

## **When the Kingdom Comes Close**

### **Week 3 — “The Narrow Door”**

#### **Luke 13:18–35**

#### **BIG IDEA**

The Kingdom of God grows slowly but certainly, and because the door into that Kingdom will not remain open forever, Jesus urgently calls people to repent and enter while mercy is still available.

#### **ANCHOR TRUTH**

The Kingdom grows gradually, but the invitation to enter it is urgent.

### **INTRODUCTION — “We Want Instant Kingdoms”**

#### **Opening Movement**

We live in a culture addicted to immediacy. Think about it. We need to stream things instantly, download data that moment, ship things overnight, fix things quickly, and transform rapidly.

This doesn't end with our entertainment and household management. It extends into our spiritual experience as well. We want instant holiness, instant healing, instant revival, and we require instant answers from God. We want that growth in Christ to explode overnight.

But the Kingdom of God rarely grows instantly. Jesus compares the Kingdom not to fireworks, revolutions, armies, or explosions. Instead he uses the examples of both a tiny mustard seed and hidden yeast in dough.

These are small things. They are quiet and unimpressive. But the process shows something that is alive – a seed turning into a tree and yeast impacting dough. And if something is alive, then that something can grow. Alive things grow. Together we grow because saved people develop in God's grace.

### **I. THE KINGDOM STARTS SMALL BUT GROWS GREAT (vv. 18–21)**

#### **The Mustard Seed**

Jesus draws from two Old Testament texts here in his first example. Ezekiel 17 and Daniel 4. The Kingdom of God is the true Kingdom tree.

Unlike Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom in Daniel 4 which was temporary, built on the ruler's pride, and it was ultimately cut down and ended. But in contrast to that, Jesus says that his Kingdom grows steadily and inevitably.

### **The Birds in the Branches**

Jesus then talks about the growth and expansion from that little beginning with the mustard seed and how it blossoms and spreads. The image is global. Nations are gathering from all over. The Kingdom is open to all of them to provide shelter and refuge. For people everywhere, the Kingdom Jesus promises is a safe place of belonging.

The Kingdom may have begun with twelve disciples, comprising of mostly fishermen and one reformed tax collector. But it was also initiated by the crucified Messiah. Which means it will fill the earth.

### **The Yeast**

Again, another example of something that is quiet, hidden, and unseen as it grows but as it grows it brings about transformation.

You cannot always see yeast working but eventually the whole loaf changes.

These pictures are encouraging. Some of you are discouraged because God's work in your life feels slow. You expected immediate victory over something hard. Maybe you expected immediate healing in places that hurt. Perhaps you expected immediate maturity and growth without the process that happens unseen over time in your heart, mind, and soul.

But God often works like yeast. He works slowly but methodically. He works quietly but effectively. And He works thoroughly.

“What are you demanding instantly that God has chosen to grow gradually?”

At this point in Luke 13, someone asks Jesus, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” That question still haunts people. How many will enter the Kingdom?

But Jesus does something remarkable. He refuses to answer theoretically. Instead, He turns the question personally. It is not “How many will be saved?” Rather, it is “Will you enter?” Are you saved? What about your life? Which transitions into the next area Jesus wants to draw attention to.

## **II. THE NARROW DOOR (vv. 22–24)**

### **“Strive to Enter”**

The Greek word is where we get “agony.” Jesus is not describing casual interest. He is describing urgency.

This is not salvation by effort. There is no “earning salvation.” But you must respond to Jesus Christ seriously. Repentance is not casual.

### **The Narrow Door**

Our culture despises narrowness. We are told that “all paths are equal, and all truth claims are oppressive, and exclusivity is arrogance.” But Jesus says, “The door is narrow.”

Not because God delights in exclusion but because salvation is found in Christ alone. There is only one way that leads to life. Together we treasure Jesus because there is no other name by which one may be saved. Everyone who believes in Jesus alone can have life.

The narrow door is narrow to limit what is not allowed to enter once Jesus is trusted as Savior and Lord. Self-righteousness cannot fit through the narrow door. Self-salvation cannot fit through. Only repentant sinners enter.

