



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Luke 13:18 - 30*

**18** Jesus said, “What is the kingdom of God like? To what shall I compare it? **19** It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took & sowed in his garden, & it grew & became a tree, & the birds of the air made nests in its branches.” **20** Again he said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? **21** It is like leaven that a woman took & hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.” **22** He went on his way through towns & villages, teaching & journeying toward Jerusalem. **23** Someone said to him, “**Lord, will those who are saved be few?**” He said to them, **24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many...will seek to enter & will not be able. 25** When once the master of the house has risen & shut the door, & you begin to stand outside & to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ **26** Then you will begin to say, ‘**We ate & drank in your presence, & you taught in our streets.**’ **27** But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’ **28** In that place there will be weeping & gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham & Isaac & Jacob & all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. **29** People will come from east & west, & from north & south, & recline at table in the kingdom of God. **30** Behold, some are last who will be first, & some are first who will be last.” (Lk. 13:18-30)

**Presume:** educated guesses based on probability or reasonable evidence. We tend to **believe something is true without absolute proof, usually because it is highly probable or based on reasonable evidence.** For example:

- **If a ship’s captain goes missing during a violent storm & cannot be found, they are legally presumed dead after a certain period of time, allowing insurance & estate procedures to move forward.**

- *If your friend always goes to the gym on Monday nights & doesn't reply to your 6pm text, you might **presume that they are at the gym.***

**Presumption**, in a biblical context, refers to the act of **taking liberties or assuming a position or privilege without proper authority or warrant**. It often involves overstepping boundaries, acting with unwarranted confidence, or making assumptions about God's will without seeking His guidance. Presumption is considered a sin because it reflects a lack of humility & a disregard for God's sovereignty and wisdom. Examples: Nadab & Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2), Israelites in Wilderness (Num. 14:39-45), King Saul (1 Sam. 13:8-14), Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6-7), King Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:16-21), Pharisees prayer (Luke 18:9-14), Future (Jms. 4:13-16).

### 1. Context: Three Parables on the Kingdom

- **"The next three parables** (vv 18, 20, 28-29), **speak of the kingdom of God ...The parable of the mustard seed has parallels in Mk. 4:30-32; Matt. 13:31-32.**" (Alan Culpepper, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary Vol. VIII, Luke John* , p. 227)
- **"After seeing [the] wonderful miracle of healing [Lk. 13:10-17], the people might have been tempted to think that the kingdom would be set up immediately . The Lord Jesus disabused their minds by setting for two parables of the kingdom of God which describe it as it would exist between the time of the king's rejection & his return to the earth to reign ."** (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* , 1423)
- **"The Jewish expectation of an eschatological messianic banquet, derived ultimately from Isaiah 25:6-9, was much elaborated in later prophetic & apocalyptic texts (Ps. 23:5). In Isaiah's vision it was to be a banquet for all nations, but by the first century it was generally assumed that it was the Jews, as the chosen people of God, who were guaranteed a place there, with the exception of those few who had specifically forfeited their place through rebellion & unbelief . The idea of only a few finding the way to salvation (13:22-27) & of Gentiles coming in to replace Jews (13:28-29) was therefore by now a quite subversive notion."** (R.T. France, *Teach the Text Commentary Series* , p. 449)

### 2. What is the Kingdom?

- Jewish expectation & presumption – return to the 'golden era' – they expect big change to come quickly
  - **"Any first century Jew, hearing someone talking about God's kingdom...would know this meant revolution . Jesus grew up in the shadow of kingdom-movements. The Romans had conquered his homeland about sixty years before he was born. They were the last in a long line of pagan nations to do so. They had installed Herod the Great, & then his sons after him, as puppet monarchs to do their dirty work for them. Most Jews...longed for a chance to revolt ... They wanted it because of what they believed about God, themselves & the world . If there was one God who had made the whole world, & if they were his special people, then it couldn't be God's will to have pagan foreigners ruling them. What's more, God had made promises in their scriptures that one day he would indeed rescue them & put everything right. And these promises focused on one thing in particular: God would become king,...of the whole world . A king who would bring justice & peace at last... God's kingdom was what they longed for, prayed for, worked for, & were prepared to die for. And now Jesus was declaring that God's kingdom, the sovereign rule of heaven, was approaching ..."** (N.T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1* , pp. 28-9)
  - **"The expression [Kingdom of God] summarizes the hopes & dreams of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries who longed for the fulfillment of the OT prophecies which spoke of a return of a golden era to Israel ."** (Craig Evans, *Understanding the Bible Commentary: Luke* , p. 108)
- Where God's rule is
  - **"The kingdom of God is like'...means, 'This is how God's rule is being established.' "** (R.T. France, *Op Cit* , p. 449)

