

Title: The shock of an unexamined life
Text: Luke 13.22-30
Theme: The minority will be saved
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: The stakes of self-deception are massive, take this to heart.

Marble works is a series of pieces that you put together in order to create a path for marbles to travel. I have a number of these pieces and my grandkids create different designs that we enjoy. Typically, at the top we will place a funnel piece so you can put a bunch of marbles in that begin spinning in circles until they get closer to the center and then drop into the tube to begin their journey. It seems to me that our time in Luke so far has been like that funnel piece. While we are circling, we are getting closer and closer to the point where everything comes together. The ministry of Christ sounds more intense. The response of the people is more intense. In the beginning of Christ's ministry, it was interesting, fascinating and exciting. Now it feels more serious, personal, even costly. Excitement has given way to a soberness as the realization is setting in that following Christ is not a trend or a game. This is for life and forever. Jesus is the King, the real King, the real good King, and therefore, he plays for keeps as he should.

My car's dash display has an electronic compass. When I am on the freeway making a large, sweeping turn, I can watch the compass go from south to southeast, and then to east. It's not like I made a sharp turn, but I've clearly changed directions. The wind that was blowing at my back is now hitting me in the side. And so it is for Jesus and the disciples. While their travels have not been in a straight line, they have now changed direction and are heading toward Jerusalem. We can feel it, even if we didn't already know. Something is bound to happen. Something has to give. This text continues that build-up.

Read Text:

Setting – 22-23, Jesus is on his way toward Jerusalem and is teaching. He is obviously teaching on what it means to be saved. Jesus was informing his audience they need to be rescued. On July 4, flash flooding warnings were popping up on cell phones for people near the Guadalupe River in the Texas Hill Country. Some slept through the warnings. Some were so used to the warnings, that they did not take them seriously. When you are on vacation, you don't want to be bothered by a warning. If the fire alarm went off in this building, I would assume that a kid had pulled it and I could probably guess which one had done it. We do not want our lives to be interrupted with the inconvenience of a warning. Jesus is pulling the alarm and telling people that they were in danger. You are lost. Your soul is lost. You are headed for an eternity of judgment and you need to be rescued.

There are two groups of people in this world; those who are saved and those who are lost. At least one person was listening. Likely more, but this one asked, *"Lord, will those who are saved be few?"* Did he/she ask this from personal concern? I don't know, but based on how Christ answered, it seems likely. He could have simply said, "yes." In essence, he did, but he

personalizes this and presses this home by urging us to make this a priority because of the warning and alarm he is raising.

1. **Priority and warning** (24-25)

This command to strive is an intense word that means to fight and struggle. Paul used this word in 1 Corinthians 9.25 to describe an athlete who is in a contest. The idea is to exert all of your energy. Give yourself completely to this. *Strive to enter the narrow door.* You will not enter the narrow door, if you do not give this your full attention. Jesus is making this extremely clear: If being saved is not your primary concern, then you will not be saved.

Notice the end of verse 24. *For **many**, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door....*

So, there is a narrow door and right now, it is open. You need to do everything you can to go through that narrow door, while it is still open because the master of the house is going to shut the door and when he does, you will no longer be able to enter.

Let's pause right here. How has Jesus answered this question? He has answered this factually by saying that few of you will be saved because the door is narrow and it is only open for a time. Later he seems to indicate that there will be many more who are saved (v.29), but there will only be a few of his immediate audience. He also answered it personally. Did you notice how many times Jesus used the pronoun "you"? Jesus is pressing this on his audience who heard this then and on us who are hearing this right now. Beloved, is this a concern for you? Is this a priority for you? If that audience missed it and they saw Jesus with their own eyes, we certainly can. Your relationship with God is not a box to check or a blank to fill in on a quiz. Do you even know what it means to be saved? Do you know how you can be saved? What is Jesus talking about? What do we need to be saved from? What does it look like to be saved? Jesus is making it very clear that you can be saved and you can know that you are saved and there are evidences and assurances of that. But one of the indications that you are not saved is if it doesn't really matter to you. Jesus is really pressing in because there were many listening to him who presumed that they were fine.

