" on our lips, but by His Spirit triumphing as Lord in our heart
- Not by knowing Jesus in a general sense, by Him knowing us by personal experience on the cross
- Not by mere eating and drinking in Jesus' earthly presence, but receiving His body and blood in Jesus' heavenly presence
- Not by merely by hearing Him teach in your midst, but by Him teaching your heart to repent and believe
- Not by me deserving to be first, but by Jesus deserving to be first, and choosing to be last

RIGHT NOW Jesus stands at the door – FOR YOU. You know Jesus and He knows you. Jesus first met with you in the waters of baptism. You bear His personal name, clothed with His righteousness, a dear child of the heavenly Father. He has confronted all your sins and iniquities - the deepest and darkest; the ones few, if any, are aware of – and He has lifted that wide load of debt right off of your shoulders. In that water, He has washed you of all that is wrong and crooked, every detour we've taken, every meeting with Him we've avoided, He has removed the very pride that opposed Him and has pulled you through that narrow door into His office of Word and Sacrament.

Literally Jesus says, "Struggle to enter through the narrow door." He uses a word which means "to engage in a contest, to fight." This process of repentance and faith is an ongoing struggle for every one of us. It requires we must be last. This struggle of the Spirit against our sinful flesh; repentance and faith will continue to the day we leave this sinful flesh behind. So Paul uses the same word when writing to Timothy – *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12).*

But don't go it alone. Your fellow blood-bought sinners sitting right in the pews next to you can relate to many of the same struggles you face every day. To the east, to the west, to the north, to the south sit your family in Christ, here strengthen you, to bring the good news of Christ to you, to share your burdens.

Don't forget – your pastor's door is open RIGHT NOW. Your church's doors are open RIGHT NOW. The doors of God's word are open RIGHT NOW. In the unchanging gift of baptism, the narrow gate to heaven has been opened and you have entered into Jesus' office RIGHT NOW. Twice a month in the Sacrament of the Altar His office opens to you in a most intimate way; He gives you His very body and blood for your forgiveness; He makes Himself known to you through the new covenant, proving the eternal grace in which you stand. Through your pastor, through your fellow believer,

through the Word, through baptism, through the Lord's Supper, Your Savior Jesus stands by you through every struggle, rebuking every sin, and giving you the gift of forgiveness. Each time you hear and believe His Word you find yourself in His office – RIGHT NOW.

Yes, you do know Jesus. And He knows you.

Let us PRAY,

**Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And when earthly things are past.
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.
Amen.**