

When we don't just 'cherry-pick' the bits of the Bible we want to read, and especially with the Gospels (Matthew; Mark; Luke and John) – the books that outline the life and teaching of Jesus – when you read the whole book, you start to get a true picture of what's really going on.

And a lot of the time, it seems like Jesus is doing His thing (healing the sick; raising the dead; casting out demons), and He's been telling parables and He's been teaching... But not even His disciples seem to really "get" what Jesus is saying... And of course the crowds, - it's like they're **totally** left in the dark...

But every now and then, we catch a little glimpse, where we realise "Ah-Huh, some folk **have** been paying attention."

So, over the last few weeks, we've been hearing how Jesus has been teaching about the Kingdom of God. And He's been quite blunt: Israel, has not pleased God. In His great mercy, The Lord is giving His chosen people one last chance, but the Day of Judgment is coming. Time is ticking. And Jesus has been more than hinting, that the privileged place of Israel cannot be presumed upon...

And basically the message of Jesus, has been a recurring theme of "repent or perish" – The clock is ticking...

And finally, today, it seems like somebody, **has** been paying attention.

Jesus is on His way through towns and villages – He’s got His face set toward Jerusalem. And by the end of today’s reading, we realise the reason He’s heading to Jerusalem, is because Jerusalem, is where the messengers of God are killed...

But somebody (who’s obviously been listening to Jesus' teaching), “gets it”, and says to Him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved???”

You see, the prevailing expectation was that pretty-much **all** of Israel would be saved (except for a few particularly nasty people – the heretics/godless/idolators/collaborators...), but this man: he understood that Jesus was saying something quite different...

“Lord, are only a few people going to be saved???”

And Jesus did, what Jesus usually does – He didn’t say “correct” or “incorrect” – He tells a story. And in typical Jesus fashion, it’s a story that reveals much more than the question was asking. You see, the man was asking “Are only a few going to be saved?” And Jesus' answer reveals that **many** will be saved, but many who expect to be saved, will not be. And so, it forces us to ponder, “Will I be among those who are saved?”

Jesus said: ²⁴ “**Strive to enter through the narrow door...**”

Now, it seems to me, it's pretty obvious that Jesus was not a card-carrying 5-point Calvinist... , because they believe that when it comes to "salvation":

- man has **no** part to play in that...
- we have no freedom-of-choice/will;
- that the grace of god is irresistible and so if God chooses to save you, there's nothing you can do to help/hinder it; and
- any effort by us to believe, or to choose to follow God, - that would be an act of works, and not "grace"...

That might be what their theology says, but I just don't see it in the Bible. Jesus urges His listeners to ²⁴ "**Strive to enter through the narrow door...**" Now, does that mess with your theology of what it means to be "saved by grace"?

What sort of striving is Jesus urging us to do? It's about putting in a whole-hearted effort (like what you do, when you're running a race). But effort to do what? **to enter through the narrow door...**

So, what is the "narrow door"?

Well, in the context of what we've been reading over the last few weeks, to "enter through the narrow door", is:

- to repent of sin/our rejection of God; and
- to receive Jesus.
- It is, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- to submit to the Son of God,

because in Him, is where our hope is found...

And the way to salvation – the way to the eternal Kingdom of God, is indeed a “very narrow door”.

Many folk find that highly offensive.

You see, in our culture, we live in an age of Godless and humanist morality. It sort of makes-it-up as it goes along. And it seems that the highest virtue, is to be “inclusive”. And conversely, the most despised **sin**, is to be “exclusive”...

And so in our culture, Christians are criticised over and over again – “Ah, you Christians – you’re so exclusive – how dare you say that your religion is the only way...”

The thing is, “It’s true”. Jesus said: “I am **the** way/truth/life. **No** one can come to the Father except through me”....

Jesus is indeed, the narrow door. **No** one can enter the Kingdom of God – no one can be saved, apart from Jesus Christ. And there’s no pride in this – it’s not a means of condescension of others, “My God’s better than your god...”... It’s simply a matter of “what is true”...

Jesus **is** the narrow door. Even God’s chosen people of Israel – their rejection of Jesus, would keep them from entering the Kingdom of God.

But let me tell you what the narrow door is **not**. There is no bouncer at the door to the Kingdom of God, saying you don’t have any right to enter.

There’s no:

- dress code;
- background check;
- family heritage/ethnic requirement;
- blue-card required;
- ‘white Kingdom of God policy’;
- education qualification required;
- cover charge to be met;
- no tats policy;
- mental health check;
- criminal check...

The narrow door is not narrow, because you have to be a saint before you enter it... The narrow door is narrow because the only way to enter it is through repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But that in itself, is an enormous barrier for some.

