

Five Non-negotiable Truths about Eternal Life

Luke 13:22-30

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Like the “COEXIST” bumper stickers we see on cars, the worldview that many paths lead to heaven is pervasive and politically correct in our culture. But this concept, that “all roads lead to God” is not a new philosophy; in fact, Jesus confronted the same issue during His earthly ministry. The world will call it “intolerant,” “judgmental,” and “exclusive,” but the truth remains: *narrow* is the path to life.

The average person on the street today believes salvation can be custom made, that you can custom design your robe of salvation, so to speak.

One author catalogued several well-known religious and cultural leaders who expressed this common belief that one-size fits all, that if you are sincerely religious, it’ll all work out—there are many paths to God.

Among them, he included the famous quote by Gandhi who said decades ago, “All the great religions are fundamentally the same.”

This author also quoted a well-known religious leader who said, “I am absolutely against any religion that says one faith is superior to another. I don’t see how that is anything different than spiritual racism.”

The author quoted popular talk show host, Oprah Winfrey, who said, “One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe there is only one way; there are many diverse paths leading to God.”

Mark Clark, [The Problem of God](#) (Zondervan, 2017), p. 205

The problem with this prevailing view, first and foremost, is that it’s not what the Bible says. The Bible clearly says the opposite. In fact, Jesus stated that He was ***the only way to the Father (John 14:6)***.

But here's the question: if Jesus is one of many ways to God, why would Jesus need to come to die? Why did He go through the agony of separation from the glories of heaven and die on a cross for us? Why go through all that rejection and suffering and pain? If there are other ways to get to heaven, why not just point out one of those other ways and save Himself the agony?

The truth is, the popular view allows people to sit in the seat of God, to make their own way sovereign.

And to our world, Jesus is a burr in their spiritual saddle; he's a rock in their shoe which makes them uncomfortable.

Which is why the world only wants to quote Jesus in basically one area: we call it the golden rule—treat others like you want to be treated.

The world is quick to quote the golden rule and tell everyone that Jesus talked about love and that's about all.

Yet, we're about to hear Him say something that will never be given the same status in our world as the golden rule, to this day; it will never be repeated today on talk shows, never quoted in our culture.

When Jesus said it, it offended His world, and it is just as offensive to our world today.

Let's take a closer look at Luke chapter 13; it all begins with a question from someone in the crowd that is constantly surrounding Jesus.

And as we work our way through this encounter, I want to structure our thoughts along the lines of five points.

These are **Five Non-negotiable Truths about Eternal Life.**

And here's the first non-negotiable truth:

Salvation demands a heart of humility.

Now notice Luke 13 and verse 22:

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

Luke 13:22-23a

In other words, "How many people are getting into this kingdom you've been talking about?"

Now keep in mind that the average Jewish person in this predominantly Jewish audience automatically assumed they were getting in because they were descendants of Abraham.

They were in the right family tree.

The Mishna, a collection of Jewish commentaries that was taught by the rabbis clearly stated: “All Israelites have a share in the world to come.”

R. Kent Hughes, Luke: Volume Two (Crossway Books, 1998), p. 96

The Pharisees and other religious leaders held that if you were related to Abraham, you were in the kingdom.

Earlier, the Lord had said something troubling, recorded in Matthew 7, where He said that the wide gate was the false way of the Pharisees, and the narrow gate was the true way to enter the kingdom.

Adapted from J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ (Zondervan, 1981), p. 327

So in this context here, this person is more than likely wondering how many Jewish people are getting in, since most of them followed the Pharisees. He’s also wondering how many people, in addition to the Jewish nation, are going to get into the kingdom.

And you may have noticed from this question that he assumes it isn’t going to be all that many, because he asked, **“Will those who are saved be few?”**

He’s a little worried.

Now we’re not told, but the Lord knew the heart of this curious person; more than likely what they’re really asking is, “Lord, am I going to get in? Is there room for me?”

Listen, that’s the most important question anyone will ever ask: “Am I going to live with the King in His coming kingdom?” Which is tantamount to asking, “Am I going to live with God in heaven?”

