



## The Experience of Every Christian Life - Part 6

### Accepting Hard Truths

Luke 13:22-30

Well these are special Sundays, exciting Sundays when we get to see people testify to their faith in Christ, to the expansion of the church, the expansion of the kingdom, these are some of the best Sundays we have together. We love to see that happening and even on this day June the 5<sup>th</sup> you do understand if you know your dates this is the actual anniversary of the beginning of Compass Bible Church eleven years ago starting small here in Aliso Viejo and as I look back and think about having baptisms this morning, we've seen hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people that have been baptized testifying to their new faith in Christ here at our church. Now that is so exciting and you know now we have thousands of people that call this their church home and fellowship here regularly. I mean it's great to see the growth of the church and yet that may sound like a lot but it's not all that much when you consider we live in a county with 3 million people. That's a lot of people. And you talk about church is growing you better grow a lot if you're going to start to make a dent in 3 million people, which sounds like a lot until you think about our 40 million people in the burgeoning golden state of California. I mean that's really just a drop in the overall state population and of course you can think about the 325 million people in our country and you can get overwhelmed with the thought of those kinds of numbers. I mean think about that, over 300 million people and that you can kind of gag on those numbers until you start thinking about the total population of the world right now which is over 7 billion people. 7 billion people. (02:08)

And now you start thinking about the growth of the church, the expansion of the kingdom we better get at it. I mean you think, well thankfully we're not doing it alone. There are millions of Christians around the world who have taken seriously their call to be Fishers of Men and we're grateful for that and the hundreds of thousands of Bible teaching churches even in places where it's illegal and they are serious about the growth of the church and the expansion of the kingdom but when you start thinking about churches, there may be hundreds of thousands of them, there may be millions of Christians but you think of 7 billion people alive on the planet today I mean come on, that's hard to fathom. Or you think of even our church, healthy and vibrant and growing and new testimonies and that's great but I mean you start thinking about the population of our country, the population of our state, the population of our county and you start thinking wow are we going to make a dent in this thing, really? I mean what kind of dent are we making, what kind of dent are the churches around the world making? I mean it seems like so insignificant compared to the challenge of people that need Christ and after all is Christianity really so arrogant that they think they are the ones that have the answer to immortality? I mean they are the ones that really have the key that's going to solve the problem of hell and death? That's kind of arrogant isn't it? (03:22)

Well it is a question to ask but it's not a question to ask of Christianity because Christianity by definition is really all about looking to the leader of the organization, Jesus Christ himself. Now if you want to ask Jesus Christ that question then I guess that would be a good thing to ask him. What kind of impact are we going to make and what about all those people who don't respond? And what about the fact that it seems like we're a very small minority in the whole of population, not speaking of our generation but all the people that have ever been born on this planet. You think, wow it almost seems unfathomable to think that this is the group that's got the answer. Unless you right with the theology of Christianity well then you're lost, I mean come on, really? (04:06)

Well I suppose you want to ask a question like that you ought to ask someone who's got the credentials. And that's the thing the Bible is super clear on. Don't ask the church, ask Christ. And Christ has said when he met his old friend in the last book of the Bible in Revelation chapter 1 he showed up and said, you know I have the credentials. Here's how he introduces himself in Revelation chapter 1 verses 18 and 19. He says, "I am the first and the last." In other words, I was there at the beginning and I will be there in eternity at the end. And he says this, "I died and yet behold I am now alive forevermore and I hold the keys of Death and Hades." That's how he opens up to his old fisherman friend John and says listen I got the credentials. Now you want to ask the expert, you can ask the expert if he really does hold the keys to Death and Hell. You want to ask about people in the afterlife that's the one to ask. (04:57)



But when you ask the expert you better be ready to accept the answers. You know when you ask the expert you've got to be willing to know that he has the answers and I may not like them. You got to the zoo and you ask the expert animal keeper, the zoo keeper there, can I climb into the gorilla pit and pet the gorillas for a little while? That may be your hearts desire but you better respect the experts answer because he knows what he's talking about. But that's probably not a good idea. Your kid is playing hockey and you may say, "Well, I'm going to ask the ref. My kid really had quite a slap shot there; the puck went right over the glass and into the stands. Can't my team get a point for that? Let's ask the ref." Well, he is in charge and that was quite an effort but really there's this really narrow goal that you're suppose to get the puck in, if you don't you don't get a point for that. Get your SCUBA certification and he signs off on that, your SCUBA instructor. You say we've been down 50 feet now under the surface of the water, I feel prepared I want to go 1500 feet under the surface of the water. Well you better be prepared for the experts answer not unless you want your rib cage crushed you probably shouldn't do that. As a matter of fact you can't do that and you're not certified to do that and that's against the rules and there will be penalties if you don't follow my instructions. (06:14)