- *“The kingdom is present in a more hidden form today . It doesn’t manifest the fullness of power that it will possess one day, nor is it called to any one nation, party or human institution. Rather, **the kingdom is found wherever God’s people are found** . Its power is revealed in the effective transformation of lives that serve as a testimony to the living God (Rom 14:17-18). **To manifest the kingdom’s presence is not to build buildings or pass laws, but to honor God with a quality of life that is directed powerfully in the transforming work of his Spirit** . If God’s people have any priority, it should be the commitment to live, relate, & serve in a way that honors him.” (Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Application Commentary: Luke* , p. 386)*

### 3. Are the Mustard Seed & Leaven Pictures of Mutation & Corruption in the Kingdom?

- *“It is important to note that **these parables do not compare the kingdom of God to leaven or mustard seed per se, but rather to the function** that leaven & mustard seed have in their specific parabolic narratives.” (Ryan S. Schellenberg, “Kingdom as Contaminant?...Parables of the Mustard Seed & Leaven,” *CBQ* #71 (2009), p. 541)*

#### a. Mustard seed mutation?

- *“ **Some dispensationalists hold that a mustard seed does not grow into a tree & that the growth depicted in the parable should, therefore, be viewed as unnatural, unhealthy** (Strauss 1980: p. 65) **or malignant** (Wilson 1994: p. 76), **resulting in a monstrosity** (Long 1997: p. 44). According to this view, if the “birds” in the parable of the Sower (13:4) refer to the evil one (13:19), & if the image is used consistently, the reference to ‘birds of the air’ in the parable of the mustard seed (13:32) should also be taken negatively. It is submitted that the referent of ‘the birds’ ([peteinon], 13:4) is not precisely the same as ‘the birds ([peteinon] of the air’ (13:32). Therefore, it does not seem inconsistent to understand ‘the birds’ of the parable of the Sower differently from the “birds of the air” in the parable of the mustard seed. Toussaint (1980:181-182) points out that the birds of the air are not necessarily a reference to evil characters, but rather describes the prosperous growth in number of the heirs of the kingdom.” (Jacob J. Scholtz, *Collective meaning & specific, prophetic reference in the parables of Matt. 13?* pp. 109-110)*
- *“ **In Rev. 10:2 [‘Babylon] has become the habitation of every unclean & hateful bird.’** The negative picture of ‘birds’ is **reminiscent of the fowls that came & devoured the seed** that fell on the rocky path in the Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:4). The ‘wicked one’ (Mt. 13:19) is **Satan himself** . And ‘the birds of the air come & lodged’ in the greatest among herbs, in the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt. 13:32).” (D. Wade Stockman, *Signatures in the Book of Revelation* , p. 300)*
- *“In general, **this parable refers to the rapid growth of the church**. The kingdom of heaven refers to the sphere of profession (those who only profess belief) that obviously grows fast.” (John F. Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible* , p. 375)*

#### b. Leaven as corruption?

- *In Scripture “ **leaven is commonly viewed negatively** , but other texts show positive uses, especially in [OT] peace offerings [etc.]...When leaven is used negatively, the context makes that clear... **Nothing in the context here [Mt. 13:33] suggests anything but a positive use** .” [Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent* , p. 233]*
- *“ **A few commentators interpret the parable of leaven [yeast]... as a symbol of corrupting influence within the Bible** , most notably in the context of using only unleavened bread for Passover, [but,] **it is not always so used** (see. Lev. 23:17). The **immediate context here makes a negative interpretation highly unlikely** . Jesus frequently pairs parables together that make the same basic point...Similar patterns are probably present in these two passages.” (Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus & the Gospels* (3rd ed.) p. )*
- *Bernard “Scott understands the parable of the leaven [in light of the fact that,] ‘leaven in the ancient world was a symbol for moral corruption,’ [so,] the parable “insists on the kingdom’s freedom to appear under its own guise, even if it be the guise of corruption.” (Bernard B. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable* , p. 329*
- *“Since leaven [can] symbolize the pervasiveness of either positive or negative influence, the decision whether it is a positive or negative symbol in this instance must derive from the parable itself. The use of **leaven as a cipher for the kingdom** of God makes it clear that here [it] **represents the pervasive power of something good** .” (Ryan Schellenberg, *Op Cit* , p. 542)*