Before we step through that door, we are profane, but as we enter the Kingdom of God – as we walk through the narrow door of Jesus, we are washed and purified by the blood of Jesus... It is not the sinless who enter – it is the sinner who surrenders to a Saviour.

And so, striving to enter through the narrow door, isn't at all about “works” – It's **not** about trying to do enough good things, so that I can squeeze through the door – it's about repenting of the sinful baggage we carry, as we enter into faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, to **strive**, is to put in every effort – it is to have every determination – I am coming to Jesus. I believe this. He is the only way, and I am coming to Him.

But we also strive, for a second reason. There is a cut-off point. **Don't dilly-dally** about it...

It's like our church camp. We've just announced that we've got a church camp coming up. And to those who are listening online, you are invited to our church camp as well. 9-12 August 2024 (in case you're listening to an old message. If you're listening to this as a recording, and it's 2044, don't come to camp, because I doubt that I'll be organising a church camp when I'm 75)... But please, if you are listening in to this, we would love for you to come and join us at our camp. Go to www.bushdisciples.church and click on "What's on", and you will find the details.

But we're telling everyone, "get in quick". We're staying at a caravan park in Stanthorpe, and we have no idea how many are going to come, and so we have not reserved any accommodation. It's up to you to book your own cabin or campsite. At this point, there's plenty available, but we don't know when they'll be gone.

So, don't dilly-dally about it – there is a cut-off point.

The narrow door, don't dilly-dally about that either.

Jesus said **For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**

Why won't they be able to enter? Why can't they get through the door? I'll tell you why. It's because the door has been shut.

It's not because they weren't good enough – none of us are good enough to enter the narrow door... It's because they left it too long.

once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,

And Jesus will say, "Who are you? I don't know you."

And they'll say, "Sure you do. **'We ate and drank [with you], and you taught in our streets.'**

And Jesus will go, "Nup. Don't know you... **Depart from me, all you workers of evil!"**

That sounds a bit harsh.

You see, through human eyes, we assess people as having different levels of evilness, don't we? People like us, Oh, they're good people. In fact, it's a shame they're not a Christian – they're so good, they should be... Those other people who are not like us – yeah, not so good...

But then there's the really vile ones – eww... It's a miracle if they ever get saved...

We do that, don't we – “This person's more evil than that one”... But in God's eyes, there's only 2 classes.

- There are those who repent of sin and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ while there is still time (they are the holy);
- And those who do not – those who reject the Lord Jesus, (and let's face it: delaying turning to Jesus, is a rejection of Jesus),

And those who reject Him, Jesus refers to as “workers of evil”... It is not only those who are particularly naughty – it is those who reject Him.

And so they won't enter the Kingdom of God. And on the wrong side of the door ²⁸ **In that place there will be weeping**

That's a picture of grief: “*Oh no, I've left it too long*”. – a deep regret, “*I should have turned to Jesus... and now it's too late*”...

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth

That's a picture of “rage”: “How dare you slam that door in my face. I deserve to get in.”

Now, remember that Jesus is talking here, to the people of Israel.

And their grief and rage will be intensified, when those who have rejected Jesus, will look and see the Biblical heroes of

the Old Testament **Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets** – they're all there, **in the kingdom of God** , but they themselves, have been cast out....

What Jesus is telling them, is “Your birthright, isn't going to save you, if you reject Jesus...”

You see, the religious establishment saw Jesus as someone opposed to God and opposed to His covenant... But Jesus was **not** the opposition to the covenant – He was the **fulfillment** of the covenant...

And the great heroes of the faith: **Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets** – do you know why they are there in the Kingdom of God? It's because by faith, they were looking forward to the coming of the Son of God.

Jesus did not enter their kingdom. They are welcomed into **Jesus'** Kingdom.

And do you know what will make the ones who are shut out even angrier? “There's Gentiles in the Kingdom of God” – Non-Jews. ²⁹ **And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.**

To recline at table , means “They're welcome to the party.” It's a good place to be...

This is something the Brumpton family understand well – You know it's a nice place to be, when there's a good feed on.

And so, what Jesus is doing here, is turning their expectation on its head.

Jesus says ³⁰ **And behold** [would you look at that], **some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."**

The ones they most expected to be in God's Kingdom (His chosen people, and even the religious leaders) won't make it through the narrow door. But the least expected – the Godless Gentiles – they do enter through the narrow door.

Why? Because they put their faith in the Son of God.

And you might be surprised who's in the Kingdom of God, and who is not.

And, it's critical for us to grasp here, what Jesus is highlighting:

The **emphasis** is that the door to the Kingdom of God that is now open, will be shut. And after that door is shut, there are no further chances – no matter how deep the regret – no matter how much the rage...