2. **Presumption and reality** (25-26)

What happens? The master of the house (Jesus) "Lord" shuts the door. Jesus wants his audience to feel the consequences of that before that actually happens by saying *and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, "Lord, open to us"....* What happened? People hearing this, did not respond with urgency. They presumed that they could wait, but then the door shut. And so they start knocking and now they are demanding (imperative verb) that the Lord open the door. This could be a panicked response, but based on what they say it sounds more like a presumptive response. The master of the house does not obey their command and in fact informs them that he does not know them. There is no relationship here. They have no right to demand entrance. Salvation, or being saved is not automatic. Again, the verb to strive speaks of

an intentional focus and commitment. This is hard to hear, but necessary to hear. Do not presume that because you prayed a prayer years ago that you are a genuine follower of Christ. Praying a prayer does not save you, Jesus saves you. If there is no fruit of a life that is pursuing Christ, in other words, if you are not following Christ, then you are not a follower of Christ. Praying a prayer is not a rabbit's foot any more than lighting votives, or trying to pay for your sins by doing something generous for the poor.

Notice the master's response (end of v.25). *I do not know where you come from*. Why does the master answer this way? What is the presumption behind the demand for the door to be open? As we will see, the presumption is, for this audience; I am a Jew. I am from Israel. I am part of the chosen people. I'm okay. It's all those other people who are the problem, not me.

What does it mean for the master to shut the door? Given that Jesus is answering the question about how many will be saved, to shut the door means that the opportunity to be saved is going to end. It is going to end and there will be people who will be shocked by that because they did not respond in time. Jesus says, *then you will begin to say...* Wait, wait, wait, we were with you. We saw you. We attended church, we went through the kids program, or we participate in this ministry, etc. They presumed that because we were with you (*we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets*), that we were fine. That may be a reference to the feeding of the 5,000 and to the fact that many people heard Jesus talk. But observing miracles and hearing Christ teach or being around him is not the same as actually believing on him and following him.

Jesus is making this very clear. Being close to him in proximity does not save you. Knowing Christ means to believe on him, trust in him, and follow him. We have a relationship with Christ based on repentance and faith, not proximity. Imagine that you were in a cathedral in Europe that supposedly had a splinter from the cross that Jesus was crucified on. Or imagine that the shroud that he was buried with was authenticated and was auctioned and you won the bid and started to wear it around the house. What if you could buy Mary's sandals, or the blanket that Jesus sat on when he rode the donkey into Jerusalem. What if you could touch a goblet that Jesus drank from in Mary and Martha's house. Would that get you closer to Jesus? NO! In fact, it would probably put you farther away because you would be tempted to think that proximity to an item counts for some righteousness (points) for you, which is dead wrong! If Jesus is warning those who ate and drank with him that they were danger of going to hell, what makes us think that owning some historical trinket would do anything? But that is our temptation and always has been. We are tempted to find things other than Jesus to help justify us and give us standing. Only Christ and Christ alone can save us.

You can feel the urgency that Jesus is speaking with. At the end of this chapter, the heart of Jesus seems to burst (v.34). He knows what is going to happen to Jerusalem. He knows that some of the people who heard his words and failed to respond with repentance and faith would be swept up in the destruction that is coming. It is so easy to presume that life is going to go on tomorrow just like it did yesterday. Beloved, the plan of God is being carried out. I don't know how exactly but I do not presume that everything is going to be all right in this world. I presume

the opposite. There is a window of time that you have today to trust in Christ as your King, Savior and Defender. You may not have tomorrow. For those who heard Jesus say these words with their own ears, tomorrow came for them. Tomorrow will come for you and me as well.

3. Judgment and shock (27-28)

Their argument is not accepted. Wait a minute. We ate and drank in your presence. We heard you teach; doesn't that count for something? The master of the house is direct. *But he will say, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from."* There it is again. Jesus is really pressing this point to them. Your ethnicity as a Jew counts for nothing! Your family cannot save you. Your tribe cannot save you. And you have to be saved because the consequences are serious.