Notice, “How *many*, Lord, are getting in? Just give me the number and I’ll do the math.”

Now instead of giving a mathematical answer, the Lord gives a metaphorical answer.

Notice verse 24:

And he said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door.”

Luke 13:23b-24a

How many people are getting in? Jesus effectively answers, “Are you one of them?”

Strive to enter through the narrow door.

Now what the Lord is *not* saying here is that you must work your way in. You must work hard at squeezing through that door and if you work at it hard enough, you'll be saved.

The Bible teaches that we're ***saved by grace through faith, not as a result of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).***

The word “striving” is a word that refers to staying focused on where you're going. It's an athletic term for staying focused.

Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Compassionate: Luke 1-13 (Victor Books, 1988), p. 154

In other words, don't be distracted by the false views around you. Don't veer off the path of truth.

In his commentary, Darrel Bock writes that this word isn't suggesting that you work your way to God; it's a word that refers to being on a quest, like someone who is hunting for treasure; this striving is the same idea found in Proverbs chapter 2 where Solomon writes, ***If you seek [wisdom] like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord.***

Darrell L. Bock, Luke: Volume 2 (Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1234

In other words, do you really want it? I talk to many people about Jesus Christ and salvation and watch as their eyes glaze over in disinterest; they wander in their thoughts and then the conversation turns to the weather or sports or the latest news event.

They don't really want it! They don't think they need it!

There is humility in this quest. You are searching for wisdom because you realize you don't have any.

The fact that Jesus refers to this gate as narrow is to emphasize that it's the only one and you must assume a humble posture to get through it.

Adapted from Hughes, p. 98

Nobody's riding their high horse into the kingdom.

By the way, there are those who say that God's house has many doors, and you choose the one you want. No, there's no other door here that leads into the kingdom but this one.

The fact that it is narrow isn't so much about its size as it is about its singularity.

Beloved, the gospel is narrow—it's as narrow as the answer on your first-grade math test in school. You never got points for getting close.

My mother had kept a big box of memorabilia for each of her four sons—I had forgotten all about it. After she passed away, I was given my box, things I hadn't seen for 50 years. Inside were all my elementary school report cards. I don't know why she would've kept them—blackmail maybe?

I pulled out my first-grade report card. There was my math grade for the year: let's just say it was below C-level. But my teacher had even written a note next to it that said, "*I believe your son needs extra help in Math.*"

I never did like her.

Math is narrow. So is that runway your pilot needs to land on. So is that prescription from the doctor's office—it's that one and not any other.

We need to stop trying to make people comfortable by denying the narrow claims of Christ.

If you want into the kingdom, you come by way of that door; it's that one and not any other.

In fact, if there's any doubt about this metaphor, Jesus made it clear in **John 10:9, when He said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved."**

He's the door. Don't get distracted or deceived—He's the only door, the only way in.

I love the fact that this metaphor makes it clear that everybody entering the kingdom gets in the same way: rich or poor, princes and peasants, we all go through the same door, the same way.

This is a biblically non-negotiable truth: **Salvation demands a heart of humility. We come to God on His terms, not ours.**

Now Jesus moves from a metaphor to a parable and here's the second non-negotiable truth about salvation:

There's a time limit on your personal invitation.

Jesus goes on to say here in verse 24:

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

Luke 13:24

Now that sounds like a lot of people want to enter the kingdom of God, but they just can't get in; maybe they messed up the secret handshake or they forgot the secret password.

They really wanted to live with God forever, but for some reason God just doesn't want them!

Oh no, that's not what Jesus is saying. Keep reading: they can't get in—WHY?

Verse 25 tells us why:

“When 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,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’”

Luke 13:25

I don't know who you are.

These people in this parable only wanted to enter after they realize Jesus was telling the truth, but by then it's too late.

Jesus is using a common illustration from His generation. In these days, the city gates would be closed for the night. People returning to the city after dark had to find lodging outside the city walls, regardless of their standing or social status. And the same was true of a household closing its doors at night.

