

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 66:18-23

<sup>18</sup> “And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. <sup>19</sup> “I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations. <sup>20</sup> And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels,” says the LORD. “They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels. <sup>21</sup> And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites,” says the LORD. <sup>22</sup> “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure. <sup>23</sup> From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD.

**66:18** *their imaginations.* † See 65:2 and note. (CSB)

The works and thoughts (66:18) refer to the idolaters (syncretists) described in the prior verse, who are defined by their unclean foods (“swine and the detestable thing and the mouse,” 66:17). They will not bask in Yahweh’s glory as this revelation is reserved for those whom he will “gather” (66:18). The theme of “gathering” (קָבַץ) is central to chapters 60–62 (the core chapters of 56–66): the new Zion is the place for the revelation of Yahweh’s glory, acting like a magnet for the nations (60:1; 62:1; cf. 2:2–4; 25:6–8). His universal Gospel invitation is extended to foreigners in 56:1–8 (which presents the agenda of chapters 56–66), especially his pledge to “gather” yet more: “the Lord Yahweh, the one gathering Israel’s dispersed ones,” promises, “I will still gather [others] to it, besides its ones already gathered” (56:8). (CC)

*gather all nations.* Cf. Joel 3:2; Zep 3:8; Zec 14:2. (CSB)

*see my glory.* Usually linked with God’s deliverance of his people (see 35:2–4; 40:5 and notes). (CSB)

“They will see my glory” (66:18). The first time people “see” “the glory of Yahweh” is in Ex 16:7, where Israel witnesses Yahweh’s provision of manna. From the vantage point of the seraphim in the temple, the whole earth is full of Yahweh’s glory (Is 6:3), but a day is coming when what is visible only for a select few will be made obvious to all (Is 40:5; Ps 97:6; cf. Num 14:21). Jesus is the full embodiment of God’s glory (Heb 1:3), and at the end of the age, he will gather all the nations to stand before his throne of glory (Mt 25:31; Rev 20:11–12). For now, the “mystery” is that “Christ in you” is “the *hope* of glory” (Col 1:27), but “when Christ is revealed—he who is your life—then you also with him will be revealed in glory” (Col 3:4). (CC)

The people referred to here are those who did not repent and follow the Lord. They are mentioned in 65:1-5; and 66:3-4,17.

The judgment upon Jerusalem by the Romans anticipated the final judgment God would visit upon all the world. Jesus said that when He returns “All the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). The words of Isaiah’s prophecy speak of the judgment God will bring upon all people. He will come with fire and sword. God’s two judgments blend together. The destruction of Jerusalem would signal the end of the OT era and would come upon the Jewish nation who had rejected the Lord’s Messiah. The final judgment on the Last Day will descend upon “all men” and “all nations and tongues.” (PBC)

At destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord would allow some from the Jewish nation to survive. Not all Jews would be destroyed. God directs us to see what He would do with the believers that survive the judgment of Jerusalem. God would send some of the believers to be His missionaries. They would go to Tarshish, perhaps Spain, to the Libyans and Lydians, people in northern Africa; to Tubal, the region we know as Asia Minor; to Greece; and to the distant islands, the Mediterranean world. Those whom God would send out would “proclaim (His) glory among the nations.” As we read the book of Acts in the NT, we can see the fulfillment of this prophecy. (PBC)

“Then the godly will recognize My glory and their abominations.” In the last place, as he is about to bring his prophecy to a close, the prophet puts two passages about judgment, the abandonment and eternal rejection of the Jews and the reception of the Gentiles. This is the end, as if to say, “Because you are so wicked and will have it no other way and cannot be persuaded by any means, let your destruction take its course.” (Luther)

**66:19** *sign*. Possibly the banner of 11:10, 12 (see note on 5:26; cf. Ps 74:4). Cf. the “sign of the Son of Man” (Mt 24:30) at the second coming. (CSB)

A dramatic sign will draw the people, their kings, and their gifts to process to Jerusalem and enter the city (cf. 11:11–12; 43:5–7; 49:22–23). The “sign” (אֹתָא) in 66:19 is similar to the one in 55:13; both are connected with Yahweh’s action of regathering people. Beyond that, the sign is not explained. (In 7:14 the “sign” is clarified as the virgin who conceives a son and names him Immanuel.) In the NT, the portent that sends people out to gather the nations is the virgin-born Son, his cross, and his empty tomb (Acts 2:22–36). It is Christ, “a man attested by God to you with mighty deeds and miracles and *signs* that God did through him in your midst” (Acts 2:22). On the Last Day the “sign” of the Son of Man will be beheld by all as he comes on the clouds of heaven, and all will mourn (Mt 24:30). But he will beckon the chosen to the new Jerusalem, his holy mountain (Rev 21:1–2, 10). (CC)

Looking back at 7:14 the sign might well mean the Gentiles. God’s work will be done even if those originally designated don’t follow through.

*those who survive.*† The judgment of v. 16. Cf. Zec 14:16. (CSB)

The banner of the Servant (11:10–12) and the sign of the Son of Man (Mt 24:30) will call all to the holy mountain (cf Is 2:1–5). (TLSB)

Nations will bring the scattered elect to Jerusalem. The emphasis is placed on the gathering's evangelical purpose, to “declare my glory” (Is 66:19). The notion of being witnesses (e.g., 43:9–12; 55:4–5) thus receives a sharper focus. Those who turn to Yahweh and are saved are constituted to be his ambassadors. (CC)

The missional strategy in the OT is normally one of centripetal attraction (e.g., Deut 4:5–8; Is 2:2–4). Yet here Yahweh's tactic is a centrifugal sending, just as he sent Isaiah out of his temple to preach to Israel (Is 6:8–13) and Jonah to preach against Nineveh (Jonah 1:1–2; 3:1–2). This certainly is a statement “of mission as we today employ the term—the sending of individuals to distant peoples in order to proclaim God's glory among them.” (CC)

Isaiah's list of the peoples and places to which the missionaries are sent is evocative, suggesting a worldwide outreach, much like the list in Is 11:11 and Acts 2:5–11. Together these lists point to “all the families of the earth” (Gen 12:3). While “those drawing the bow” or “archers” may simply designate Meshech the inclusion of these weapons of war might indicate that the Gospel will be met with opposition, which can turn violent (a frequent motif in the book of Acts). (CC)

The role of these missionaries is to declare Yahweh's glory. Just like the servant nation (42:6) and the Suffering Servant, they are a light for the world (49:6). Their goal is to bring the Servant's free gift of righteousness to many more people (53:11; 54:17). (CC)

*Tarshish.* See 23:6 and note. (CSB)

*Libyans.* People who lived west of Egypt. See Na 3:9. (CSB)

*Lydians.* People from either west-central Asia Minor (see Ge 10:13 and note) or Africa. (CSB)

A range of places and ethnic groups around the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world among whom God's report and His glory were not known. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

*archers.* See Jer 46:9. (CSB)

In Hebrew this would thought of to refer to still other nations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

*Tubal.* Usually mentioned with Meshech (see Ge 10:2 and note; Eze 27:13; 38:2–3; 39:1). It was probably a region southeast of the Black Sea. (CSB)

*islands.* See 11:11 and note. (CSB)

*proclaim my glory.* See 42:12; 1Ch 16:24. (CSB)

His victory. (TLSB)

Hbr *kebod yahweh*. The term *kebod* refers to the “weight” or “weightiness” of something, and thereby its impressive appearance or “honor.” Moses introduces the expression during the exodus (Ex 16:7) to contrast the Lord’s majesty with that of Pharaoh and Egypt. It comes to describe the visible manifestation of God’s presence in the cloud and fire of the exodus. It is the splendor of God’s presence that belongs *now* to believers in the promise, and that by His advanced preparation *will be* revealed to them and in them. (TLSB pp. 6-7)

NATIONS – Those mentioned to symbolize the worldwide gathering of the redeemed were on the outer perimeter of ancient Israel: Tarshish to the west (see note, 1Ki 10:22); Pul and Lud in Africa (LXX “Put,” cf Ezk 38:5); Tubal and Javan to the north (Ezk 27:13). *Javan*. Translated “Greece” in Zec 9:13. (TLSB)