You see, when Jesus returns, **that** is the cut-off point. In Matthew 24, Jesus speaks of His return as a time when **the Nations will mourn**. And they will.

When Jesus returns, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord,, ...

- Those who are saved will be saying: Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord... Jesus is Lord. Praise God, He's come....; Yahoo!!!; But,
- Those who:
 - did not enter the narrow door and found themselves on the outside of the Kingdom of God;
 - rejected Jesus;
 - chose a different path

Their knee too, will bow on that day, but they will say: Oh no, what have I done... Jesus is Lord... oops...

So, some will be delighted that their Lord has come; Some will be grief-stricken...

Now, at this point, the Pharisees came to Jesus and said to Him, "You need to get away from here. King Herod wants to kill you."

That seems a bit of a change, doesn't it – it seems like the Pharisees are looking out for Jesus... I doubt that's what is happening. I suspect they were trying to shoo Jesus away...

- Maybe Herod did want to kill Jesus – I doubt it because we're told later that he, for a long time wanted to see Jesus, hoping Jesus could put on a bit of a magic show for him by doing a few miracles...
- Or maybe the Pharisees were 'spinning a yarn', in the hope that it would frighten Jesus off.

But Jesus wasn't frightened off. He said, "**Go and tell that fox, ...** As far as I can recall, I think King Herod is the only person we have a record of Jesus treating with contempt. "**Go and tell that fox, -** that cunning so-&-so...

Tell Herod what? Basically, Tell him I'm not afraid that he's going to kill me, because I have an appointment to be killed in Jerusalem, and God's going to get me there...

You see, Jesus' face was set toward Jerusalem. And He knew He was working to God's timetable/divine plan...

- I will keep winning the spiritual battle by casting out demons, and healing people.
- I will do it today;
- I will do it tomorrow;
- And I will do it the third day – I will finish my course/the plan God has set for Me.

And it will end in death in Jerusalem...

What was Jesus' mission about? It was a mercy mission...

God's desire is to intimately care for His children and to nurture His children – like a chook gathers her chickens under her wings...

But Israel (time & time again) had rejected God. They had rejected God's prophets, and they had **killed** God's prophets (His messengers of mercy)....

And in God's great mercy, He was now giving His people one last chance. He was still wanting to gather His people in to His great love (like a hen, gathering her brood)... But like the prophets that had gone before Him, Jesus too, would be killed in Jerusalem. Why? Because they were not willing to repent and come to God, through His Son.

35 Behold [Look], your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

On Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds and the Disciples of Jesus gathered, and they cheered, and that's exactly what they proclaimed as Jesus rode that donkey into Jerusalem... Luke 19:(ESV)³⁸ ... "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Is that when the Pharisees would "see" Him? I don't think so...

They were seeing Jesus now, but they didn't really "see" Him – they didn't "recognise" Him.

You see, on the day that Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem, His **Disciples** were crying out "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!, not the Pharisees. The Pharisees were trying to stop them.

Luke 19:39 (ESV)

³⁹ ... some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him,
"Teacher, rebuke your disciples."

But when Jesus returns; And when the door is shut; That is when they will "see" Jesus for Who He is. And on that day, we will **all** "see" Jesus for Who He is. And say, '**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**

What a tragedy... To fail to "see" Jesus – to fail to recognise who Jesus is;

The word for us today, remains the same:

²⁴ **Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**

You see, if I were to reject Jesus, by the time He appears, and the door is shut, it will be too late.

And I might say, "But Jesus", and He will say "But nothing".

But I know about You. Didn't you see me?

- I learned about you in Sunday school.
- I lived in Australia – I was born in a Christian country.
- I had Christian friends, and they took me along to Youth Group
- Didn't You notice me supporting those tax-deductible charities just before the EOFY each year?

- Didn't You hear me pray at the funerals I went to?
- It's ME, Jesus....

I do not know you.

Depart from me, all you workers of evil...

Weeping; gnashing of teeth...

Grief; Rage

There's a real "play on words" here. Jesus is saying to those who are **not** His, "**I do not know where you come from.**" He says it twice: '**I do not know where you come from.**'

Do you "see" Jesus? Do you "recognise" Jesus? Do you know where **He** comes from?

Strive to enter the narrow door.

Receive Jesus; Repent of sin, and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. And He gathers us to Himself, like a mother-hen gathers her brood.

That, was Jesus' mission.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for Your divine plan.

We thank You,
that Jesus willingly followed that course.
And became the door for our salvation.

We thank You for Your heart of mercy;
That You would gather us to yourself,
as a hen would gather and care for her brood.

And Lord,
we pray for those who have not yet entered the narrow
door
into the Kingdom of God.

We pray that they would "see";
That they would know the Lord Jesus for Who He is;

And that they would be saved.

in Jesus' Name,
Amen.