At the end of v.27 the master of the house says, *Depart from me, all you workers of evil.* But the sending them away is more than a banishment from the door, but where they are sent is *that place (where) there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, (hell) when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.*

Those who fail to respond to the words of Jesus with genuine faith are cast out from his presence into a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. (5x in MT; 2x = outer darkness, 2x = fiery furnace, a reference to hell) And it is shocking because these people thought, (assumed) because they were in the ethnic line of Jews that they were automatic members of the kingdom. Now, to be on the outside looking in, is stunning. It is stunning because they never honestly examined themselves and did not know the truth about themselves. They were not willing to face the facts about their own lives. Most people aren't. Most people want to live an unbothered, unexamined life. They don't want to talk about their mortality or their morality. They don't want to face their fears, their limitations, their struggles, their inconsistencies or (fundamentally) their need to be rescued from their own sin. If you are not willing to face that, then what are you thinking? What do you think is going to happen? Saying that you don't want to talk about it, does not mean it will not happen. It will happen and when it happens, there will be shock. The idea that you're okay, is not okay. But most people don't want to talk about it.

God, in his mercy will allow things to take place to rattle our cage. The very tragedies that we decry, like children getting shot, hurricanes, other natural and physical disasters are actually wake-up calls from God to remind you and me that this world is not a safe place. Do not presume that you are fine. Those who are wealthy simply have more distractions and layers to hide behind, so in that sense, it is always more difficult for the rich and talented to be followers of Christ because they already appear to be "blessed." They must be okay, right? No. In fact....

4. Conclusion: Privilege can be a curse (29-30)

Benjamin Disraeli served as prime minister of England in 1868 and from 1874 to 1880. Elected to the Parliament at 33 he was quickly attacked by Daniel O'Connell an Irish leader. During an unrestrained and inappropriate attack by O'Connell, he denounced Disraeli as a Jew. Disraeli replied, *"Yes sir, I am a Jew. And I remind my illustrious opponent that when the ancestors of*

that right honorable gentleman were brutal savages eating nuts in a German forest, my ancestors were serving as priests in the temple of Solomon and were giving law and religion to the world." There is truth to that. The Jews were the people to whom and through whom the OT came and to whom and through whom Jesus came. But it does not count for righteousness!

Jesus now describes the scene in his kingdom where people (think Gentiles) from the east, west, north and south are all reclining at table in the kingdom of God. This is stunning to his audience. It is so stunning that it is offensive. Gentiles? Gentiles are going to get into the kingdom of God and Jews are going to be cast out? Gentiles getting to dine with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as if those patriarchs belong to them and not to us? Yes, because those patriarchs belong to the people of faith, not to a people of ethnicity. Being a Jew was not enough. Your ethnicity, family, religious label or practices was not the ticket but were probably getting in the way of you understanding what your real need is. So now, the first (Jews) ended up being last. They don't belong. And the Gentiles who were last, are now first. But not all Gentiles, only those who truly believe. And not all Jews are on the outside. Those who get it, those who realize that Jesus is the Messiah, and trust in him are in.

It is so hard for those who are raised with religious privilege, or ethnic privilege, or academic, social or economic privilege, or even with attractive looks to grasp how much of a sinner they really are. Privilege can be a curse because you are tempted to assume that you are okay because you have some things that others don't. And you are tempted to think that God blessed you with that, because, well, you are just better than others. That is a curse because believing that will prevent you from truly trusting in Christ. Examine your life. Be willing to ask yourself the hard questions. What am I really trusting in? Do you know yourself or are you presuming?

A few years ago, Target, the department store, sent some coupons for a baby crib and other baby items to a home where there was no baby, but there was a 17-year-old daughter. When the dad saw the coupons, he was angry and went to the local Target store and asked the manager about it. He wanted to know if they were trying to encourage his daughter to get pregnant? The manager apologized but had no idea of how this had happened. After a few days of getting no help from corporate the manager called the father back to simply apologize again. This time, it was the father who apologized. He did not know initially, but his daughter was already pregnant. She had been looking on-line at baby things. This triggered a hit for Target who, like many companies pay a lot of money to know what you are clicking and looking at. The baby coupons were not random at all. The dad had no idea of what had been going on in his family. He was understandably shocked to discover what he wasn't aware of. How about you?

Like the Jews, some of you have been raised knowing God's Word. But, like the Jews, knowing the Word or knowing the gospel is a curse if you don't believe it and submit to it. The good news is, that there is room at the table for you. There is room for you in the kingdom of God. The door is open. It is narrow because it is only for those who will repent of their sin and trust in Christ. There is no other way. But there is THE way. Come! Jesus is not afraid to say hard things. We need to be humble enough to listen.