## 4. Parable of the Mustard Seed (vv. 18-19)

## a. Why Jesus uses ordinary illustrations

- **“ Why does Jesus turn immediately to his double attempt to characterize the kingdom? One hint is found already in the nature of the comparisons he draws. Jesus does not...reach for images normally associated with royalty & kingdom-making in order to depict the nature of God's dominion; instead, he draws on first-century Palestinian village life . The parable [of the mustard seed] (v 19) focuses on the contrast between the mustard seed & the tree into which it grows. One typically thinks of a shrub rather than a mustard 'tree,' so that Jesus seems deliberately to emphasize the notion of astonishing extravagance in his analogy. This idea is furthered by the detail that birds nest in the branches of this tree – a possible allusion to several OT texts emphasizing the bounty of God's favor & the universal reach of God's empire. Why is this point not made with reference, say, to the mighty cedar of Lebanon (Ezek. 17:23)? No doubt, this is grounded in the dissonance of Jesus' message: God's kingdom is established through means other than the coercive power & intrigue usually associated with the establishment of a new order, & his dominion purposefully seeks out persons who do not represent the socially powerful and privileged .”** (Joel B. Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* , pp. 557-8)

## b. The Kingdom of God will one day embrace all people

- **“A mustard seed is tiny (Lk. 17:6), but it produces a large plant: Brassica nigra can grow to more than two meters in height. 'Tree' is a bit of an exaggeration, but the term is probably used to recall the great 'tree' of Daniel 4:10–12, 20–21, whose branches provided shelter for animals & birds, representing the nations ... So the kingdom of God, which as yet seemed quite inconspicuous, would one day grow to embrace all nations .”** (R.T. France, *Op Cit* , p. 449)
- **“ The image of a tree that shades the birds comes from Ezekiel 17:22-24, where the great, promised Son of David is a source of deliverance to his people... The growth of the tree in the parable is portrayed as inevitable & amazing . What the Jews expected to come all at once will grow gradually into greatness. ”** (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 379)
- **“Brief as the parable is, it reverberates with echoes from the OT . [Isaiah] found nothing to which he could liken God (Isa. 40:18). But Jesus likens the kingdom to the mustard seed . It is organically present in Jesus' ministry, although its manifestation may be as obscure as the mustard seed is diminutive. Nevertheless, just as the seed certainly grows to a massive bush, so also the kingdom will inevitably come in all its glory.”** (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 227)
- **“ The coming of the birds to nest in the branches of the plant that represents the kingdom of God has often been interpreted as a reference to the inclusion of the Gentiles ...Luke's interest in the inclusion of the Gentiles... is indisputable.”** (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 227)
- **“ The point of the Parable of the Mustard Seed is simple enough. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed (which is quite small) that grew into a tree, a tree large enough for birds to perch in its branches. In other words, the kingdom may have a small & insignificant beginning, but it will grow & become very large. The reference to the birds perching or making their nests in the tree's branches is an allusion to Dan. 4:12, 21, a passage in which the 'birds' probably refer to the nations that were dependent on Nebuchadrezzar, the king of the Babylonian Empire. It is possible, then, that the birds are therefore meant to refer to the Gentiles (nations) that become part of the kingdom. They may contribute, however, no more to the parable than the idea that the mustard tree becomes so big that even birds find it suitable for nesting. ( The suggestion...that the 'birds' refer to heretics who infiltrate the church is completely unfounded .)”** (Craig Evans, *Op Cit* , p. 211)

## c. The Kingdom of God being insignificant in its beginnings

- **“ The most important background for the parable...is the oracle in Ezekiel 17:22-23 ...The reference to 'the birds nesting in the branches' clearly connects the parable of the mustard with these prophetic parables. There is a certain irony , however. Rather than describing the kingdom as a great cedar, as did the OT Kings & prophets, Jesus describes it as a mustard seed – hardly the noblest of plants by any reckoning! Jesus' emphasis is, therefore, not on the glory of the future kingdom but on the present sign of its presence . The mustard seed is a parable of the kingdom's beginnings, not its final manifestation. The people expected a mighty cedar, but Jesus' ministry – though accompanied by mighty deeds – was like a mustard seed, merely a promise of the mature plant. Had his opponents read the Scriptures more closely, they might have recognized that they should have been looking for the sprig God had promised to plant rather than a full-grown cedar .”** (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 227)