**66:20** They will come to Zion by all means possible. (TLSB)

*bring all your brothers.*† See 11:11–12; 49:22; 60:4 and notes. (CSB)

These are other Gentiles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

Who are “your brothers”? Are they Gentile converts or believing Israelites from the Diaspora? One thing is certain: “your brothers” does not have the same meaning that it has in 66:5, where they are apostate Israelites ostracizing Yahweh’s faithful remnant. Since chapters 65–66 testify to the birth of a new community (e.g., 65:8–9; 66:7–8) that includes believing Gentiles (56:1–8), “your brothers” is a mixed group of the elect from among all people. How are they “an offering to Yahweh” (66:20)? These believers are gifts, that is, “the firstfruits” of those who are in Christ (e.g., 2 Thess 2:13; James 1:18; Rev 14:4). Paul embraces this metaphor when he speaks of his converts as “the offering of the Gentiles,” “acceptable” and “sanctified by the Holy Spirit,” an “offering” that is a validation of his ministry (Rom 15:16). (CC)

*holy mountain.* See 2:2–4 and note. (CSB)

The former distinctions between clean and unclean will pass away. In Christ, all of the barriers between Israelites and Gentiles are forever banished (cf. Gal 3:28–29; Eph 2:11–22). The kingdom that Yahweh establishes on his “holy mountain” (Is 66:20; cf. Is 65:25; Rev 21:10) is a realm where everyone is “holy” (Is 62:12; Zech 14:20–21; Rev 20:6). (CC)

*as an offering ... to the temple.* As the Israelites were to bring their tithes and offerings (see Dt 12:5–7). (CSB)

ON HORSES – Horses were ceremonially clean animals. This says that the Gentiles will come with offerings that are ceremonially pure and sanctified in every way.

This is a stark contrast what the Israelites bring in verse 17. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

**66:21** *some of them.*† No longer will only Levites be eligible to become priests as in the old covenant; all of spiritual Israel will be a “holy priesthood” (1Pe 2:5, 9). (CSB)

The Levites would not automatically be chosen as the priests because they failed to provide proper spiritual leadership. This opens the door for the Gentiles to serve the Lord in this capacity.

The old system, in which the priesthood was limited to the sons of Aaron (Num 18:7; cf. Ezek 44:6–13), has become obsolete. Every man in the new community will have the opportunity to enjoy access to the highest ranks of clerical leadership. Timothy is an example of a man who, though of mixed Jewish-Gentile ancestry (Acts 16:1), became a pastor in the Christian church (2 Tim 1:6). And while the pastoral office in the church is limited to qualified men (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), already now, baptized men and women alike are God’s “sons” and Abraham’s “heirs” (Gal 3:26–29) and hold holy office in the “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9; see also Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Gentiles are not excluded from anything. (CC)

However, throughout Israel’s history, more often than not the people failed in their calling to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6). The holy God then took up residence in human flesh, in the person of Jesus, to be his holy temple forever (Jn 2:19–22; cf. “tabernacled,” Jn 1:14). He is “*the Holy One*” (e.g., Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; Jn 6:69). Through his suffering, death, and resurrection (“in three days I will raise [this temple],” Jn 2:19), Christ has formed for himself a new “holy priesthood” and “holy nation” (1 Pet 2:5, 9). When Jesus returns he will bring down the holy city, Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). (CC)

Yahweh seeks people from every tribe and nation to be a part of this everlasting holy priesthood. They will arrive by means of every form of transportation: horses, chariots, wagons, mules, and camels. (CC)

**66:22** *new heavens ... new earth.* See 65:17 and note. (CSB)

As lasting as the new creation is the crown of His creation, His restored people. For the servants of the Lord, life goes on eternally in the presence of the Lord (Rv 21:2–4) with a share in His glory (Is 4:2; 11:10; 43:7; 58:8; 60:1–2, 13; 62:2). Cf v 24 for the final place of those who rebel. (TLSB)

The preaching of the Gospel a new Jerusalem is formed (Christian church). All the people of the earth are not a part of that chosen group including us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

Nations will be gathered to see Yahweh’s glory (66:18) and then be sent to the unbelieving nations to announce what they have seen (66:19). These missionaries are also the subject in 66:20–21 and will therefore bring the elect (“all your brothers,” 66:20) to the new Jerusalem. Some converted Gentiles will even become priests (66:21). (CC)

*name and descendants endure.* See 48:19 and note. (CSB)

**66:23** *New Moon.* See 1:14 and note. (CSB)

All time will be holy. (TLSB)

Just as the first creation reached its zenith with Yahweh's gift of the Sabbath (Gen 2:2–3), so will the new creation. Poetic language is being used here, and so we must avoid an overly literalistic interpretation. Eternal existence on Zion will not just consist of weekly and monthly worship gatherings, but will also find glorious and joy-filled expression within the flow of a continual life of receiving from God's grace and then giving back to God in worship and to one another. We will perfectly preserve justice and do righteousness (Is 56:1). It will be a perpetual living in "Yahweh's year of favor" (61:2), where all of "Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness" (1:27). Zech 14:16–21 also envisions the restored order as one where worship is a defining characteristic. (CC)

The believers gathered from Gentile nations (Is 66:18–19) become "your brothers" (66:20). Just so, "your offspring" and "your name" (66:22) now morph into "all flesh" (66:23), which denotes the full number of the elect who will inhabit the new heavens and the new earth (65:17–25; 66:22). Life will continue eternally in the presence of the triune God (Rev 21:2–4) as we share in his glory. (CC)

The godly have a continuous Sabbath. This will not end until the end of time comes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

*all mankind ... bow down.* See 19:21; Zec 14:16 and notes. (CSB)

#### EPISTLE – Hebrews 12:4-24

**<sup>4</sup>In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup>And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup>because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." <sup>7</sup>Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? <sup>8</sup>If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. <sup>9</sup>Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! <sup>10</sup>Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup>No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. <sup>13</sup>"Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.**

**12:4** *not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.* Though they had suffered persecution and loss of possessions (10:32–34), they had not had to die for the faith. (CSB)

The inspired writer here adds another thought to his appeal, namely, that his readers have by no means tasted the worst form of persecution yet: Not yet unto blood have you resisted, striving against sin. The Hebrew Christians of Judea were indeed suffering to some extent, both by reason of their isolation from others and by reason of the scorn which was heaped upon them. The fact that they were striving against sin in every form, especially against that of unbelief in Christ Jesus the Messiah, brought them many enemies. But the persecution had not yet reached the point that a great many of them had suffered death in the cause of Christ, the church in Judea had not yet become a martyr church as such. They might expect still worse conditions for them to endure. (Kretzmann)

**12:5** *the Lord's discipline.* Suffering and persecution should be seen as corrective and instructive training for our spiritual development as his children. (CSB)

Another thought is here brought in for the consideration of the readers: And you have altogether forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, nor faint when being corrected by Him; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom He receives. The Christians are here reminded that their sufferings are tokens of God's fatherly love and care. They must never forget the exhortation and comfort which is contained in the words of the Lord, Prov. 3, 11. 12. These words are addressed to sons, to children, and that in itself is a distinction, to be called sons of God. The believers should not make light of, should not despise, the discipline of the Lord, His entire method of training and educating His children, particularly through the necessary chastising. There must be no fainting, no despondency, no failure of faith when He reproveth by word or deed. (Kretzmann)

**12:6** *punishes.* The Greek for this verb means "to whip." God chastens us in order to correct our faults. (CSB)

For it is necessary that all the children of God be subjected to the same discipline; it is a token of God's love, a treatment which He accords only to such as He receives into His heart and cherishes with all the wonderful love of His fatherly mercy. (Kretzmann)

**12:7** *treating you as sons.* God's discipline is evidence that we are his children. Far from being a reason for despair, discipline is a basis for encouragement and perseverance (v. 10). (CSB)