You go out and get your pilots license, you've learned to take off, you've learned to cruise around, you've learned to turn the plane around and now you say can I land it anywhere I want? Well, you better ask the instructor and he's going to tell you, well I'm the expert you can't just land this anywhere you like, there's a very narrow landing strip called the airport and you better put the plane down there and if you don't listen to me you will die. We're use to those kinds of confines when we ask the experts in other areas of life. Well if you want to talk about who's saved and who's not saved and how many are saved and whether or not Christianity really is the only way, you better ask the one who is the one who holds the keys to Hell and Death. And Jesus is very clearly affirmed that his credentials because of his death and resurrection, he's got the right to tell us what's on the other side and in our passage today someone asks him that very question for us. (07:07)

And I think we need to sit here this morning and say I got to be ready for the answer. It may not be what I like. I may not be what I prefer but Jesus is the one who is authorized to give us the answer. So I turn you to the passage we finally reached as we continue through our study of Luke 13. As someone comes up to him as he's journeying through the towns and villages and he's preaching and he asks them a question that really is a question that everyone if they give this thing called Christianity enough thought they're eventually going to ask. So let's take a look at this beginning in verse 22 of Luke chapter 13. When he, that's Christ, when on his way through the towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. Look at it now, verse 23, someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" Now we've just come off of a passage you might remember, as you glance up to it, it's all about the growth of the kingdom. We even called it cultivating biblical optimism that God's going to do his thing and reach the gospel into all kinds of places that you might not expect. And we thought what an encouraging message; at least I hope that's what you thought. (08:12)

Now someone says, "Well wait a minute and if you're telling me it's going to be small and it's going to grow, I mean it's small, I mean you're going to miss a lot of people along the way. Are you telling me a lot of people are lost?" Let's invert the question as he put it, are you telling me only a few people are going to be saved? And Jesus says as he often does gets to answering the question but he always puts the onus right back on the person. He says you guys are asking this question; let's make sure you think about your life. Verse 24, strive, he says to this crowd, to enter through – now here's the answer – the narrow door. The restrictive door, this door that is not all inclusive let's strive each of us to enter through that narrow door because I'll tell you – middle of verse 24 – many will seek to enter and will not be able. When one – now he illustrates – 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." Verse 26, then you will begin to say, "What do you mean you don't know where we come from? We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets." But he will say, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" In that place, verse 28 says, 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 you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west and from north and south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God, that's going to happen. And behold, some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last. (09:57)

Now I know we just read that once here in our sitting but if you were to just let those sentences sink in you'd say, "Wow, those are hard truths." I want to look at this passage from two perspectives and I'd like to first just accept what's there on the piece of paper and let the difficulty of the truth set in. And as I often say the truth has hard edges



sometimes it can't be flexible because it is what it is. It correspond to reality and we will look at the reality of people in the after life, we've got to accept the experts commentary on what is and what isn't and so if you pulled out your worksheet this morning and I hope you found it. I know it's a little scary because it's indicative of a twelve point sermon, which seems unprecedented. I've been to all of Pastor Mike's messages and I do think this is unique, here, 12 points. But lets fill in this left column first, 1 through 6 and let's fill in that we want to at the box on the top of the left hand side we want to accept the tough truths. (11:00)

### **Accept the Tough Truths**

There are some tough truths and we need to accept those tough truths as we read through the text because there's a lot of things naturally from our perspective we say, "That's hard for us to comprehend. That's hard. It doesn't sit well with us." Six things that don't sit well with us. Let's start in verse 23 when someone said, "Lord will those who are saved be few?" Now let's just start with the question and nature of the question. It is a categorical question. It's a question about categories. And the way it's presented as you'll see, as you look down at what we just read, he doesn't ever dispute the categorical thinking. Follow me now. He doesn't dispute the categories. They're asking about saved because this is the presupposition of the Jews who ask him the question, and the unsaved. In other words you've got two camps, you're either saved or you're not saved. And as Jesus answers he affirms those categories and he says, "Yeah, you're right there are those that are in the kingdom and those that are shut out of the kingdom." There are those that are included and there are those that are excluded. There are those that get in and there are those that don't get in. There are the saved and the unsaved. In our terms there are Christians and non-Christians. There are those who have guaranteed places in heaven and there are those people that do not. It is the bifurcation of humanity. You've got two groups, two categories. Number 1 let's just deal with that difficult pill. There are, number 1, only two destinies. (12:21)

