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Luke

Chapter 13 - An Unpredictable End
No Place for Strangers (vs. 22-30)

Luke 13:22-30: And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” And He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’; and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.’ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. And they will come from

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

That's a very poignant passage, isn't it? I think one of the things that it demonstrates is that there are people that perceive certain things just by virtue of their own imagination. You know, you ask certain individuals, “Where are you going when you die?” “Oh, heaven.” “How do you know that?” “Well, I just... I'm a good person.” I mean, you get all kinds of interesting answers. It's really just a figment of their own imagination. It doesn't mean that it's necessarily true. I mean, just because you think something doesn't mean it's true, right? I mean, you **do** know that. We all have opinions and imaginations, and that really doesn't make something so. There is a truth and it is absolute. And this is why we keep going back to the word of God. We know that man has tried to change it through the years, but it remains the same. And so, you come into this wonderful text in

Timothy where Paul says, "All Scripture is God breathed and is profitable for correction, for reproof, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect and complete. And God is the only One that can do that. His Word is the only thing. God's Spirit takes His Word and uses it. The Spirit of God never works outside the Word of God. And of course, the wonderful thing is, as John 1 says, the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld the glory of God, the glories of the only begotten, full of grace and truth. In other words, when you read the Old Testament in particular, you read and you go, "I wonder what God's like?" And you read the New Testament, you go, "I wonder what God's like?" But Jesus comes and He walks among us, and He goes, "I'm the living word." The One who created all things is walking among us. The way that Hebrews 1 puts it is, He is the exact representation of God's nature. And He walked among us. Think about it, the fact that John leaned on the Creator. Just think about that! You just leaned on the Creator of the universe, and He embraced you. And they felt comfortable with Him. People wonder, "I wonder what heaven's like?" Well, in His presence is fullness of

joy; at His right hand are pleasures forevermore. You're with Jesus, and He loves you.

John 17 reminds us that in that prayer of Christ, He prays to the Father as He is a part of the Father, they never cease to be one. And He says, "These guys are coming with Me, and they're going to stay with Me." And then He makes this statement, "And I have others that I'm going to bring in too." We're the others, aren't we? And it's wonderful to know.

So, the question is, how do we know? And by what standard do we come into heaven? Is it something that I fabricate or is it something that God states? Is He the one that controls things, or am I the one that controls things? I mean, I can't even control whether or not I catch a bug. I can't even control whether I'm going to live the next day or not. I mean, you and I don't control things. The evidence of that is all around us. Nevertheless, we seem to deny the reality of it. But we have this word of God that is immutable. It doesn't change. And that's what truth is. Truth never changes. It's absolute. It never changes. And so, Hebrews will say we have this anchor for

our soul, both sure and steadfast. So, why do we get in the word of God? Why is it that we dissect the word of God? Why do we seek what the word of God says? Because it is the truth. We are not the truth. It is the truth. The Word is the truth. And then Jesus says, “I am the truth.” And so, we understand that if we're going to find what is real and what is reality, we have to come to Scripture.

Luke 13 opens with the perceptions of man. The perception of man is that if something bad happens to people, they must have been really bad people. And so, somebody brings that up in the crowd with Jesus, and they go, “You remember when Pilate slaughtered those people that were sacrificing in the temple? Were they really bad people?” And Jesus goes, “Let Me tell you something. Every one of you need to repent.” Then Jesus goes on, He says, “So, do you think the people that died in the tower of Siloam that came down when it killed so many people and here they were, they were in a place where they could wash and get purified for the time of going to the temple, were these horrible people or were

these people that really wanting to do the right thing? And yet they died in this seemingly arbitrary event. Do you think that was that they were horrible people?" Jesus goes, "I tell you no. Everyone needs to repent." Everyone needs to change their way of thinking. "*Metanoeō*" is the word which He uses for "repent". Everybody needs to stop thinking the way they think and listen to God and let Him tell you how to think because we think wrong.

So, we come to this wonderful passage in which He's reminding us that we all have sinned. It's just simply that Romans 3, right? "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There's none righteous, not even one." And you can go down the list, whether it's Adam or Job or whoever. It was a hard lesson for Job to learn because Job actually was the most righteous man on the planet, Scripture says. But there's not enough righteousness to save you. And Job had to come to the point of realizing that. I would say the more righteous that you perceive yourself, the harder it's going to be to convince you that you need a Savior. So, you're actually in a bad place there.