The author now presents his conclusion: It is for discipline that you are enduring, as sons God is dealing with you. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? (Kretzmann)

**12:8** **ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN** – But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then are you bastards and not sons. This is the view which the believers should hold: their sufferings are evidence that God considers them His sons and treats them as such; they need such training in order that their sonship may be maintained. In fact, if there were a child in the house and the father would not take his chastening, disciplining, into his hand, a person might draw the inference that such a child is not a genuine son, but a bastard, one that is

not accorded the same treatment as the true sons. In the same way believers, far from resenting the disciplining which God lays upon them, should rather be thankful for this evidence of their heavenly Father's regard and interest. (Kretzmann)

**12:9 FATHER OF OUR SPIRITS** – Another consideration of the argument is here introduced: Further, fathers of our flesh we had to discipline us, and we gave them reverence; should we not much rather subject ourselves to the Father of spirits and live? The conclusion is from the smaller to the greater. We Christians, with the average run of humanity, had human fathers, parents of our own flesh and blood, who had charge of our training, including the necessary chastening, which cannot be omitted without disastrous results. To these fathers we gave honor and respect according to the Fourth Commandment. But if we did so much for our earthly fathers, who were, after all, merely human, does it not follow that our attitude toward the heavenly Father, the Father of spirits, whom we worship, with whom we come in contact, in the spirit, should be one of cheerful and obedient subjection? For in doing so, aside from the fact that the duty seems so obvious, this obedient relation toward God, flowing out of faith as it does, gives us the true spiritual life. (Kretzmann)

**12:10 SHARE IN HIS HOLINESS** – That this thought is altogether reasonable, and should appeal to all readers at once, the author now shows: For they, indeed, for a few days disciplined us as it seemed best to them, but He for our advantage, that we may be partakers of His holiness. The truth of the comparison is obvious. The earthly fathers had charge of our training for only a short while, during the short period of childhood and youth, and the training which they gave during this time was certainly done in accordance with the ideals which they had set before them, subject nevertheless, however, to mistakes, especially as to the means employed and the degrees of severity used in various instances. But the discipline of God is without fail, always to our advantage; He never makes a mistake in the kind and in the amount of suffering which He has us endure. For it is by this training that we are brought to that degree of holiness which He desires us to possess. His chastening constantly reminds us of the duty which we owe Him, and we are thus trained in His discipleship more and more. (Kretzmann)

**12:11** *it produces a harvest of righteousness.* When received submissively (see v. 9), discipline is wholesome and beneficial. (CSB)

The author here answers an objection which some reader may make: All discipline, indeed, seems for the time to be not joy, but grief; but afterwards it yields, to those that are disciplined by it, the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The writer has throughout spoken of God's discipline in a most enthusiastic strain, and his ardor is not dampened by the objection which will tend to arise, at least in the hearts of such as are still weak in faith, that suffering of all kinds is a most unpleasant experience. That, indeed, is true: while the discipline lasts, while God permits the suffering to strike us, it certainly is a matter of pain and not of joy. But without training, correction, wholesome restraint, strict regulations, and an occasional punishment the aim of God cannot be accomplished with regard to His children. It is therefore solely in our interest that He uses this method. The result invariably is that those who are exercised and trained by it will be able to bear such peaceable fruit of righteousness as is well-pleasing to the heavenly Father. It is through this training of the Lord that our faith is rendered pure, true, precious, that we ourselves



are thoroughly prepared, strengthened, founded unto eternal salvation, 1 Pet. 1, 6-9; 5, 10; Rom. 8, 25; 5, 3-5. (Kretzmann)

**12:12 FEEBLE ARMS** – This being true, the appeal may be made with full force: Wherefore lift up the listless hands and the paralyzed knees, and make the paths straight for your feet to walk in, that the lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed. Listless, nerveless hands and weak, paralyzed knees are not the members which should be found in true Christians, Is. 35, 3. Knowing that the Lord always has thoughts of peace with regard to them, they can rely upon His promise, which He will keep without fail, Is. 40, 29-31. (Kretzmann)

**12:13 Make level paths.** A call for upright conduct that will help, rather than hinder, the spiritual and moral welfare of others, especially the “lame” who waver in the Christian faith. (CSB)

Instead of walking with unsteady feet, as under the weight of a heavy load, which tends to bear him down to the ground, every Christian should let his feet go straight before him along the path of sanctification as prepared by Christ, swerving neither to the right nor to the left, Prov. 4, 26. 27; Is. 30, 21. If this is the case, then also the lame and limping, those Christian brothers that are still weak in the faith, will not be discouraged and turned quite out of the way, but will be given an opportunity of being healed of their spiritual infirmity. If the stronger believers are always firm and steadfast in all matters pertaining to sanctification and the discipleship of Christ, then their example will serve as an aid to the weaker brethren, causing them to follow the Master without doubt and without flinching until they reach the goal above, Is. 35, 5. 6. (Kretzmann)

#### *Warning Against Refusing God*

**<sup>14</sup> Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. <sup>16</sup> See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. <sup>17</sup> Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears. <sup>18</sup> You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; <sup>19</sup> to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, <sup>20</sup> because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.” <sup>21</sup> The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” <sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, <sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**

**12:14 LIVE IN PEACE** – the passage in Proverbs, to which the author has just referred, Prov. 4, 26. 27, the author now takes another thought, namely, that of maintaining peaceful relations with others: Follow peace with all and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord. It seems that the characteristics of the Hebrews made them impatient of weakness, a feeling which might

easily bring on alienation and lead to quarrels. But God wants His Church to be built up in peace, Rom. 12, 18; 2 Tim. 2, 22, a peace based upon the unity of faith and making for holiness in general, for true consecration to the Lord and His cause, Eph. 5, 5; Matt. 5, 8. (Kretzmann)

*without holiness no one will see the Lord.* Cf. 1Pe 1:15–16; 1Jn 3:2–3. (CSB)

Sanctification grows out of faith from the same seed, the Word of God, and without this holiness it is impossible to see the Lord, to be accepted by Him as His child. Only he that has accepted the vicarious sacrifice of Christ in such a spirit as to make him a partaker of the mind which lived in Christ will finally stand in the presence of the Lord and see Him face to face. (Kretzmann)

**12:15** *misses the grace of God.* † “Falls short of” or “fails to lay hold of” God’s grace. Such a possibility is described in 2:1–4; 6:4–8. (CSB)

This is not a matter to be taken lightly, for the author continues: Watching lest any man fall short of the grace of God, lest some root of bitterness growing anew trouble you and thereby many be defiled. Christians must ever be on the alert, always watch carefully, lest one of their number fall away from the grace of God. (Kretzmann)

*bitter root.* Pride, animosity, rivalry or anything else harmful to others. (CSB)

The danger is always there that the one or the other may turn aside to some sin. But the believers should always be a closed company, held closely together by their faith and fellowship in Christ. That one of their number should turn aside, should miss the grace of God, must be a matter of grave concern to them all. And as they thus keep to the path together, they also guard against such pollution, such defilement, as follows the springing up in their midst of roots of bitterness. The words at this place are borrowed from Deut. 29, 18. The introduction of evil, sinful practices in their midst would be much like that of a poisonous root and plant, through whose pollution they would not only be troubled, but through which they would also be rendered unfit to approach to God and to enter into fellowship with Him. Cp. Gal. 5, 9. (Kretzmann)

**12:16** *godless like Esau.* See Ge 25:29–34. He had no appreciation for true values and was profane in his outlook on life (cf. Php 3:18–19). He “despised his birthright” (Ge 25:34) by valuing food for his stomach more highly than his birthright. (CSB)

**12:17** *he was rejected.* Because he only regretted his loss, and did not repent of his sin (Ge 27, especially v. 41). His sorrow was not “godly sorrow” that “brings repentance that leads to salvation,” but “worldly sorrow” that “brings death” (2Co 7:10). (CSB)