#### **1. There are only two destinies**

That's all the Bible leaves us with. Here is the expert he's commenting on the afterlife and he's says you've got one of two places to go. Now that sounds like just old school Christianity right there, well there was something to old school Christianity because it was true. They like to speak of what the Bible taught and the Bible taught about these two things, Heaven and Hell. Now you know if we're creating our own religion we'd come up with more options than that, wouldn't we? Oh and human religion has, we've got all kinds, we've got limbo, we've got purgatory, I mean even in our thinking we've got Christians and non-Christians well then you've got kind of the sort-a Christians. The Christians in process, on their way Christians, the kind of Christians, I mean I don't know how much of that comes out of your mouth but in your thinking it's easy for us to look at the 11 o'clock news and say, non-Christians man, they're going to go to hell. But then you say I've got Christians here, those people are going to heaven, and then you've got this real murky middle and we don't like to think in two distinct destinations. (13:22)

But the Bible presents us with that, and we can't get around it, there's the first pill to swallow. He asks the question about saved and unsaved and Jesus said no where in this answer over turns that. As a matter of fact he affirms the question as a good one. And then he answers the question in the bottom of verse 23 and 24. As he said to them, verse 24, strive to enter through, here's the answer, the narrow door, the restrictive door, the limited door, the door that's not wide. And if you know the parallel teaching which is not at the same time but way up in Galilee early in his ministry in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus talked about narrow paths and small gates and he talked about wide paths and big archways that lead to destruction. He did use the word few and he answered it directly earlier in his Galilean ministry to say, "you know what? There are only a few that are saved." And that's hard for us to process too, isn't it? Put it down this way, number 2, there are only a minority that are saved. (14:19)

#### **2. Only a minority are saved**

Only a minority are saved. Minority, well what's the percentage Pastor Mike? I don't know I can't tell you that but I can tell you when he's asked, are only a few saved he says, "Oh you better make sure you get through the narrow door." If you want the cross reference over there in Matthew 7 he says, "Yeah, few are those who enter by that narrow gate." Few, what does that mean? I don't know it's not a majority. I know that. We're trying to grow the kingdom, we're trying to expand the church, we're trying to see more people come to faith in Christ but I can tell you when the dust settles in humanity the Bible is giving us this hard truth. Few people will be saved. Now if we're creating our own religion we wouldn't put it that way because we care about our fellow human beings. And we



don't like to think it's hard, it grates against our minds and our sensibilities to think most people are lost and shut out of the kingdom, I don't like that. We create things that and people have created in man made religions, things like this its called universalism, ever heard of that? Universalism, eventually everybody gets it right. As a matter of fact that's why I like those middle categories and I don't like two destinies I like that middle destiny where you can go to a place where you can get kind of in shape. It's the boot camp of getting to heaven. So you don't go to hell you go to some middle place and in that middle place you can work your way to the good place and so this kind of plays nicely into more than two destinies. If I can have a third destiny, maybe even people that are really not ready for heaven can get ready for heaven after they die. (15:41)

Keep reading he says there in the middle of verse 24, I tell you, many will seek to enter and will not be able. And then he illustrates, once the master of the house has risen, he shuts the door and you begin to stand outside and knock saying, "Lord, open to us." Then he will answer you, "I do not know where you come from." So I get this sense that in this text you've got an idea here of people that want to get in and can't get in and you struggle with that as I do too if I don't read it carefully but the Bible is a very careful book and Jesus said you better pay attention to every tense of every verb and the number of every noun because the Bible is a book where every jot and tittle, remember those words? Every serif and yodh as he speaks to the Old Testament Hebrew text of the Torah, not a bit of that not a bump or a little tiny consonant like a yodh with just a tiny little comma, not going to depart from the law until it's all confirmed and all fulfilled. So I need to pay attention to what this actually says and it is very clear that when it says that there are many that are not trying to enter, not seeking to enter, but they will try, they will seek, why? Because the door is closed, verse 25, when the door is closed, then they want to get in. (16:57)

So it's not as though you look at a passage, well there's a lot of people that want to get saved and God just doesn't let them get saved or they can't get saved or they are prohibited from being saved. That's really not the language of this text at least. We've got to be honest with the text. The text is that once people realize what the clarity of their own death, that what they rejected in this life was the thing that could have saved them, well then they're knocking on the door. Well, let us in now. It's like the kid who disregards all the rules in class, his conscience, the teacher's explicit commands, then gets hauled into detention and when he's getting hauled into detention he's says, "Well wait a minute, I get it now, I get it now." Well, at that point it's too late, why? Because there is in God's economy number 3, no second chances. (17:41)