- “.. **[W]hat exactly does [Jesus’] rule look like?** His remarks are important in light of the Jewish expectation that the kingdom would come all at once & with great power. The parable of the mustard seed (vv. 18-19) & the parable of the yeast (vv. 20-21) make fundamentally the same point, that **the kingdom starts out small but will eventually cover the whole earth .**” (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 379)

#### 5. The parable of the Yeast (vv. 20-21)

##### a. Yeast/Leaven

- *Leaven (yeast) (zume probably from zeo = to heat, as occurs in fermentation of dough when leaven is mixed in) was literally a small portion of dough that was retained in order to start a new batch of dough (literal uses – Mt 16:12; Lk 13:21; 1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9). Leaven or yeast is a single-celled fungus that promotes fermentation . When put into bread dough, it produces carbon dioxide bubbles that cause the dough to rise . In ancient times, when bread was about to be baked, a small piece of dough was pulled off & saved. That leaven or yeast would then be allowed to ferment in water, & later kneaded into the next batch of fresh dough to make it rise. Zume was used proverbially to demonstrate great effect from little causes (Gal 5:9). **Leaven throughout Scripture was used figuratively to describe permeating power or influence, usually the influence of evil, but also of good as here in Lk 13:21 referring to the growth or expansion of the Kingdom of God.**”*
- “ Yeast is old, fermented dough that is added to a fresh lump of dough in order to start the leavening process in it.” (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 228)

##### b. Yeast/Leaven representing sin & corruption

- “*Twice Paul quotes or alludes to the proverb ‘A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough’ (Gal. 5:9; 1 Cor. 5:17); in both instances it is a warning about the permeating effect of evil in the Christian Community... Thus yeast was used as a metaphor for uncleanness or a corrupting influence .*” (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 228)

##### c. Yeast/Leaven here is the permeation of God's Kingdom

- “*The parable of the yeast is similar [to that of the mustard seed.] Here the point is the permeation of the presence of the kingdom .*” (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 379)
- “*Jesus’ audience is being asked...to identify with the characters in his parables in order to hear their message, his second kingdom-parable (v 21) is remarkable indeed. He asks people – male or female, privileged or peasant, it does not matter – to enter the domain of a first-century woman & household cook in order to gain perspective on the domain of God . In view is the invasive character of leaven , the work of which is hidden but pervasive . In this case, confidence is expressed in the ability of a typically small portion of yeast to invade even [50 lbs of flour], enough to feed as many as 150 people... Set in relation to the healing episode of vv 10-17, this parable declares that satanic domination is being repealed & the kingdom of God is made present even in such seemingly inconsequential acts as the restoration of an ill woman who lived on the margins of society .*” (Joel B. Green, *Op Cit* , p. 558)

##### d. The parable illustration

- “*Jesus fixed a huge amount of flour ( almost 50 lbs) for the illustration. A pinch of yeast eventually permeates the entire loaf . This too is inevitable . What starts out as an insignificant movement will cover the whole earth in the end.*” (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 379)
- “*Luke says that the woman ‘hid’ the yeast in the flour . The verb implies secrecy rather than a normal part of preparing bread for baking. For whatever reason, the woman attempts to hide the yeast in a great quantity of flour. The humor of the situation is readily apparent . ...50 lbs of flour, [is] enough to make bread for 150 people!...The large amount of flour accords well with the woman’s desire to conceal [the yeast]... The point of the parable is made in a humorous fashion . Like the yeast, the kingdom is powerful & irrepressible . Like the yeast, the kingdom will eventually leaven the whole lump.*” (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 228)
- “*Jesus tells these parables to call for trust . He is building the kingdom, & people should trust God that it will come, even though the movement starts out looking so insignificant. God’s plan is advancing...Nothing will stop its coming in fullness.*” (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , pp. 379-80)

#### 6. Don't Presume Who's Included in God's Kingdom (Lk. 13:23-30)

- “**The Parable of the Narrow Door does relate to the previous parables , especially since it is a parable concerned with entry into the kingdom of God (v. 28).**” (Craig Evans, *Op Cit* , p.