In just what way this might happen the author now states: Lest there be any fornicator or a profane person, like Esau, who for a single meal sold his birthright; for you know that afterward, though he wished to inherit the blessing, he was repudiated, for he found no room for a change of mind (in his father), although he sought it earnestly with tears. Here are examples of the bitter roots, of the poisonous plants of sin and evil, as they may spring up in a Christian congregation. There may be some one that will be overcome and stricken down by the sin of fornication,

against the Sixth Commandment. Or some person may be tempted and fall into the sin of profaning such things as are sacred in the eyes of God. (Kretzmann)

*the blessing.* Of the firstborn. The readers were thinking of compromising their faith in order to gain relief from persecution. But to trade their spiritual birthright for temporary ease in this world would deprive them of Christ's blessing. (CSB)

When the rich feast of God's grace and mercy is spread in the same congregation for one or two generations, there is always danger that some one may become surfeited and barter away his salvation for the enjoyment of sin for a season. That was the sin of Esau, who considered the right of the first-born, though it included the fact that the first-born was also the bearer of the Messianic blessing, so lightly that he sold his birthright for a single meal, for a mess of pottage, Gen. 25, 29-34. His case illustrates the danger of missed or rejected opportunities. (Kretzmann)

*with tears.* See Ge 27:34-38. (CSB)

For when Esau afterwards made an attempt to get the blessing of the first-born for himself, he did not succeed, Gen. 27, 30-40. He made a very serious effort to get the blessing which had been given to Jacob for himself, beseeching his father with tears to change his mind. But Isaac remained firm; he realized that it was the will of God that Jacob should have the blessing of the first-born and the Messianic promise and therefore refused to change his decision. (Kretzmann)

**12:18-21** These verses describe the awesome occasion when the law was given at Mount Sinai (see Ex 19:10-25; Dt 4:11-12; 5:22-26), a description focusing on the old covenant's tangible mountain, ordinances, terrifying warnings and severe penalties. Believers in Jesus Christ do not have such a threatening covenant, and should not consider returning to it.

**12:18 THAT CAN BE TOUCHED** – Sinai was “touchable” in that it was geographically located. Zion is sacramentally located, that is, wherever the Lord's people gather around the Word and Sacraments. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

Here is another reason for the entire appeal and warning as contained in this chapter, namely, the fact that grace is the compelling motive in the Christian's life, and not fear: For you have not approached to the mountain that can be touched and burns with fire, to darkness and gloom and hurricane, and to the sound of a trumpet and to a voice sounding in words, which they that heard earnestly begged that further speech might not be added to them. The reference is evidently to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, Ex. 19; Deut. 4. That was a solemn, a fearful occasion, for the mountain itself was burning with fire, Deut. 4, 11, and yet the rest of the country in the neighborhood was covered with a misty gloom, with a heavy darkness, while a stormwind having the proportions of a hurricane made every heart quake, Deut. 4, 11; 5, 22. (Kretzmann)

**12:19 TRUMPET BLAST** – To this fearsome scene was added the sound of a trumpet, in itself calculated to make even a stout heart shrink under such conditions, Ex. 19, 16. 19; 20, 18, and then the voice of words which were spoken from the top of the mountain, Ex. 20; Deut. 5, 4-22. No wonder that the children of Israel were filled with such terror that they earnestly entreated and begged Moses to arrange in some way that this fearful voice might not sound for them any

more, Ex. 20, 18. 19; Deut. 5, 23-27. The very enumeration of the various phenomena gives some idea of the terrifying character of the spectacle. (Kretzmann)

**12:20 THEY COULD NOT BEAR** – Though Mt. Sinai was touchable, it was not to be approached by either man or beast under penalty of death (Ex. 19:12-13) until the long blast of the trumpet signaled the proper time. In the same was, the Most Holy Place could not be entered except by the High Priest, and just once a year (Heb. 9:7; Lev. 16:2). Sinful man may approach the holy God only on God’s terms. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

**12:21 TREMBLING WITH FEAR** – How great the terror of the people was, is indicated in the following verses: For they could not bear that which had been ordered, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, Ex. 19, 12. 13. It was a day when all hearts quaked with a fear that could not be quieted, since all nature seemed in an uproar, and the Lord Himself appeared to be their threatening enemy. So inexpressibly great was the glory and majesty of God on Mount Sinai that Moses, upon returning from the presence of God with the two tables of the Law, and finding that the people had so far forgotten themselves as to become guilty of the basest idolatry, was terrified by the very thought of God’s possible revenge upon them, and cried out: I am extremely afraid and tremble, Deut. 9, 9. 15-19. That is a picture which properly characterizes the Law with its terrible threats and curses of damnation. (Kretzmann)

**12:22 Mount Zion.** Not the literal Mount Zion (Jerusalem, or its southeast portion), but the heavenly city of God and those who dwell there with him (see 11:10, 13–16; 13:14; Php 3:20). The circumstances under which the old covenant was given (vv. 18–21) and the features of the new covenant (vv. 22–24) point up the utter contrast between the two covenants, and lay the foundation for one more warning and exhortation to those still thinking of going back to Judaism. (CSB)

**YOU HAVE COME** – *proselaluthate* – You have approached. It is perfect tense, denoting past action whose effect extends to the present time. This mountain is a present reality for the believer, not just “pie in the sky, by and by.” It is “heavenly Jerusalem” come down to us here and now, “our mother” (Rev. 21:2; Gal. 4:26), the church “that begets and bears every Christian through the Word.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

*thousands upon thousands of angels.* See Rev 5:11–12. (CSB)

Fortunate are the Christians that they are no longer under the Law, the very giving of which struck abject terror into the hearts of a whole nation: But you have drawn near to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the perfected righteous, and to the Mediator of a new covenant, Jesus, and to the blood of sprinkling, whose message is more excellent than Abel’s. The contrast between the old and the new covenant is brought out by every expression. For the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, is not an earthly, visible mountain, but a fellowship of saints, whose excellence can be but feebly indicated by attributes of human speech. Because David, the forefather of Christ, lived on Mount Zion and in the city of Jerusalem, and because the salvation of the Messiah was to take its beginning from this neighborhood, therefore the congregation and

communion of saints, where God lives with His salvation in Christ, is commonly called Mount Zion, the city of God, in the prophecies, Ps. 9, 11; 76, 2; 110, 2; Is. 2, 2. 3; Micah 4, 1. 2. The ideal Zion is the place where God manifests His presence, the fullness of His grace in Christ. (Kretzmann)

**12:23** *church of the firstborn.* Believers in general who make up the church: (1) They cannot be angels since these have just been mentioned (v. 22); (2) “firstborn” cannot refer to Christ (though he is called firstborn, 1:6; Ro 8:29; Col 1:15–18; Rev 1:5), since here the Greek word is plural; (3) that their names are recorded in heaven reminds us of the redeemed (see Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27). The designation “firstborn” suggests their privileged position as heirs together with Christ, the supreme firstborn and “heir of all things” (Heb 1:2). (CSB)

Zion is the place where the church of the firstborn is gathered, “the saved community of the NT.” Christ is the firstborn of God (Heb 1:6), of all creation (Col 1:15), and from the dead (Col 1:18; Rev. 1:5). He is the firstborn of many brothers (Rom 8:29). “Firstborn” denotes both inheritance and election in grace. As the firstborn in the Passover were spared death by the blood of the lamb (Heb 11:28), so believers are saved by the blood of Christ (Rev. 7:14). The firstborn are not yet in heaven, but their names are enrolled there in the heavenly book of life (Lk 10:20; Rev 13:8) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

*God, the judge of all men.* See 4:13; Ro 14:10–12; 1Co 3:10–15; 2Co 5:10; Rev 20:11–15. (CSB)

*spirits of righteous men made perfect.* † For the most part, these were pre-Christian believers such as Abel (11:4) and Noah (11:7). They are referred to as “spirits” because they are waiting for the resurrection and as “righteous” because God credited their faith to them as righteousness, as he did to Abraham (see Ro 4:3). (CSB)