### 3. There are no second chances

If I'm making my own religion I'd come up with a way to have a second chance. But I got to deal with the expert who holds the keys to death and hell and he says this. When this life is over, that's it. It's appointed for man once to die and then comes the judgment. I don't like that truth, I'd like to come up with a religion where maybe once you die your eyes can be open and you can say, "I really blew it, I guess." And so you can get it right. But Jesus is clearly saying, I mean, can you affirm it here? At that point when it's all too late they're going to seek to get in and they won't be able to get in because there are no second chances. That's why the gospel is so urgent. That's why people of another generation were willing to offend you with the urgency of the gospel to say please consider your relationship with Christ and do it today. I know that's not very vogue, not very hip, it's not the cool thing to do, we ought to let people figure it out in their own time but it used to be that evangelists of former days would say today is the day of salvation. Today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart. I think our grandparents had it right. It's time for us to bring the urgency back to the gospel because if people die without Christ there are no second chances. That's what the expert here says. (18:55)

Verse 26, they've got a retort in verse 26. Well, you say I can't get in, you say you don't know where you're from, you're saying your not part of our team, part of our clan, part of our family. But I'm going to tell you, you should know where we're from because we're from where you're from. Verse 26, then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets." Now historically and contextually clearly this is a statement to people that were hearing him preach in their streets and did take meals with Jesus. But let's try and bridge the application to our day. What were they actually saying? Well they were saying listen we have full knowledge of who you are then so you should know us. We're familiar with you, we're familiar with your teaching, we've heard your teaching, you should know us. We should be accepted by you, we should be in your family. But he says, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" Now did he teach people to be evil? No, his teaching was to do just the opposite, to repent of evil and do what was right. Well, they heard his teaching but apparently they didn't respond to his teaching. Oh they were there in his presence but they weren't part of his team because they did not respond at



least with some sincere response from the heart to the form of teaching to which they were committed to put it in terms of Romans chapter 6. They heard him and they were familiar with the facts but they were not committed to him and they were not committed to doing what he said. Number 4, knowledge of Christ is certainly not enough. (20:25)

#### 4. Knowledge of Christ isn't enough

And that will bridge to our day, will it not? Because there's a lot of people that know about Christ. Just like Judas by the way knew a lot about Christ didn't he? You want to talk about someone who ate and drank more meals with Jesus than the people Jesus is now speaking with. Judas ate a lot of meals with Jesus. How many times did Judas hear Jesus preaching in the streets and yet in our daily Bible reading this last week in John chapter 12 we learned about John saying, you know, old Judas use to keep the money bag. He was our CFO and I know he got real uptight when he saw very expensive perfume being poured out on Jesus and he didn't like that extravagant act of worship because he said, "Well that can be sold and given to the poor, we could feed a lot of poor people with that money." And John says, "You know looking back, we've done a little accounting, we've gone over the spreadsheets and I realize this, Judas was pilfering the moneybag. He didn't care about the poor. He cared about himself. And he helped himself to what was in there." Therefore here was Judas hearing the teaching of Christ about integrity, about righteousness, about repentance, about honesty but he wasn't really doing it. He heard the teaching but he didn't respond to the teaching. I mean when it comes down to it, I hear this more than ever we heard in the baptismal tank this morning. People think knowing about Christ is what it takes but as I stated from James chapter 2, the demons know all about Christ. It isn't about knowing the facts, it's not about hearing the teaching, as Matthew 7 says there's a lot of people that are going to say on that day, "Lord, Lord did we not..." and they'll say a lot of things that required a lot of input and reception of a lot of teaching. And he'll say depart from me I never knew you. Knowing the teaching, knowing the facts, knowledge of Christ, that isn't going to cut it. (22:10)

Verse 28, In that – underline this word – place. What place are you talking about? Well, the people apparently in this illustration up in verses 24 and 25 there is a door shut there on the out side. Well in that place; shut out from this banquet, from this reception. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now there's an experience in a place. Hmm, and you're going to see what you're missing. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves are cast out. That's hard. You want to talk about a fourth observation that's a hard pill to swallow, a truth that's got hard edges, a reality that if we're making up our own religion we'd never make this up. And that is this, number 5, the lost exist eternally. (23:02)