All the way through the Gospel of Luke, He is reminding us that God thinks not like we do. And so, as we gave you the title for the book, “Good News for the Unlikely,” because the unlikely are saved. And all the way through the book, we see those that we go, “Man, I sure wouldn't have thought that they would be in heaven.” And God goes, “Yeah, that's right, they're unlikely.” And so, only the Gospel of Luke will talk about the good Samaritan, which can Samaritans be saved? They not only can be saved, they're the one that God sees. And you have this man on the cross that's a criminal, and he just says, “Remember me,” and he's in heaven. And you go, “Well, that's highly unlikely.” And God says, “I know, that's what I'm trying to show you.” The wonderful message goes to these characters who are just shepherds, and fishermen are the ones that are called to be disciples. And there's nothing that seems to match the paradigm that man has for heaven. And that's the Gospel of Luke.

It is through the parable that He states in Chapter 13 in which He gives in verse 18,

(Luke 13:18) “... “What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?”

(Luke 13:19) It is like a mustard seed...”

And once again, the picture of the mustard seed is that you have the smallest seed that is planted in the garden. And that particular phrase that He uses, the guy just kind of throws the seed in there. It's almost hardly visible. Just throw it and... Well, maybe it'll take, or maybe it won't. And the carelessness of it. And yet Jesus goes, “That's the kingdom of heaven. You know what you just threw on the ground and what you perceive to be as insignificant? That's the kingdom of heaven. And in the garden, it becomes the greatest. And it shelters and the birds of heaven or the wings of heaven begin to reside there.” It's an interesting picture.

He says this in verse 20,

(Luke 13:20) “And again He said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?”

(Luke 13:21) It is like leaven...”

Of course, leaven is just despised by the Jews. You don't have leaven in your bread. And Jesus has put it in a very simple way, "Yes, the ones that you despise are in the kingdom of heaven too."

It'll be in the Gospel of Luke that we have, once again, the Pharisee crying unto the Lord, and saying, "I thank You that I'm so wonderful." And the one that is a tax collector saying, "Have mercy on me, a sinner." And Jesus says, "Who do you think I heard?" It is that humility that God is looking for.

So, we pick up in verse 22, Jesus begins to pass through different cities as He's heading to Jerusalem. I just want to emphasize this. He's been on this trek, His final trek to Jerusalem from Chapter 9. So, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and all the way to 19; in Chapter 19, He will finally arrive in Jerusalem. So, He's coming down from Galilee and He's heading that way. So, all of these messages and all these sermons are on His last trek to Jerusalem.

If you look with me in Luke 9, you'll see Him coming, and it says in verse 51,

(Luke 9:51) “When the days were approaching for His ascension...”

That is to say, Him being taken up.

“... He was determined (resolutely set His face) to go to Jerusalem.”

Why is He going there? To die. As He states and will state, “This is why I came, to die for your sins.” That's the whole reason He came.

So, verse 22, He's on his way and Scripture is wanting us to know that His teaching is to remind us that we need to get right. Let me just emphasize something. Scripture tells us that He's going to be the Judge of all things. So, the Judge is heading to the cross to die for your sins. Jesus is going to the cross to die for your sins. What will you be judged on? That's the question. Because your sins are that which are crucified. How is He going to judge you? Just because you and I think that we're okay doesn't mean we are. Just because we think that we're righteous doesn't mean we are. And so, Christ is going to judge our sins. Christ is the Judge of what is good and true and righteous and acceptable.

(Romans 2:16) “... God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

Did you catch that statement? He's going to judge the secrets of men. He's going to judge your hearts through Christ Jesus.

John 5:27 reads this way, “All authority has been given to Me to execute judgment, and I'm going to judge.”

Acts 17, the question is, how do I know the person that God has ordained to judge me? And Acts 17:31 says who it is. It's the guy who's raised from the dead. He says, “Just look. It's not going to be hard. It's not going to take brain surgery. Watch the guy who raises from the dead and stays alive. It is Christ alone.”