It is the heavenly Jerusalem, since it is not earthly and made with hands, and yet will be the final abode of all believers, Gal. 4, 26. God has His home, the throne of His mercy, in the midst of His Church, Rev. 14, 1; 21, 2; 1 Cor. 3, 16; 2 Cor. 6, 16. Into this communion the believers have entered. They are thus united with many thousands of angels in a fellowship of bliss, heaven and earth being united through the coming of Christ, Col. 1, 20; Eph. 1, 10. We belong, by faith, to the great festival assembly, to the congregation of God’s first-born children, those that have been converted to faith in the foremost First-born, the eternal Son of God. We have come to God, the Judge of all men, and are able to stand before Him in trusting confidence by virtue of the justifying faith which has been kindled in our hearts through the Gospel. We are even one great congregation with the spirits of the saints that have reached the final perfection, the last goal, the bliss of heaven, Luke 23, 43; 2 Cor. 5, 8; Phil. 1, 23. (Kretzmann)

**12:24** *mediator of a new covenant.* See 7:22; 8:6 and note; 8:13; 9:15; 1Ti 2:5. (CSB)

All this, however, is possible because we have come to the great Mediator of the New Testament, to Jesus, who restored mankind to the original relation of children to the heavenly Father, through His own holy, innocent blood, with which we have been sprinkled in faith. The blood of Abel may indeed act as a witness and as such have value for this life, chap. 11, 4. But

the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all sins, and therefore pleads before God with a voice so loud and persuasive that it secures perfect righteousness for us. Thus the inspired writer brings home to us the fact that we have come to the pleasant, merciful, saving Gospel. What a glorious privilege! (Kretzmann)

SPRINKLED BLOOD – *aimati rantismou* – Literally, “to blood of sprinkling,” Ex. 24:8; Heb 9:18-21. Blood was shed for the atonement of sin (Lev 17:11; Mt. 26:28). In the old covenant the blood was sprinkled on the altar to appease God (Ex 24:6; Lev 16:14-19), and sprinkled on people to bring them into the covenant; therefore it was called “the blood of the covenant” (ex 24:8). Jesus draws on this language when he says, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt. 26:28). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

“Sprinkling” also relates to baptismal terminology (Heb 10:22; 9:18-21; 10:29; 13:20; 1 Pet 1:2). Under the old covenant, the blood of the red heifer was sprinkled toward the ark, and its ashes were used in “the water of cleansing; it is for purification from sin” (Num 19:9). This was water was sprinkled on the people to purify them from various kinds of uncleanness (Num 19:11-22). In the new covenant Holy Baptism is the “washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

“Sprinkling” also relates to the Word of the Gospel, whose proclamation sprinkles us with the blood of Christ (Apology 24:38). Christ’s sprinkled blood proclaims “a better word than the blood of Abel.” Abel’s blood demanded expiation and justice (Gen 4:10); Christ’s blood makes atonement and justifies (Heb 9:11-22; 1 Pet 1:2; 1 Jn 1:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

*a better word than the blood of Abel.* Abel’s blood cried out for justice and retribution (see note on Ge 4:10), whereas the blood of Jesus shed on the cross speaks of forgiveness and reconciliation (9:12; 10:19; Col 1:20; 1Jn 1:7). (CSB)

#### GOSPEL – Luke 13:22-30

**<sup>22</sup> Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, <sup>24</sup> “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. <sup>25</sup> 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.’ <sup>26</sup> “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ <sup>27</sup> “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’ <sup>28</sup> “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. <sup>29</sup> People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”**

A new discourse (13:22–14:24) and the second major division in Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in Luke begin at 13:22. This is Luke's second travel notice (the third will be at 17:11 and the fourth at 19:28), and the hearer cannot help but pause here and recall that this journey began back at 9:51, when the evangelist announced that "it came to pass as the days of his being taken up [ἀναλήμψεως] were being fulfilled, and he himself set his face in order to journey to Jerusalem." At both the transfiguration in 9:31, where Jesus' destiny is described as an "exodus" (ἔξοδος), and at 9:51, where it is a "being taken up" (ἀναλήμψεως), Luke pictures Jesus' work of salvation as a movement out of this world through suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus is reenacting Israel's exodus from Egypt. See comments at 9:31, 51. References to Jesus' movement to Jerusalem immediately suggest his work of atonement there. His atoning sacrifice will be his own life, as implied in 13:33, where Jesus speaks of the necessity of a prophet dying in Jerusalem. Jerusalem becomes increasingly prominent as both Jesus' destination (13:31–35) and the place for feasting (13:26–30; cf. the Last Supper). The setting for these teachings in 13:22–30 is the eschatological table fellowship of Jesus, where people "will come from east and west and from north and south and *will recline at table in the kingdom of God*" (13:2). (CC pp. 548-549)

**3:22** *through the towns and villages*. See chart on "The Life of Christ". Somewhere between the events of 11:1 and 13:21 Jesus left Judea and began his work in and around Perea, which is recorded in 13:22–19:27; Mt 19:1–20:28; Mk 10; Jn 10:40–42. During the last part of the Perea ministry, it appears that he went north to Galilee and then traveled south again through Perea to Jericho and to Jerusalem. Some of Jesus' sayings that Luke attributes to the period of ministry in Perea are found in different settings in Matthew (7:13–14, 22–23). Perhaps he repeated various sayings on different occasions. (CSB)

διεπορεύετο—This imperfect is part of Luke's journey vocabulary, a reference to the journey that began in 9:51. See comments at 1:6, 39 and 9:51. διαπορεύομαι occurs also in 6:1; 18:36, while πορεύομαι occurs fifty-one times in Luke. (CC p. 547)

κατὰ πόλεις καὶ κώμας—This phrase is used in the singular at 8:1, where Luke gives a veiled travel notice in connection with Jesus' preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God and the support he received from the women. Cf. also 9:6. (CC p. 547)

TEACHING AS HE MADE HIS WAY – διδάσκων καὶ πορείαν ποιούμενος—These two present participles are dependent on the main verb. They describe Jesus' teaching and his consciousness that he is not just "in motion" but *on a journey*. This ties Jesus' teaching to his passion. The circumlocution πορείαν ποιούμενος emphasizes the journey (πορείαν) even more than the single verb earlier in the verse. On Jesus' teaching, see 4:15, 31; 6:6; 11:1; 13:10. διδάσκω is also used again in this passage at 13:26. In Luke only Jesus teaches, but in Acts, after Pentecost, the disciples will teach, fulfilling Lk 12:12. (CC p.547)

*as he made his way to Jerusalem.* Where he would die. Although Jesus was ministering throughout Perea, his eyes were constantly set on the Holy City and his ultimate destiny. (CSB)

dieporeuto – This denotes continued action that was first mentioned in Luke 9:51. He knows his goal and will not be distracted but continues to teach even as he is going. – Luke heightens the tension and emphasizes again the significance of Jesus’ heading for Jerusalem. It is in Jerusalem that Jesus’ ministry will appear to unravel and fail – his arrest, trial, condemnation, and crucifixion. It is also in Jerusalem that the risen and victorious Lord will charge his apostles to preach “repentance and forgiveness of sins...in his name to all nations” (Lk 24:47). – Luke tells us in 9:51 that “Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” In the present section the fact is noted that Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem. In 17:11 we will read that “on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.” This journey to Jerusalem is hardly in a straight line; it is rather a spiritual pilgrimage interrupted by much teaching and several miracles. But there can be no doubt as to the ultimate goal. Jerusalem will finally be reached. This is the city where the salvation of the world will be accomplished. (PBC)

**13:23** *only a few ... saved?* Perhaps the questioner had observed that in spite of the very large crowds that came to hear Jesus’ preaching and be healed, there were only a few followers who were loyal. Jesus did not answer directly, but warned that many would try to enter after it was too late. (CSB)

Jesus directs His followers’ attention away from the plight of others and toward an honest self-appraisal and spiritual housecleaning (cf vv 1–5). (TLSB)