212)

## a. The Jewish understanding

- The Mishnah: “ **All Israelites have a share in the world to come** , for it is written, **Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified** . And these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says that there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law, & [he that says] that the Law is not from Heaven, & an Epicurean.” (Sanhedrin 10.1)

## b. “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” (v. 23)

- “Someone asked Jesus if only few are going to be saved. **Perhaps he senses that salvation will not be as automatic or as based on genealogy as some have thought.** ” (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 380)

## a. The nature of the question

- “Jesus’...response to a question from an unnamed person in the crowd: “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” (v. 23). It was **a smug, self-complacent question** because **the general understanding among the Jews was that all Jews except the very worst would be saved** .” (Joel B. Green, *Op Cit* , p. 541)
- “When the question rang from the crowd, **the hearers expected Jesus to affirm that all Jews would make it [into God’s coming kingdom]** , unless they had committed especially grievous sins like the rebellion of Korah or that of Absalom. They also thought all Gentiles would be excluded from the kingdom except for a few proselytes who followed the examples of Rahab & Ruth. **The question was a presumptive query meant to solidify Jewish feelings of religious superiority** .” (Joel B. Green, *Op Cit* , p. 541)

## b. Jesus uses the question to give a warning

- “As Jesus moved toward Jerusalem, someone stepped out from the crowd to ask him if only a few would be saved...The Lord answered a speculative question with a direct command. **He told the questioner to make sure that he himself would enter through the narrow gate** .” (William MacDonald, *Op Cit* , 1424)
- “The question about how many will be saved sends us to the question of ultimate & final salvation. Interestingly, **Jesus refuses to answer this question directly** ; he will not give statistics & figures to satisfy mere human inquisitiveness. **What he gives is a stern warning** , not least because in the setting of his journey to Jerusalem, **‘being saved’ is not simply a matter of ultimate destination after death** , but the more immediate & pressing question of the crisis that hangs over the nation.” (N. T. Wright, *Luke For Everyone* , p. 126)

## c. Don't presume with God

- “As [Jesus] goes about his mission, **he is holding open the gate of the kingdom & urging people to enter it** . The door isn’t very wide, & it will take energy & commitment to get in; no question of strolling in by chance. One day, & not very long from now, the door will be shut, & it will be too late. God is giving Israel this last chance through the work of Jesus, but he is the final messenger. **If he is refused, there will be no further opportunity** ... **Those who wait to see what happens later, & who presume that because they once shared a festive banquet with Jesus they will somehow be all right, will find that there are no promises for those who did not take the chance when it was offered** .” (N. T. Wright, *Op Cit* , p. 126)
- “**Presumption of salvation through privilege continues to delude multitudes in the professing church today** . Jesus’ ‘many...will seek to enter & will not be able’ applies with the same urgency. Jesus does not want to inject false fears into our minds, but **he does want us to examine our lives so we will be sure to take the narrow way** .” (R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: Luke* , p. 542)

## c. Jesus exhorts everyone to ‘strive’ to enter the Kingdom (v. 24)

- “The Lord’s call to **‘strive to enter’** is the Greek word ‘agonizomai,’ from which we get our word **‘agonize.’** This is the kind of moral effort necessary to enter the kingdom. ‘We are not saved by effort, but we shall not believe without effort.’ In light of what is at stake,... **we cannot strive too much to get through the narrow door** . **It must be sought with all that we are** . The Word must be mined. Prayer ought to be perpetual.” (R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: Luke* , p. 543)
- “The verb **‘make every effort’** (Gk. agonizesthe) **speaks of laboring to get it** . This implies that there is a specific route by which to enter; a narrow door. **Those who fail to enter by that door, even though they desire to get in, will not succeed. Once the door is shut, it will be**

**too late.** For individuals, the door shuts at death – if not before, because of the hardness of one's heart." (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 380)