So, we come to verse 22,

(Luke 13:22) “And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.”

Someone in the crowd is there following Him. Certainly, He picks up an entourage on the way, not only with His disciples, but many others. And he cries out. It is actually

in the Greek vocative, which means that he's crying this out.

(Luke 13:23) “And someone said to Him, “Lord...”

Now, the word that he uses, “*kyrios*,” makes reference to the fact that he perceives Him as somebody who makes the decision. When you use that particular word, that's the guy that makes decisions.

“And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” ...”

And Jesus then answers. Once again, if you put it in the context of the chapter, all of us have a perception that we're in the few. I mean, especially when you see people that are just noticeably a lot worse than you. You go, “Too bad, they're probably not going to make it.” And so, you think in terms of that just a few of us, we're going to make it. What Jesus is going to do is, He's going to turn the pronouns around and He's going to say, “I'm concerned about you.”

So, He says this in verse 24,

(Luke 13:24) “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

Now, the picture is not as much that the door itself is narrow, although it wouldn't be a wrong understanding of the text to throw that in. But actually, the picture of the phrase that is used within the text is somebody trying to squeeze in where it's very difficult to get in. And the reason why this is true is not necessarily, once again, that the door itself is so terribly small, but because there are so many people crowding it and keeping you from getting in. If you've ever been in a massive crowd of people and you have one door to get through and the door is crowded around it, people are walking back and forth or whatever, it's hard to get through that door. You have to squeeze through this person, squeeze through another person, because there are so many hindrances, and that literally is the word that is used within the text. You're going to have to strive because there's a lot of things keeping you back. And quite frankly, the greatest thing that keeps us back is our pride. But it's people telling you, “Well, you don't have to humble yourself. I mean, a

mustard seed? Come on. It's not about being small, it's not about being humble, it's about being great." I mean, if you're like the Sadducees and the Pharisees, you have the garb to prove just how righteous you are. And the perception is, by virtue of the fact that you've studied more than everybody else, you have the background, you went to seminary, you went to all these things, you're a shoo-in for heaven. I mean, some of you probably have perfect attendance! It doesn't matter. All of these thoughts are crowding in and keeping you from the door.

The word that Jesus uses, "strive," is actually where we get the word "agonize". And it's going to be agonizing because of the fact that you're going to have to give up stuff. "Laying aside every weight," Paul writes in Hebrews, "and encumbrance of sin." Boy, that's hard to do. Because as Jesus had been saying all along, "You're going to have to pick up a cross and follow Me." Remember, He's heading to Jerusalem to die on the cross. So, you're saying, "I want to go in Your door." And He goes, "Okay, you've got to pick up a cross. And there's not much room and it's going to be hard because a lot of people are going

to try to discourage you. They're going to try to tell you something else. You're going to listen to all kinds of sounds and you're going to have to work hard..." Here's a very interesting picture, "You're going to have to work hard at being humble." I think it's probably the hardest thing that we have to strive to do. I mean, who thinks that way? Who thinks that the least is going to be the greatest? That's what He says about the kingdom of heaven. The servant will be the one that will be exalted. But that's not true on this earth. The last will be first. I mean, every conceivable thought of the kingdom is paradoxical in our thinking. We go, "That just doesn't match the way that we would perceive things." So, you have to strive to not allow those thoughts to take over. When Scripture says you need to repent, it means you have to stop thinking the way that you think. And you've got to come to the point where you go, "Okay, Thy will be done, whatever You say. It's Your kingdom." You just see God in heaven going, "Thank you." I could just imagine people going, "I should be in heaven." And God goes, "It's My house."

And that's one of the things that He mentions in verse 25.

(Luke 13:25) “Once the head of the house gets up...”

A compound word in the Greek, “*oikodespotēs*”. The last part of the word probably sounds familiar, “*despotēs*”. So, “*oikos*”- He's the house master. He's the one that calls the shots. And He's the only one that has the absolute power to let you in or not let you in. It's His house.

“Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door...”

You can begin to knock on the door all you want to; He's not going to let you in. It's His house. I mean, you can demand, “I demand You open the door,” but it's His house. He sets the rules. And that's why we read, you know, “Thy kingdom come.” It's His kingdom. It's His rules. It's His standards. What are His rules and standards?