οἱ σωζόμενοι—While Luke sometimes uses a present participle for events that will be completed in the future (1:35; 22:19, 20, 21), the present participle, “those who are being saved,” indicates that salvation has already come through the ministry of Jesus. Cf. Acts 2:47. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 564, notes: “οἱ σωζόμενοι ... is a stereotyped phrase in the early church (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15). ... It refers to the obtaining of eschatological salvation, and is tantamount to entry to the kingdom and the gaining of eternal life (Mk. 10:26 ... ).” (CC pp. 547-548)

After Luke’s second travel notice comes a section about those who will be received into the kingdom of God. The previous discourse ended with two parables about the kingdom of God (13:18–21). This new discourse is introduced by this question in 13:23: “Lord, are those who are being saved few?” (CC p. 550)

The question is one in a series of questions at critical moments in Luke’s narrative. These questions help the catechumen reflect on the significance of the theological discourse. As Jesus’ journey draws to a close, Jesus himself fires a pointed question at his disciples that drives home his teaching: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he even find the faith on the earth?” (18:8). On a literary level, the rhetorical purpose of that question is similar to that of the question put to Jesus in 13:23 and his answer in



13:30. Both occur at key junctions in Jesus' journey and require the hearer to pause and consider his own standing in relation to the kingdom of God: "Am I one of the many or one of the few?" (CC p. 550)

In Luke questions often serve to provoke the hearer to deeper reflection and/or to introduce a teaching of Jesus that is an especially important authoritative revelation (10:29; 12:41; 18:8). Provocative statements made to Jesus in the narrative may serve a particular purpose (11:45; 12:13; 13:1); cf. F. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, p. 160 (CC p. 550)

Framed in the third person, the question represents a certain type of "theological discussion" current among the Jews. (CC p. 550)

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 219–20, makes this comment on the Jewish context of this question:

The question put to Jesus is cast in the distinctive Christian language of "salvation," but it derives from a central preoccupation of Jews in the first century concerning the relationship of historical Judaism to the people of God. Were all those calling themselves Jews really part of the chosen people? The concept of a *remnant* chosen by God from a larger population is found clearly in the writings of the Essenes who saw themselves as that "saved" group (cf. *CD* 1:4) and who scorn[ed] other Jews, the "ungodly of the covenant" (*1QM* 1:2). We can find the same perception in writings more frequently associated with the Pharisees, as in *4 Ezra* 8:1: "This age the Most High has made for many, but the age to come for few." Such discussions about who will find their way into the age to come are continued in *m. Sanhedrin* 10:1–6, and *bT Sanh.* 99b; 105a. (CC p. 550)

kurie ei oligoi oi sozomenoi – In ancient Greece the word sozo (I save) could take any of five different meanings. (1) saving (human or divine), from serious peril; (2) keeping alive, protecting, keeping from want; (3) benefiting, keeping in good health; (4) preserving the inner being; (5) religious usage where all the nuances occur. In the synoptic gospels the concept of salvation is associated with entrance into the kingdom of God. – Some of the rabbis taught that all Israelites would have a share in the world to come. Jesus answers the question in quite a different way. (PBC)

In ancient Greece the word sozo (I save) could take any of five different meanings: (1) saving (human or divine), from serious peril; (2) keeping alive, protecting, keeping from want; (3) benefiting, keeping in good health; (4) preserving the inner being; (5) religious usage where all the nuances occur. In the synoptic gospels the concept of salvation is associated with entrance into the kingdom of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

**13:24 MAKE EVERY EFFORT** – But theoretical questions framed in the third person "put off repentance and do not lead to faith." Jesus will not let a questioner examine others without examining himself. So Jesus responds with direct warnings in the second person: an imperative ("you"; 13:24), a condition ("when ... then you"; 13:25–27), and a

prediction (“there will be ... when *you* will see”; 13:28–29). These warnings seem to ask, “O questioner, will *you* be saved?” (CC p. 551)

Jesus begins with an imperative cast in catechetical language: “Struggle [ἀγωνίζεσθε] to enter in through the narrow door, because many, I say to you, will seek to enter in and they will not be able” (13:24). The command to “struggle” does not mean “that moral effort is necessary in order to enter the kingdom,” nor does it mean entrance is gained by exercising “human responsibility.” (CC p. 551)

J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 734. R. Stein, *Luke*, 379, says: “The reason some are not able to enter does not have to do with being good enough but with the willingness to repent (cf. 13:3, 5), which they refuse to do. The main point of the verse centers on the need to make sure one is part of the ‘few’ who have, through repentance and faith, experienced God’s mercy and grace.” (CC p. 551)

Rather, the struggle through which one enters is repentance, which is a work of God in the human heart. The struggle is produced when the Word of God—such as the teaching of Jesus here—calls one to repent and trust in Christ, but sinful human nature wars against God’s Word. The struggle is resolved as the old Adam is put to death by the Law and the person of faith is raised to new life with Christ by the power of the Gospel. St. Paul offers a window into this inner struggle and how it is resolved in Rom 7:7–8:11, with a concise summary in Rom 8:13. *This ongoing, lifelong struggle characterizes the lives of all who are baptized into Christ (Rom 6:1–11).* (CC p. 551)

The struggle is not against other people but rather against our own sinful flesh and the temptations of the devil. (PBC)

NARROW DOOR – A narrow door prevents great crowds of people from entering all at once. Entrance into the banquet is gained by going through the door one at a time. That narrow door is a symbol for Jesus Himself. One enters the banquet hall by way of Jesus. (PBC)

Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (Jn 14:6). All other hopes are misplaced. (TLSB)

This interpretation agrees with the previous discourse, which was a call for preparation for the coming of the Son of Man by repentance (Lk 13:3, 5) and for discernment of the signs of Jesus’ ministry—signs that are perceived only by faith and that also strengthen faith (12:56). *Entrance through the narrow door is gained by those who repent and see in Jesus the Lord of the eschatological banquet*, for this door opens up into the house in which the end-time feast is about to be celebrated. In this way a constellation of classic catechetical themes about “the way” are focused on the one final door that is the goal and the end of catechesis. Jesus is about to talk about the moment when the door is closed and the opportunity for entrance through catechesis is over. (CC p. 551)

In Mt 7:13–14, Jesus refers to both the narrow gate and a wide one leading to destruction. Luke sometimes employs the “two ways” catechetical method of the

OT (Deuteronomy 27–28; 30:15–20; Psalm 1; Proverbs; etc.): a way of life and a way of death (cf. Lk 6:20–26). But here he chooses to emphasize only the one way to life. (CC p. 551)

This first warning of Jesus states that since the door to the banquet is narrow, many will seek to enter in and will not be able. (CC pp. 551-552)

As it is narrow and one must struggle, there is no possibility to crawl through this door wearing medals or bearing trophies awarded for good works before people. Nor do people come through in groups (“the Jews,” “the Pharisees,” etc.), but one by one (cf. F. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, 160). (CC p. 552)

The many (πολλοί; 13:24) who try and fail are contrasted to the few (ὀλίγοι; 13:23) who will be saved. Although Jesus may have the Pharisees in mind here for the “many,” it applies to everyone who does not repent and see in Jesus the coming of God’s salvation. (CC p. 552)

William Arndt writes, “Heaven is a gift of divine grace, but accepting the gift and clinging to it imply a constant struggle with the forces of evil inside and outside seeking to induce us to refuse or droop the gift.” Lenski says, “But does this not contradict the teaching that man is spiritually dead and cannot struggle and strive? This struggle is not one on the part of man’s corrupt natural powers – they never could or would struggle to enter that narrow door. The struggling is caused by the law and the gospel when they operate upon and in the heart and move it mightily. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

*Entrance through the narrow door is gained by those who repent and see in Jesus the Lord of the eschatological banquet, for this door opens up into the house in which the end-time feast is about to be celebrated. In this way a constellation of classic catechetical themes about “the way” are focused on the one final door that is the goal and the end of catechesis. (CC p. 551)*