Charles R. Swindoll, [Insights on Luke](#) (Zondervan, 2012), p. 359

Jesus is delivering the truth, even if it's an uncomfortable, nonnegotiable truth.

There is a time limit on the offer of salvation.

Hughes, p. 98

That time limit happens to be the length of your life.

When you die, God closes the door. The Bible says, **“Mankind is destined to die once, and after that to face the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27)**, which is why the apostle Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 6:2**, **“Now is the day of salvation.”** **Hebrews 4:7** says, **“Today if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”**

Don't harden your heart; respond today!

What makes you think that you can reject Jesus today, but you will want Him 20 years from now? No, your heart will be 20 years more hardened than it is today.

And the day you die, Chuck Swindoll writes, is the day that narrow door slams shut—locked tight—forever.

Swindoll, p. 359

Terrifying thought? The apostle Paul wrote, **“Knowing, therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade mankind” (2 Corinthians 5:11).**

In recent weeks I have been thinking about one of the most tragic demonstrations of this time-limit offer of salvation, rejected until too late.

One of the most tragic things we could ever see—and we probably never will—would be all of the marks, the fingernail marks; the clawing marks; the dents and cuts made by hammers and hatchets, all the marks left on the door of the ark.

For 120 years, Noah had preached to his generation, warning them that it was going to rain; God was going to flood the planet and they were going to drown in the judgment of God. Their only hope is to get into this ark. Judgment is coming.

The people laughed and mocked, and eventually ignored him. They hadn’t seen rain; there was no body of water nearby; Noah had spent 120 years preaching while building a boat in his dusty old backyard. What a lunatic!

Surely if there is a God, God wouldn’t judge humanity like that? Who does God think He is and Noah, who do you think you are to say that only those who get on that ark will be saved. How arrogant, how exclusive, how narrow can you be?

But then—it began to rain. And the fountains underneath the Earth’s surface erupted. And the water rose, but it was too late, for we read in **Genesis chapter 7 and verse 16** that God had shut the door. Not Noah, God shut the door.

How many people wanted to get on the Ark once the water started rising? There were no unbelievers then. They were listening now.

I can’t imagine the clawing and clamoring and pounding on that door. No one had believed until it was forever too late.

And that’s the point here in the Lord’s parable: they wanted in only after the door was shut.

Here’s the non-negotiable truth: this invitation has an RSVP—there’s a time limit, and if you’re alive, there’s still time to send it in.

Now Jesus anticipates the argument that will arise here.

Let me give you the third non-negotiable truth before we look further in the text—here it is:

Being familiar with the things of God does not make you a member of the family of God.

Now verse 26:

“Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’”

Luke 13:26

In other words, what do you mean you don't know who we are? Of course you do! You walked the streets in our villages; you taught in our streets and synagogues; we listened to you; we learned some things from you; we even ate meals when you stayed for the weekend.

If anybody's got an inside track, it's us—we hung out!

Listen, being exposed to the truth of Christ doesn't mean you've accepted the truth about Christ.

If listening to Jesus preach and eating meals with Him was a guaranteed spot in the kingdom, Judas would be on the front row.

If attending Temple services faithfully could save you, the Sanhedrin and Caiphas the High Priest would be in heaven for sure.

If personally hearing the truth of who Christ was, directly from His lips, made you a Christian, Pilate would go straight to heaven as well.

Adapted from Hughes, p. 99

Hearing the gospel is not the same thing as believing the gospel.

This is a non-negotiable truth that Jesus is telling the world that cares to listen today:

Being familiar with the things of God does not mean you belong to the family of God.

Non-negotiable truth number four:

Ignoring God's invitation will have eternal consequences.

The last part of verse 27 again:

“I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!”

Luke 13:27b

Notice how Jesus pulls off the mask of their religious facade and effectively says, “You might have listened to me preach in your streets and we might have had some meals together, but nothing I said entered your heart.

What you were really interested in was evil—wicked living. You might’ve listened to some of my sermons on Saturday, but they made no difference on Monday or Wednesday or Friday.”