“... and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you...”

Oh wow, that's an interesting switch in the pronouns.

“Oh Lord, are there just a few that are getting into heaven?” “Let Me say what the Master's going to say to **you.**”

“... ‘I do not know where you are from.’”

That phrase, it takes you back because you're going, “He wants to know what they are like, right?” No. Where you're coming from. What perspective are you coming from? How do you think? “You think foreign than Me.”

We're all familiar with that wonderful passage in Matthew 7 that just grabs your heart every time you read it. Because Jesus says, “Not everybody who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ is going to enter the kingdom of heaven.” For all those people that think, “I said it, it must be true.” And God says, “No, you need to worship Me not only in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3) The point of that is, it has to be real.

Was it in the Gospel of Luke? He turns to those that are following Him, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and you don't do what I say?” Everybody likes to use the words.

Jeremiah 7 talks about those that were crying out, and they say, “We've been in the temple of God. We've been in the temple of the Lord. We've been in the temple of the Lord.” He goes, “It doesn't matter. Say it as many times as you want to. It doesn't make it true. This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. There's nothing genuine about anything you're saying. You have to come and worship Me in spirit and in truth.” Isn't that what He states in John 3?

(Luke 13:26) “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’.”

We're dealing with lessons of proxemics or some kind of merit that we were in His presence by virtue of the fact that we were privileged to hear the things that we heard.

This is fundamentally the passage of Hebrews, and I know we covered it a little bit last week, but if you look with me in Hebrews 6, it gives this interesting picture that really parallels to the text that we're looking at in verse 4.

(Hebrews 6:4) “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

(Hebrews 6:5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.”

In other words, you've reaped benefits. You walked through the door. You heard the word of God; you were blessed by it. You had the fellowship of other believers, and they were hugging you and embracing you and telling you how much they were thankful that you were there. You had all those wonderful benefits. In fact, you could sense the Spirit of God in your presence.

(Hebrews 6:6) “and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”

In other words, you took all the benefits and you disregarded how you got them. It was because of His love for you. It was because He died. And you just literally spit on the cross of Christ.

He gives this wonderful picture in verse 7,

(Hebrews 6:7) “For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful...”

But it can also bring,

(Hebrews 6:8) “... thorns and thistles...”

It's a sad thing to say that many people get the benefits of God, but the fruit thereof is just pain and sorrow. And they abuse the things. They don't give Him thanks. They don't recognize that He was the One that gave them the blessings, and so they become not only useless in their production, but they become hateful in their response to people.

(Hebrews 6:8) “but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.”

It's a reminder within the passage. And the reminder clearly is that it's not just simply about an experience. Let me just throw this in, no extra charge; it's one of the reasons why we don't go into the whole entertainment thing. We go into the entertainment stuff, and you change because of our entertainment, you came for the wrong reasons. And you might even come at the end of the day before the throne of God, and go, “We got into that whole thing just like everybody else,” and God could

go, “I don't care. There wasn't an ounce of truth in your heart.” And if you can accept the truth when nothing is beckoning you but the truth, you are saved. If you rely upon anything else... This is why Paul will say in Romans 1, “I'm not ashamed of the gospel. That's the power. Nothing else is the power.”

And so, we come to this Luke 13,

(Luke 13:26) “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’;

(Luke 13:27) and He will say, ‘I tell you...’”

Look at how personal this is.

“... I do not know where you are from...”

“You're not coming from the perspective of My Father. He's not the One that sent you to Me. You have a different mindset than Us. You don't even think like Us.” And so, you ultimately have to ask yourself, “Well, how does He want us to think?” And what He's been telling us all the way through the Gospel of Luke is, “You need to come with humility and say, ‘It's all You; it's none of me. It was all what Christ did and none of what I've done.’” You

need to come in humility like the tax collector that says, "Have mercy on me a sinner," instead of the Pharisee that goes, "I thank You God that I'm not like these other people." You've got to start thinking like a mustard seed. And if it takes a little agonizing to think that way, to think that you're not as important as you think you are, then get there. But strive to think that way. Because as you come to that point, God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and He'll exalt you. He'll exalt you.