Therefore, the answer to the question of whether those being saved are few is a resounding *yes—few indeed!* But the hearer need not despair or exhaust himself attempting to “struggle” through the door by his own efforts. Luke’s narrative will continue to provide examples of those who pass through the door by grace, and these examples encourage as well as instruct. One of the clearest examples is given to those who ask a similar question but in the first person (in reference to themselves): “What should we do?” The answer given is that Baptism in the name of Jesus—a Baptism of repentance to the forgiveness of sins with the gift of the promised Spirit—provides all that is necessary for entrance (Acts 2:37–39). Those that were baptized were added to the number of those being saved. They also remained steadfast “in the apostles’ doctrine, in the fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The regular reception of the Lord’s Supper anticipates the end-time feast of Lk 13:29. (CC p. 552)

**13:25 ONCE** – Greek (from the time when) – ἀφ’ οὗ ἄν—This temporal prepositional phrase acts like a subordinating conjunction and governs the four main verbs that follow: ἐγερθῆ, ἀποκλείσῃ, ἄρξῃσθε, and ἐρεῖ. Everything in 13:25 (including the two reports of direct discourse) is subordinate; the prior events describe the situation at which point “*then* [τότε] you will begin to say ...” (13:26). (CC p. 548)

**GETS UP** – ἐγερθῆ—L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 216, has an intriguing suggestion as to Luke’s use of this word here: “Does it have the sense of the biblical idiom ‘rise and do something’ (cf. 1:39; 4:29; 6:8), or does it mean ‘rise up’? Luke uses *anistemi* for the former idiom, and *egeiro* for the latter (cf. 11:8). (CC p. 548)

**OPEN THE DOOR FOR US** – The time to repent and receive the Lord is fleeting. See note, 3:9. Accordingly, people need to make entry into God’s kingdom their first priority, before the door to life suddenly slams shut. (TLSB)

ὑμῖν—This is a dative of advantage, i.e., open the door for our advantage so that we might enter the banquet hall. It is repeated again in 13:27. (CC p. 548)

The second warning begins with a pronouncement by Jesus: “From the time when the master of the house arises [ἐγερθῆ] and locks the door ...” (13:25). (CC p. 552)

If the door is shut at the parousia and the master’s rising refers to the resurrection of Christ, these two things do not happen simultaneously. But the hearer should be warned not to assume that the time between them is long! (CC p. 552)

The master of the house is Jesus; he is the one who ate and drank with them and taught in their streets (13:26). In the second warning, the narrow door of the first warning is *now shut* by the master. The time of patient forbearance, given in order to evoke repentance, is over. (CC p. 552)

The catechumen has already been instructed about shut doors in the previous two chapters (11:5–13; 12:35–40), and some of the parallels are striking. In the parable of the friend at midnight (11:5–13), the friend, from behind a locked door (11:7) and against his inclination (11:8), will rise up (ἐγερθείς) and give bread to his neighbor to avoid the shame of not showing hospitality to a stranger. How much more will God show hospitality as he supplies salvation in his Son and thereby opens the narrow door to the banquet. This is why, after the friend opens the door to his neighbor, Jesus concludes the parable by urging the disciples to persistently ask, seek (11:9—ζητῶν; cf. 13:24—ζητήσουσιν), and knock (11:9—κρούετε; cf. 13:25—κρούειν). The time frame in Luke 11 is prior to that in Luke 13, for in Luke 11 there is still time to repent, seek, and knock.

The other previous reference to a shut door occurs in the parable where the servants are ready to open (12:36—ἀνοιξωσιν; cf. 13:25—ἄνοιξον) the door at the knock (12:36—κρούσαντος) of their Lord when he returns from the feast. Here it is the servants who open the door for the Lord; their action represents

their repentance, their readiness by faith, and their recognition of him as their Lord. Then contrary to all expectations, they do not serve the banquet. Instead, the Lord girds his loins and serves them as they recline at the table (12:37—ἀνακλινεῖ; cf. 13:29—ἀνακλιθήσονται). (CC p. 552)

I DON'T KNOW YOU – οὐκ οἶδα ἡμᾶς – God disavows any relationship between himself and the unbelievers. – That God would not know someone or from where they come is not due to God's inability or failure, nor from His lack of knowledge about anyone or anything. Being known by God is a matter of his grace, as his word works humble contrition (we acknowledge our sin) and faith (we trust in God's mercy and love in Christ toward all people) Without this grace, which comes to us through Christ, God would not know or recognize us as being His redeemed children. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

To know often has the connotation of an intimate relationship, both on a human level and of God's knowing His people. – The time will come when the owner of the house is going to close that door. There will be some who come knocking on the locked door demanding entry. But just knowing the owner of the house will not cause him to open. Jesus is obviously picturing himself as the owner since the people speak of his teaching in their street. Just as the time will come when the unfruitful tree will be cut down (13:0), so also the time will come in each individual's life and in the history of the world when the entrance to salvation will be closed. The message is plain: don't delay but strive to enter now. (PBC)

In the OT, when getting to know a person, it was common to ask where the person had come from, since a person's hometown, tribe, nationality, or prior activity often revealed something about the person's character. Here the Master says that He does not know the people, and moreover, He has no familiarity with their place of origin. He has nothing in common with them, no ties to them whatsoever. (CC p. 548)

Matthew 25:1-13 is the story of the 10 virgins. Five of them were not ready when the bridegroom came and wanted oil from the other 5's supply. We cannot be saved by someone else's faith. Too many people want to eat drink and be merry and hope to come to faith in time. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

WHERE YOU COME FROM – πόθεν ἐστέ—In the OT, when getting to know a person, it was common to ask where the person had come from, (E.g., Gen 16:8; 1 Sam 30:13; 2 Sam 1:3, 13; 15:2; Jonah 1:8; Job 2:2) since a person's hometown, tribe, nationality, or prior activity often revealed something about the person's character. The Greek renders the Hebrew idiom in those OT verses: οὐκ οἶδα ἡμᾶς. Here the master says that he does not know the people, and moreover, he has no familiarity with their place of origin. He has nothing in common with them, no ties to them whatsoever (cf. Jn 8:41–47). (CC p. 548)

**13:26 WE ATE AND DRANK WITH YOU** – They did indeed do so, but they wanted him all to themselves and were offended when he ate and drank with “sinners and tax

collectors.” What they didn’t say “we believe in you.” Jesus had no effect on their lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

They lay claim that He taught in their streets; sadly they cannot claim that he taught them – Matthew 7:21-23,”<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”<sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’<sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Here as in our text “doing” is presented as a means to entrance. They are ignoring Jesus as Savior and bringing Him down to their level or leaders. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 3)

The warning focuses on the future experience of those who are standing *outside* when the door has been shut. The baptism of John and the preaching of the kingdom by Jesus *had provided them with a narrow but opened door*. Because they refused to repent and recognize Jesus as the Master of the banquet, they now stand on the outside. He denies that he knows them, even as they have failed to confess him. He will not open to them, for the time of patient forbearance, of preaching and catechesis, when they were invited to know (believe in) Jesus, is finally over. These shut-out guests then have the audacity to appeal to Jesus’ table fellowship; he came among them as a teaching and eating Messiah. But table fellowship with Jesus during his earthly ministry does not *guarantee* a place at the eschatological banquet if those who feast with him in the here and *now* do not recognize him as the Lord of the *not yet* banquet. (CC p. 553)

Apparently such was the case with Simon the Pharisee (7:36–50), other Pharisees who ate dinner with Jesus (11:37–54), and the Pharisees and lawyers who will eat with him at a Sabbath meal in the next chapter (14:1–24). (CC p. 553)

Even some who partake of the Lord’s Supper may do so to their own condemnation because they do not recognize the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor 11:27–31). (CC p. 553)

I TAUGHT YOU IN THE STREETS – Mere acquaintance with Jesus and His teachings will not avail on Judgment Day; a wholehearted trust is needed. Luth: “For even though you know that He is God’s Son, that He died and rose again, and that He sits at the right hand of the Father, you have not yet learned to know Christ aright . . . [until you also] believe that He did all this for your sake, in order to help you” (AE 30:30). (TLSB)