- "Jesus...exhorts [people] to **strive – as an athlete strives to win a race** (1 Tim. 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). **Whether one enters depends in part at least on human freedom, one's vigorous effort to reach salvation** . Many will try, but few will succeed." (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 229)
  - a. Only those who enter through the narrow door
    - "The [answer to] v. 23...is 'yes.' But **the parable** does not merely affirm the question; **it explains why only a few enter the kingdom** . This explanation takes place primarily in v. 24. There are **many people who simply cannot (or will not) enter through the narrow door** , the door which is...unpopular (i.e., **Jesus' teaching** )." (Craig Evans, *Op Cit* , p. 212)
    - "**Jesus' words assaulted their complacency** . 'Many [of you Jews]. . .will seek to enter & will not be able.' 'Many,' not 'some' – implying that **a majority of his hearers would not make it!** The Jews' complacency had drawn a stinging slap, & an uneasiness spread through their hearts. **Jews in Jesus' day felt privileged** to be part of the covenant community. **They had the Law, the prophets, the temple. So they assumed salvation was a given** . This was fatal thinking (Rom. 2:17-21). **Jesus' point was, your Jewish privilege had better make a difference or it is all for nothing** . Sadly, many did not have personal faith in Christ & so were lost." (R. Kent Hughes, *Op Cit* , pp. 541-2)
    - "It is **helpful to remember in this context how status is assigned to individuals** in a social system, generally with weight being given either to **inherited traits or kinship ties, or based on achievement** of certain goals or behaving in certain ways. In the first instance, those seeking entrance do so...as **persons who claim Abraham as their father** & so imagine that their status among the saved is unconditionally secure...We are not surprised to hear the words of the owner of the house, then, who ironically claims not to know these people nor their origins. That is, **their claim to privileged status via family heritage is thwarted** by his claim not to recognize them as members of this household!" (Joel B. Green, *Op Cit* , p. 561)
  - b. Respond before the door closes (vv. 25-26)
    - "**13:22-30...serves as a warning ... people should respond now, before the door closes** . **Many** of those originally invited, descendants of those to whom the original promise came, **will miss the blessing if they do not respond** . There's nothing more tragic than being close to God's blessing & then missing out." (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 380)
    - "**Entry through 'the narrow door' means responding personally to Jesus** . **The danger of getting close but not responding** is that **you end up outside** the table of Fellowship forever. Thus, this passage crosses the ages, either directly by addressing Jews or indirectly by addressing any who are close to God's promise without being in. Association with the church or having relatives who attend church is not enough. God does not save us through our activity, through heredity, or by proxy." (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit* , p. 385)
    - "Verse 25 marks **the first transition** . **The narrow door becomes the closed door** . The language of this verse evokes echoes of other stories: the neighbour who has closed his door & cannot get up (11:5-7); the exhortation to knock & the door will be opened (11:9); Jesus' warning in the Sermon on the Mount that many would say, 'Lord, Lord,' but he would send them away (Matt. 7:22-23). With all these allusions in the air, **the questioner (& the reader) is shocked to find that he or she has been placed among those who stand outside** . This reversal is achieved by means of the direct address 'you' (v. 25). **A further shock follows** when the master of the house responds, **'I do not know where you come from.'**" (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit* , p. 229)
    - "**The opportunity for response will not always be available; do so now, before the door is shut** . **The puzzle** of this parabolic material **is that those outside the door seem genuinely to expect to be allowed in** . On what basis do they stake their claim? In the first instance (v 25) no rationale is given, though in the second they claim some previous interaction with Jesus (v 26)." (Joel B. Green, *Op Cit* , p. 561)
    - "The [door] is open right now. The fact that you're [here] in your mortal flesh means that you can respond if you so wish. But **when your body is gone, so will be the opportunity** . 'It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment' (Heb. 9:27). **Today you are alive. Therefore the door is still open** , though it will not always be." (R. Kent Hughes, *Op Cit* , p. 543)
    - "**Eventually the narrow door will be slammed shut by either death or the Lord's return** , ushering in eternal tragedy for those who have not entered the kingdom. **[What keeps people] out of the kingdom? They had no personal relationship with the Master** . Twice Jesus

issued a categorical denial of relationship: 'I do not know where you come from.' This is a total denial despite the fact that they argue, 'We ate & drank in your presence, & you taught in our streets.' None of the crowd could persuade Christ to say that their superficial knowledge of him had established a relationship... **Some today may argue that they have eaten & drunk with Christ at the Lord's Table, & they have heard his Word preached in his church**. This is all very good, but it does not establish relationship, & some who have never missed the Lord's Table & the preaching of the Word will hear him say, 'I do not know where you come from.' If attendance in the Lord's house could save a soul, Caiaphas would be in glory. If hearing the Word was enough, Herod would be in Heaven... **So the burning question is, does Christ know you? Are you in authentic relationship with him?**" (R. Kent Hughes, *Op Cit*, pp. 543-4)