(Luke 13:28) "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Once again, we've been going through the Old Testament in the first service, and we're familiar with Abraham and Isaac. They're not perfect people. Clearly, tremendously flawed. But every one of them ultimately came to a point of faith and giving up their own manipulation, their own righteousness. Romans

4 will clearly put it in this way, "And Abraham was declared righteous because of his faith, not by his works." And so, you just take the whole works things out, and you go, "Why is he sitting at a table? I mean, clearly these are the paragons, but how come they get to sit, and I don't?" I mean, you may have even looked nicer than them in some of the things.

I mean, when I consider Judah as one of the tribes, and of course the tribe in which Christ came, he was one of the worst. I mean, he not only helped sell his brother Joseph into slavery, but he went into incest. I mean, there were horrible things that he did. And yet, God humbled him through that. And he turned to God and he repented.

What is God looking for? Well, I would say this, that whole repentance thing is an agonizing event. Because there's a day that you come to, and you realize, "You know, I've been doing everything wrong. I've been thinking it was all me. And I've got to let go of that. I got to let go of all of my trophies. I got to let go of all of my pride. And I've got to say, 'You know, if it weren't for You,

I couldn't be saved.'” And if you'll come in that simplicity, God will save you.

This is why when you look at the parable of the soils, remember the parable of the soils in Luke? It's in all the gospels except John. When you look at the last one, the good soil, that's the soil that's been tilled, remember? That's the good soil. That means that the rocks are pushed out and there aren't any weeds. Well, that takes a lot of digging and hoeing and all kinds of stuff and a lot of beating and a lot of agony. If in fact you've gone through a lot of pain and a lot of suffering, a lot of hardship lately, thank God, you're getting close. God's humbling you, and you're at a point where, as Scripture says, you begin to receive the word of God with a good and honest heart once you get there, but it's agonizing. I agree. It's agonizing.

“... but yourselves being thrown out.

(Luke 13:29) And they will come from east...”

This is probably the greatest insult that the Jews could hear.

“And they will come from east and west and from north and south...”

In other words, “All those horrible people that you say are most undeserving, they're going to be at the table when you're not.”

“... and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.
(Luke 13:30) And behold, some are last...”

He uses the word “*eschatos*,” where we get the word “eschatology,” within the passage. In this particular setting, clearly, it's in the nominative which describes the kind of people that they were viewed as being.

“Nominative” just simply means that it's a naming case, which simply means that it identifies them as who they are. It'd be like you calling me “Gary”. That's my name. That's a naming case. They were called “last”. That was their name. We'll put it in another way, “the insignificant”. They were called “the insignificant”. And Jesus says, “You know the ones that are insignificant? They're going to be first. They're going to be above the others.” That's the way it reads.

“... some are last who will be...”

Future tense. They will be called and declared “chief,” highest in rank.

“... and some are first (highest in rank) who will be (declared) last.”

Scripture is full of paradoxes from our perspective because of the fact that we see things in a certain way. But as Isaiah 5 says, we think upside down. The only thing Jesus has done is make things right. If you've ever been with somebody that's full of themselves, you realize you don't want them in heaven either, but they can be saved if they humble themselves.

Closing Prayer:

Father, I give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us and for Your saving us. We come to the realization that all has sinned and fall short with the glory of God. None of us are righteous and none of us deserve anything but Your judgment upon us. The day is coming when You will judge and the only thing that You'll judge us by is, did we admit

that we were a sinner and need a Savior? Or did we deny it? You'll judge the motives and intent of our heart, and did we mean it when we said it? Or were we just throwing out some words?

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. What I'm asking you to do is to mean it; to come to God today, and say, "I receive Your Son." But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right, the power, to become children of God, even to those who would believe in His name. That whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Or as Romans 10:9-10 says, "If you'll confess Him as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you can be saved." But let me tell you something. There are just a few that are being saved because there are very few that can make it through that door with all the noise and all the people pushing them in different directions. You're going to have to squeeze through. You're going to have to stop listening. And you're going to have to let go of some of your own stuff because it's hindering you from getting through. Take this moment and pray.