**13:27** *I don’t know you.* See Mt 7:23; 25:12. (CSB)

AWAY FROM ME YOU EVILDOERS – Lit, “workers of injustice.” Without faith in Jesus Christ, it is impossible to produce works that please God (Heb 11:6). (TLSB)

ergatai adikias – It is unlikely that the unbelievers in Jesus’ parable would acknowledge themselves as evildoers. They are, nevertheless, the one who will recognize Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God. But they will be excluded from the festive celebration. – The Judge will repeat Himself, not because He is giving a second chance, but because they were not listening when He first spoke. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

The table was one of the prime locales for Jesus’ instruction to the people about his identity as the messianic King and his coming to usher in God’s kingdom through death and resurrection. After Jesus’ ascension, the preaching, teaching, and table fellowship of Jesus will continue in the worship life of the church. Jesus is still present to teach through his Word and to serve guests at his Table. For those who *now* ignore this “open door,” it will be too late to enter when the final feast arrives at the Son of Man’s return. The master of the house reiterates that they had no true communion with him during this life. To such as these, Jesus will command, “Depart from me, all you workers of unrighteousness” (13:27). They are workers of unrighteousness because they did not discern the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ (see comments on 12:57). They have traveled the unrighteous way. They rejected the Righteous One who alone opens the narrow door to the banquet where righteousness reigns. Jesus has threatened judgment in the previous discourse (12:57–59), but now that threat becomes a reality for those who rejected him and his kingdom. (CC pp. 553-554)

**13:28** THERE WILL BE WEEPING THERE , AND GNASHING OF TEETH – Refers to the torment of eternal separation from God and His goodness—hell. (TLSB)

ο κλαυθμος και ο Brugmos twn odonton – The emotional and spiritual pain of discovering that they are not true children of Abraham and the devastating experience of being thrown out of the kingdom of God will cause weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Their eternal consignment will bring dire distress. This description of the outward expression of physical pain and agony is found six times in Matthew, but only here in Luke. The anguish is in response to seeing “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out” The emotional and spiritual pain of discovering that they are not true children of Abraham and the devastating experience of the being thrown out of the kingdom of God will cause weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

ἀπόστητε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, πάντες ἐργάται ἀδικίας—This is a variation of Ps 6:9 in the LXX ἀπόστητε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, πάντες οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν. (CC p. 548)

The third and final warning continues the catechetical language of the “two ways.” It predicts the conditions that result when one has either continued down the way of death or has been led along the way of life (cf. Ps 23:3). (CC p. 554)

Here the catechumen is reminded of the many sayings in Luke that speak of these two ways, beginning with Simeon’s prophecy that Jesus “is destined for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel” (2:34). These include such teachings of

Jesus as the beatitudes and woes (6:20–26) and the two categories of people who are either with Jesus and John or against them (7:29–30). (CC p. 554)

For those who choose death by rejecting (John and) Jesus, “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves being thrown outside” (13:28). This seems to be pointed directly at the Jewish religious establishment. (CC p. 554)

The earliest appeal by the Jews to John the Baptist was when they claimed Abraham as their father (3:8), naively thinking that this guaranteed them a seat at the end-time table with Abraham in the kingdom of God. (CC p. 554)

The eschatological banquet is a grand reunion of all the OT saints, including the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and “all the prophets” (Luke’s unique touch). Instead of receiving an invitation to the final feast, those who rejected Jesus are cast outside to the place of death, where there will be only weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is a time of inconsolable sorrow because the judgment is irreversible. (CC p. 554)

ALL THE PROPHETS – πάντας τοὺς προφήτας—This does not appear in the Matthew parallel (8:11). It is a favorite Lukan formulation. See also 11:50 and 24:27, where it occurs in crucial positions in Luke’s prophetic pattern. (CC p. 548)

KINGDOM OF GOD – Restored creation, after the new heaven and new earth are revealed and people behold God face-to-face (Rv 21:1–5). (TLSB)

**13:29** *People ... from east and west and north and south.* From the four corners of the world (Ps 107:3) and from among all people, including Gentiles. (CSB)

Those redeemed by Christ through faith. (TLSB)

On the other hand, 13:29 is *the* classic Lukan statement on the nature of Jesus’ eschatological table fellowship. This feast is also a time of joy because of the consummation of the kingdom. Those rejoicing at the heavenly table of Jesus in the kingdom of God will include the patriarchs and the prophets and even Gentiles (e.g., Is 19:23–25; 66:19–23) from east and west, north and south, as well as the outcasts of Israel—the poor, the disabled, the lame, and the blind (14:13, 21). They have heard the word of repentance from John and Jesus, and they believe that in Jesus God is bringing his eschatological salvation. The irony is that those guests who will participate in this eschatological banquet are more likely to be the outcasts of Israel and Gentiles. This fits Luke’s Great Reversal motif where the last will be first and the first will be last (13:30). To human eyes, the Pharisees and the other religious luminaries (the first) appear to be the most fit for the kingdom, and the most unfit (the last) appear to be the unclean Gentiles and outcast Jews. But these Pharisees, who want first seats in the synagogues (11:43) and at the table (14:7–11), and lawyers, who held in their hands the key of knowledge that opened the narrow door to the final banquet (11:52)—they will be shut



outside when they seek a seat at the final banquet because Jesus does not know them. Conversely, Gentiles and sinners (the last) will enter. (CC pp. 554-555)

**WILL TAKE THEIR PLACES AT THE FEAST** – See note, Mt 8:11. The joy of eternal life is repeatedly compared to that of a great feast (e.g., Is 25:6–9). (TLSB)

ἀνακλιθήσονται – “they will recline.” This is what people would do when invited to a banquet, only in this eating it will be the Gentiles who get to do so. – Jesus is moving on from the Jews to Gentiles, whose conversion was prophesied in Is 49:12; 59:19. Yet the very thought was repugnant to the unbelieving Jews of Jesus’ day, and initially to some of His apostles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 3)

**13:30 IN DEED** – kai idou – Means to take note. – Jesus is talking about Jews who according to God’s plan were first to hear the Gospel, made themselves last by excluding themselves from the promises. And Jesus is talking about the Gentiles who were the last to hear the Gospel (and were last in the opinion of many Jews) but became among the first and foremost members of the kingdom through Christ. This interchange of position is one more example of the Gospel theme of the great reversal, so prominent throughout both testaments (the humble will be exalted, and the proud humbled; the poor will be enriched, the wealthy impoverished; etc). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 3)

As we hear these warnings, our Savior does not want our hearts to be filled with fear. Instead, He would have us examine our hearts to make sure we rely on Him and Him alone for our salvation. (LL)

**LAST/FIRST...FIRST LAST** – Outsiders and people from the dregs of society (tax collectors, sinners, and Gentiles) will be saved, while supposed insiders and important people (religious and civil leaders) will lose out. The determining factor is faith in Jesus, not wealth or social status. (TLSB)

ἔσχατοι/πρῶτοι—The absence of the article indicates that not *all* who were last will be first, and vice versa. (CC p. 548)

Jesus’ Great Reversal logion (13:30) concludes this description of the eschatological banquet and provides a frame with the evangelist’s travel notice (13:22). The catechumen knows that the Great Reversal language of the gospel prepares the hearer for God’s *ultimate* reversal in Jerusalem. God’s *ultimate* hospitality will be shown when Jesus is rejected on the cross in order to open the eschatological banquet door to all humanity. In Jerusalem, God’s firstborn shall be last, and God’s exalted one shall be humbled (14:8; 18:14). But three days later will come the greatest reversal. (CC p. 555)

**13:22–30** People can enter God’s kingdom only through Jesus Christ. Moreover, the time for every human being—and indeed the world—is quickly slipping away, and soon the door will slam shut. Accordingly, the Lord beseeches one and all to come into the great wedding banquet of His Son, without cost and without delay. • “Today Your gate is open, And all who enter in

Shall find a Father's welcome And pardon for their sin. The past shall be forgotten, A present joy  
be giv'n, A future grace be promised, A glorious crown in heav'n." Amen. (*LSB* 915:2) (TLSB)