- c. Entering depends on 'knowing' Jesus vs just having casual contact with him
- **"Outward contact with Jesus counts for nothing; what he desires is an inward response."** (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit*, p. 381)
  - **"The central issue is 'knowing' Jesus, not just having casual contact with him.** To 'know' Jesus means **to trust him to deliver us, to open up a life that interacts with him** as a part of day-to-day living. Those who only have **mere contact with the believing community must be encouraged to ... know him** & have experienced forgiveness through faith in the living Christ." (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit*, p. 385)
  - **"Verses 25-26 imply that many who are unable to enter by the narrow door were people who knew Jesus & who had heard him & had fellowshiped with him. However, a casual acquaintance with Jesus, even hearing his teaching, is insufficient. Jesus calls people not to hear, but to hear & to obey [i.e., respond].** Those who obey him (or 'follow him') are those who will enter the narrow way & join Abraham, Isaac & Jacob & all the prophets in the kingdom of God. Although many persons who had acquaintance with Jesus & had firsthand knowledge of his teaching will be thrown out, there will be people from the four corners of the earth who will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. **These people are certainly meant to be Gentiles, the very people who were never imagined to be included among those destined for a place in the kingdom.**" (Craig Evans, *Op Cit*, p. 212)
- d. The Master of the house is Jesus (v. 26) – Jesus makes it personal to each one 'then you...'
- **"The image of the door is dropped after v. 25, & as the exchange continues it becomes clear that the Master of the house is Jesus ... Those who stand outside 'you' will then begin to identify themselves by means of their association with Jesus:** 'we ate & drank with you, & you taught in our streets.' The Master's response, 'I do not know where you come from,' is repeated, but this time it is followed by the condemnation 'Go away from me, all you evildoers' (Ps. 6:8)." (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit*, p. 229)
- e. Regret expressed by those who didn't enter through Jesus (v. 28a)
- **"The image of the...banquet now takes the place of the image of the door. Luke... emphasises the result of those who are turned away; there will be 'weeping & gnashing of teeth.'**" (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit*, p. 229)
  - **"When Moses encountered God at the burning bush, God identified himself as 'the God of your father, the God of Abraham, ...Isaac, &...Jacob' (Ex. 3:6). Those men were the progenitors of Israel & representatives of the greatest members of their race. So we can understand how horrifying Jesus' next sentence was to his hearers:** 'In that place there will be weeping & gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham & Isaac & Jacob & all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out' (v. 28)." (R. Kent Hughes, *Op Cit*, p. 545)
  - **"The banquet image looks to the time after Jesus' return, & those who trust in him are gathered to share in the celebration of salvation. There are no post facto opportunities."** (Darrell L. Bock, *Op Cit*, p. 381)
- f. Many people who were presumed not to be in God's Kingdom are included (v. 28b)
- **"One of the unresolved issues regarding this passage is whether those who are gathered into the kingdom from all directions are the children of Israel scattered abroad or the Gentiles.** Although the issue cannot be resolved with any certainty in the present context, it is clear that **Luke is vitally interested in Israel's rejection of the Gospel & the subsequent inclusion of Gentiles.**" (Alan Culpepper, *Op Cit*, p. 230)
  - **"People will come from east & west, from north & south, & recline at table in the kingdom of God' (v. 29). Unbelieving Israel will be cast out, but believing Gentiles will sit down with the three patriarchs & the redeemed house of Israel... because they belong to Christ ...They will not only be there – they will be joyously feasting!"** (R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: Luke*, p. 545)

## d. A final warning about presuming (v. 30)

- *“Some are last who will be first, & some are first who will be last.’ [This saying] serves to warn those who think they are among the ones who will enter through the narrow door, those who presume to think they are invited to the banquet . When the kingdom comes, many will be surprised. Take care that you are not among those who will be excluded.” (Alan Culpepper, Op Cit , p. 230)*
- *“The effect of Jesus’ remark has altered the theoretical nature of the original question to a practical level. The question, ‘Will the saved be few?’ has become, ‘Will the save be you?’ ” (Darrell L. Bock, Op Cit , p. 381)*
- *“Those who are last (Gentiles, Jewish ‘sinners,’ Samaritans) will be first (i.e., admitted into the kingdom), while those who are first (persons of what seems to be good religious standing) will be last (last to enter kingdom, perhaps unable to enter the kingdom at all).” (Craig Evans, Op Cit , p. 212)*

