

Pentecost 11
Luke 13:22-30

8/24/25
16C

“STRIVE TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR. FOR MANY, I TELL YOU WILL SEEK TO ENTER AND WILL NOT BE ABLE.”

“*Strive*,” Jesus says, “to enter through that narrow *“θυρας”*.”

Yes, that’s the Greek word. And you know this word. Sure you do. If your hair falls out, you lose weight, your git-up-and-go has got up and gone, you go to your doctor, the first thing he or she will check is your thyroid.

You know where your thyroid is, right? Take your finger {take it}, feel the top of your sternum (you’ll feel that “u” shaped bone) – right behind that bone is your “θυρας”, the door, the entrance, to your body. Everything you eat or drink passes by the thyroid to enter into your body.

Inquiring minds want to know why I am starting the sermon with an anatomy lesson. For a simple reason – it helps us understand Jesus’ words. Rejoice and be glad, for Jesus has opened the θυρας, the door, the entrance, to heaven.

Like the door into our body, the door to Paradise is narrow and, in our sinfulness, we cannot open it. But we try. We have such a most wondrous treasure in our Little Catechism. I love Question # 210, under the 3rd Article, “Why must we firmly maintain this teaching of forgiveness – the doctrine of justification by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith”?

We must firmly hold to this teaching because it is the most important Christian doctrine. This teaching distinguishes the Christian religion from all other religions, since the teach salvation by works (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, 213).

Islam says that if you confess there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet; if you pray towards Mecca 5X/day; if you pay

alms to benefit the poor and needy; if you fast during the month of Ramadan; and, if you can afford it, you make a pilgrimage to Mecca, you will enter Paradise. The Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, say that if you wear the right underwear, don't drink coffee, and do a few other things, you will one day be your own god on your own planet. That is, if you are male; if you are female, you will be eternally pregnant, with your husband, the god, on his own planet. I'm not making this stuff up, folks. Roman Catholics, don't eat meat on Friday, pray to Mary, do other nice things, and you might just get into heaven, after you have been cleansed of your sin in purgatory, and the grandkids have paid enough money to get you out of purgatory. And the Hindus, well you just keep come back in a different life form again and again in the lie of reincarnation, until you are good enough to go to paradise. And if you are bad, then you have to come back as a mosquito in North Dakota and start all over again, I guess.

Article 4 of the Augsburg Confession teaches us this:

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight.

Our Lutheran Fathers taught this, because this is what the Bible teaches us, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8-9).*

The Good News of the Christian faith is that you can enter through that narrow door to heaven because Jesus has opened it for you.

That's why He's journeying towards Jerusalem. There, He went to the cross carrying all of your sins of thought, word, and deed. There upon that cross, He bled and died for you, giving His blood and His life in death as payment for your sins. Three days after He did that, He rose again to bring you forgiveness, life, and salvation.

And He gives you that forgiveness, life, and salvation by means of baptism, His Word, and His body and blood that you eat and drink. He gives you that forgiveness, He gives you that life, He gives you that salvation, for you see, He not only strives for you, Dear Child of God, Jesus strives **in** you.

He does that because there are those who would rather see you perish than recline at table in the Kingdom of God. There are those who would rather see you weeping and gnashing your teeth than be with Jesus. We call these people the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The Good News for you, Child of God, is that Jesus defeated the world, the flesh, and the devil when He died for you on Calvary and rose again on Easter Sunday. But even though the decisive battle has been won, these unholy three continue to battle for you soul until that day Jesus comes again to judge the living and the dead. They come with all the fury and the lies they can to try to make sure you do not enter through that narrow door.

The world does that to you by coming to you with that lie that there is a door for the Muslims, a door for the Mormons, and the Hindus, and for everyone else because God is just a kind, old grandpa who would never condemn anyone, and besides, we are pretty good people. This **lie** leads straight to hell and that is why, Child of God, you strive against this lie

because you believe and confess Jesus to be the way, the truth, and the life, the only door to salvation.

The flesh comes to you with temptation to sexual immorality, lying, drunkenness, gossip, coveting, hating because the flesh is not going to inherit the Kingdom of God. And if they can get you to live life like that, all the better for them. But, you strive against that, you strive to enter through that narrow door because you confess your sins and receive God's forgiveness for the sake of Jesus your Lord.

And when it comes to the devil, He would rather see you cast out than in heaven. So, He seeks to make your life miserable by accidents, natural disasters, illness, people stealing and vandalizing your property. He does all that, but you strive against Him. You remember your baptism, when you renounced the devil, and all His works, and all His ways. And you remember when you said exactly the same thing the day of your Confirmation.

So, do you understand what Jesus means when He says to enter through the narrow door? He has saved you by grace through faith to strive against your enemies which want to see you cast out and not inherit of heaven. He is calling upon you to strive against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And, remember Jesus strives for you and with you. For you, He carried your sins to the cross and defeated your enemies by His dying and His rising the 3rd day. And now today, as He calls you to strive against the unholy three, He is still with you, with you to the end of the age. He is with you by means of your baptism, His Supper, and His Word to give you the forgiveness, the strength, the will that you need to strive against your enemies and enter through that narrow door when you will sit at table in the

Kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with those who will come from the east and west, and from the north and the south.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.