## **III. MANY PEOPLE NEAR JESUS NEVER TRULY KNOW HIM (vv. 25–27)**

### **“We Ate and Drank in Your Presence”**

The narrative takes a terrifying turn in vss. 25-27. We discover that these people were religiously informed, spiritually exposed, and externally near Jesus. They walked and lived and spent time close to the actual, physical presence of Jesus. They listened to the teaching. They saw the healings.

And still did not enter the narrow door of salvation. Because mere proximity is not salvation. We say these types of things, make these types of statements all the time: “You’re no more saved because you are inside a church than you are a car because you’re inside a garage.”

We refer to being in church, but this is a real, harsh reality that the Lord Jesus himself addresses. So, in clarity, just because you have gone to church and been standing in the premises, maybe even participating in the activities for decades, does NOT mean you get to walk through the narrow door.

If you have done all of this without every surrendering your heart to Christ, you are not passing through that narrow door. You are not saved because you or your family went to church a lot. You are saved when, on a specific day, at a specific time, you trusted your life into the hands of Jesus.

Basing your salvation on statements like, “I grew up in church,” or “I know Bible stories,” or “I was baptized,” or “I volunteered,” or “I know Christian code words” is NOT the same as basing your salvation in Christ alone. If your salvation is based on what you know or what you did, one day Jesus will say, “I do not know you.”

This is not Jesus admitting to spiritual intellectual ignorance. This is Jesus using covenantal relationship. If you are basing your salvation on anything YOU every did or on what YOU know, Jesus makes it clear. You are not known by Jesus in a savingly way. Which should at least make you pause a moment today. Because the reality of not being known by Jesus in a savingly way leads to what Jesus referred to in the next verses.

#### **IV. THE REALITY OF JUDGMENT (vv. 28–30)**

This is one of the hardest teachings of Jesus. And notably, Jesus speaks more about hell than anyone else in Scripture.

##### **“Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth”**

There are two images here that depict sorrow and rage. This is Jesus illustrating what a person will feel at the tragedy of realizing too late what was rejected. That person will feel sorrow and rage.

And the source of both of those things is not Jesus, rather, it will be the person's rejection of Jesus as Savior.

### **The Great Reversal**

Jesus tells us here in the text that people from all over (east, west, north, south) will enter the Kingdom. Meanwhile some presumed insiders will tragically remain outside.

Luke repeatedly emphasizes that the Kingdom overturns expectations.

This is not meant to produce despair but urgency. The fact that the door exists at all is mercy. The astonishing thing is not that God judges sinners.

The astonishing thing is that God saves any sinners at all. Why should a holy God save rebels? Yet He does. At the cost of His own Son.

### **V. JESUS WARNS WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES (vv. 31–35)**

#### **Herod the “Fox”**

As Jesus concludes he gets warned about Herod. But Jesus will not be intimidated. Because for Jesus The cross is neither accidental nor incidental. It is mission. “I must go...”

Jesus is moving steadily toward Jerusalem, toward suffering, toward crucifixion, and toward redemption. Which moves him to lament over Jerusalem.

This changes the emotional tone completely. Jesus is not cold and he is not gleeful about judgment. He weeps. “Jerusalem, Jerusalem...”

Jesus cares about all people and wishes to bring them to himself like a hen gathering chicks under her wing. The narrow door is spoken by a Savior with tears in His eyes.

To be clear, people reject Christ willingly. Yet apart from grace, human hearts do not naturally want Christ. Sin blinds people. Sin hardens people. And sin resists Jesus.

Which is why salvation is ultimately grace from beginning to end.

### **“Do Not Mistake Smallness for Weakness”**

The Kingdom may appear small now. Maybe it is a mustard seed in dirt or yeast hidden in dough. It is built upon a crucified Savior by ordinary disciples and would begin as a local Jerusalem church quietly worshiping.

But do not mistake small beginnings for weakness. Good news abounds for us today. The Kingdom is growing. It continues to grow quietly and slowly. From church revitalizations in the United States to churches being planted in houses in Southeast Asia, the church is also growing certainly.

And the narrow door still stands open. But it will not remain open forever.

The Jesus who warned about the narrow door is the same Jesus who stretched out His arms in mercy. The same Savior who speaks of judgment is the Savior who weeps over Jerusalem.

The Kingdom has come close. Do not simply admire it from a distance.

Enter while the door still stands open.