## 7. Reflections

## a. Why do people fail to enter?

- *“Wherein lies the failure of those who are turned away? It is not because they did not seek to enter. Did they seek to enter by the wrong means? Did they come to the wrong door, when they should have come to the narrow door?...Did they lack the faith or good works needed for entry? The owner says only, ‘I do not know where you come from’... Many who think they will enter will not, & others who are presumed to be excluded from God’s fellowship will take their place . Strive, therefore, as one who dares not presume on God’s grace . Strive as though admission to the kingdom depended entirely on your own doing, but know that ultimately it depends on God’s grace.” (Alan Culpepper, Op Cit , pp. 230-31)*

## b. Going to church &amp; assuming you’re fine

- *“The parable of 13:22-30 has a specific context in mind – the danger that those in Israel will miss the blessing they have been awaiting for centuries . In a directly applicable sense, Jesus addresses the Jews, the descendants of the patriarchs. So this text most directly continues to address Jews, asking them to consider whether they are open to entering through the ‘narrow door’ Jesus provides. But in principle, the text suggests other applications. One can be so close to the promise of God & yet miss it . This can manifest itself in a variety of ways. People in the church can assume that because they have been born into an attending family, they are in & will automatically receive God’s blessing . Like Jews who thought it was mostly a matter of heredity & cultural heritage, some call themselves Christian, not because of any faith commitment, but because of a family connection , a denominational affiliation, or cultural contact with christianity...attendance at church twice a year (at Christmas & Easter).” (Darrell L. Bock, Op Cit , p. 384)*

## c. All paths lead to God

- *“Luke 13:22-30 issues a warning. People should be sure they have responded to the one who brings in the kingdom . It is easy to think we automatically qualify – by birth, by cultural connection, or by heritage . But to Jesus, a relationship with God requires personal appropriation on the path Jesus has set (Jn 1:12). This principle is fundamental in a culture that argues that there are many ways to God , as if the road...is a complex interstate highway system, which offers dozens of routes & interchanges. Jesus uses a more focused image, the narrow & soon-to-be-shut door... The door remains open individually for everyone. It is an equal opportunity road, with access to all who will take it; but, the route is marked out by God, not by us . Though in our hearts we may want God to take in everyone, that is not what Scripture teaches. He wants people to consciously enter into relationship with him, aware of their sins & shortcomings, their need for God, & the salvation Jesus has achieved for them. To respond to God is to respond to the one he sent to pave the way for life through his death.” (Darrell L. Bock, Op Cit , p. 386)*

## d. Ask the right questions

- *“Another implication in this text comes from the questioner’s theoretical question about everyone else, ‘Are only a few people going to be saved?’ There is nothing wrong with such a question, but often it is asked to turn attention away from oneself . Jesus takes our theoretical questions & personalizes them. As interesting as the question is of whether God will save the lost in faraway places, a more fundamental question for all of us to answer is whether we have a relationship to God . Jesus challenges each one of us where we stand with God . ” (Darrell L. Bock, Op Cit , p. 387)*

## e. Don't be complacent

- *“In 13:22–30 we are provided insights into **the scope of the gospel** . **Its universal appeal is not matched by universal response** , & there are those who regard themselves as God's people who are deceiving themselves (3:8). **Complacency is a deadly enemy of salvation** . The kingdom of God reverses human expectations, not least with regard to who are insiders & who are outsiders. The inclusion of Gentile believers (along with Jewish patriarchs & prophets) in the...kingdom of God means that the whole concept of the 'chosen people' must be reexamined.” (R.T. France, *Op Cit* , p. 454)*

## f. The gospel is good news for all people

- *“Perhaps you have noticed that this 'narrow door' text touches on one of Luke's grand themes – **the universality of the gospel – the good news of salvation for all people** , both Jews & Gentiles. Christ's words teach us that the kingdom is narrower than his Jewish hearers thought because they assumed that all Israel would automatically be included. But Jesus said that many of them would not make it through 'the narrow door.' The door's narrowness demanded humility. It demanded moral determination. Only those who are in relationship with God go through the door... **But here is the ultimate beauty , the narrowness of the kingdom has created a kingdom that is broader than we would ever have thought! This is because 'the narrow way' is spiritual & not hereditary, because it is a relationship with God that comes by faith** , because it makes men & women new from the inside out, & because it is all by grace. Consequently, there is hope for you & me. There is hope for all Jews & Gentiles. There is hope for every suburbanite & city dweller. The narrow way is wide open to all.” (R. Kent Hughes, *Op Cit* , p. 546)*