You were **workers of evil**; literally, evil was your occupation; you worked at making sure you could sin every chance you could.

We would say of people like that today, “they party on Saturday and then praise God on Sunday.”

But let me tell you, Jesus isn’t fooled by Sunday clothes and religious overtones; He says to them here, “You will be cast out.”

And He now describes the place where they are cast, here in **verse 28**:

“In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Luke 13:28a

This is a description of hell. **Weeping** is a sign of sadness and **gnashing of teeth** is an expression or sign of anger and hatred (**Psalm 35:16**).

Clinton E. Arnold, General Editor; Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Volume 1 (Zondervan, 2002), p. 438

From other passages, this is a description of hell. They are sad they are there, but at the same time infuriated and filled with hate toward God.

I find it interesting that people want to choose their own path and they seem to believe that whatever path they choose is going to take them to heaven; I have yet to meet someone who is choosing their own path who says to me with delight that they know it’s going to lead them to hell.

Have you noticed that our world says that all roads seem to lead everybody to heaven—all roads lead everybody to God.

But the Bible says in **Proverbs 14:12: There is a road that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.**

Jesus pictures them here as if they’re looking through the windows into the kingdom—**verse 28**:

“When you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.”

Luke 13:28b

This word for **cast out** is the same verb used in **Revelation 20** following the final judgement of all unbelieving humanity at the Great White Throne. The Bible describes that final judgment in horrifying terms:

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15

This is nonnegotiable truth about eternal life: to reject Him is to be rejected one day by Him.

But while you're still alive, there is hope for you. Here's the last nonnegotiable truth I want to draw out from this passage:

Anyone can accept the invitation no matter who they are or what they've done.

Jesus delivers a global invitation here in verse 28:

"And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Luke 13:29-30

People will arrive from all four points of the compass—east, west, north, and south—pointing to the fact that people from every tongue, tribe, and nation—Jew and Gentiles from around the world—will all be seated at the feast of the redeemed.

Adapted from Dale Ralph Davis, [Luke: The Year of the Lord's Favor](#) (Christian Focus, 2021), p. 247

Some unknown, some well-known, some recorded in Scripture, some never mentioned. But all forgiven.

You might be seated across from Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, maybe Adam, or Job. It could be Ruth, or Eve; you might be seated next to Moses, or Joseph; perhaps the Lord will seat you next to Lydia or Phoebe, or Mary, or it could be Paul, Peter or Thomas.

Who knows where you will be seated? God knows—He's already made the seating assignments! Whether first or last or last or first or somewhere in the middle—you are there!

These are the non-negotiables of eternal life!

1. Salvation demands a heart of humility.

We come to Christ on His terms. We don't choose the path; He is the path; we don't choose the door—He is the door.

2. There's a time limit on the offer of salvation.

There's a time limit to RSVP, and that's because salvation isn't on your terms or according to your timeline, but God's. And time is running out!

3. Being familiar with the things of God does not mean you belong to the family of God.

Hearing the gospel is not the same thing as believing the gospel.

4. Ignoring God's invitation has eternal consequences.

Discard the invitation of Christ at your own peril!

5. Anyone can accept the invitation, no matter who they are or where they came from.

The passport is stamped for everyone the exact same way, no matter what your past, no matter where you came from, no matter how young or old you were when you arrived at the gate of salvation, everyone's passport is stamped the same way: **Citizen of Heaven.**

You were not deceived or distracted from Christ.

You're in! You're there!

How did you get in? Through that narrow door; over that doorway, John Bunyan wrote in Pilgrim's progress, where the words from Scripture are written over it, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

And through that narrow doorway, the path led up to the cross of Christ and there the burden of sin rolled away.

This passage has moved us from curiosity to urgency.

Davis, p. 245

It began with the question and then moved into an urgent invitation: "Lord, how many are going to be saved? Is it just a few?"

The Lord turns it around and effectively says, "The question is not, 'How many will be saved?' The question is: 'Will you be one of them?'"

Bock, p. 1241

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