

Last shall be first

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost) is Luke 13:22-30. Jesus and his disciples are still traveling through many towns and villages on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus is taking every opportunity to teach many as he travels.

As he is journeying someone asks the question: “will those who are saved be few?” Perhaps the questioner meant this a form of self-justification. Jesus answer directs this topic away from the plight of others toward having his followers do a deep examination of their own spiritual conditions. Jesus will not let a questioner examine others without examining himself.

The “striving” mentioned here is not trying to earn our way into heaven. Is a struggle in which one enters repentance, which is a work of God in the human heart. It is produced when the Word of God calls one to repent and trust in Christ. The Law puts our old Adam to death and we are raised to new life with Christ by the power of the Gospel.

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. Jesus is the only way to heaven.

People need to make entry into God’s kingdom their first and highest priority before their life-door closes at death. 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 people Jesus is addressing did in deed eat and drink with him, 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. Without faith in Jesus Christ, it is impossible to produce works that please God (Heb 11:6).

The eternal banquet is a grand reunion of all the OT saints, including the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and “all the prophets.” 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)

The people who will be saved will come from the four corners of the world and from among all people, including Gentiles. By faith in Christ we will be among that group.

Prayer: “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)