#### 5. The lost exist eternally

There's just no way around that in the text of scripture. This is a place where people have experiences. Making my own religion like the Buddhists, the Hindus, the JW's, the Christian Scientists, Scientology you name it, you put a long list of people together. Even the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists they're going to say this. When you die if you're not in the relationship with Christ then you are annihilated. You've heard of that? You cease to exist. Oh I'd like to think that but that's not the consistent teaching of scripture. The Bible is very clear it is a place where there are experiences and those experiences are not good and according to the book of Revelation they take place day and night forever and ever. You may struggle with that, that's why I put so many books on the back of the worksheet this morning that are going to deal passage by passage, verse by verse with all the issues that deal with the conscious eternal reality of retribution in a place excluded from the kingdom of God. We need to read on this topic because I know it is not popular, from Clark Pinnock to Rob Bell to statements from John Stott to William Fudge. You can look at a lot of people that name the name of Christ that say a lot of things that are going to tell you there is no hell. And they don't bear the marks of a JW or a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Scientologist. So you want to remain faithful to scripture you better bone up on this topic and figure out whether or not this is the teaching of the expert who holds the keys to death and hell itself. Well if that's the case I can't, I can't compromise this doctrine. (24:28)

Number 6, you can combine it with what we just read, if I'm outside the kingdom and I'm weeping and gnashing my teeth I'm looking in so to speak at the banquet where everyone is there including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the VIPs of the kingdom. And then what I'm seeing that really bothers me is that people will come from east and west and from north and south and recline at table in the kingdom of God and then I've got to conclude what Jesus likes to say which was clearly a proverbial statement of the day. Behold some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last. Now what are you talking about? Context. He's preaching where? He's not preaching in Greece,

he's not preaching in Rome, he's not preaching in Assyria. He's preaching in Jerusalem or at least in the environs of Jerusalem as he's heading toward Jerusalem, he's preaching in Judea the most holy, righteous place where the covenant people live and he's talking to them about the fact that you better make sure you get through the narrow door. You better strive to get there; you better make sure you're right, because if you're not right, you'll be cast out. Cast out? Us Jews? Yeas, as a matter of fact you're going to see people from east and west, and north and south. What does that mean? People that are foreigners are going to hanging out with the Jewish VIPs. Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. And you're going to go, that doesn't work. They're the last people who I'd think would be saved. No, no, they're first. And the first people you thought for sure would be saved the people who sat there listening to Christ teach in the first century in Jewish Judea, eating and taking meals with the living Messiah. Shut out. That'll be a surprise won't it? Much like Matthew 7, many will say on that day Lord, Lord, did we not? They seem surprised. Number 6, many lost will be surprised. (26:22)

#### 6. Many lost will be surprised

It's the scariest text and the scariest principal in all of the scripture as I stand up and preach to Christians every week multiple times a week I think how often I preach to people who will be surprised because of their great knowledge of the truths of Christianity that have never appropriated the teaching of Christianity. They have not repented of their sins with sincerity, not put their trust in Christ and that will be a rude awakening on the day of judgment. Are those tough truths? They're tough truths. Only two destinies, wouldn't come up with that, only a minority. I would want a majority if not a universal group. No second chances, come on there's got to be a second chance. Knowledge of Christ isn't enough; well it wouldn't seem like if you knew a lot about Christ you should be excluded. Lost existing eternally, can't we annihilate everyone God? Many lost will be surprised; I mean I think everyone should make their bed and know what they're getting into. There shouldn't be any surprises on judgment day, but there are. Those are hard truths and we ought to accept those tough truths. (27:21)

But you'll see I'm making my way around the horn so to speak using some baseball language here. I want to start at the bottom of the text on the right hand side of your worksheet and work our way up. Let's make some observations here about what I'll call the gracious truths. Right hand column, let's appreciate those. (27:39)

#### **Appreciate the Gracious Truths**

A lot of people don't see those because they choke on the tough truths. I understand the tough truths are there and we've got to accept those. That's a bitter pill to swallow but before you choke on that you better make sure to get over to what may seem right now like a silver lining around that dark cloud because it sure shines brightly in light of the perspective of what Jesus is saying to people that understand the grace of God. Let us appreciate the gracious truths and let's start at the bottom verses 29 and 30. And people will come from east and west and north and south and recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some who are last are going to first and some who are first will be last. Now if I'm in the "first" category and the "last" that's a sad verse. And when I think I'm going to be in because I'm right there in Judea and I'm excluded that's a bad verse, seeing people from the north, south, east and west. But here's my question, what if I'm the last person expected to be in the kingdom? What if I lived in the north or the south or the east or the west and now all of a sudden I'm in there with the VIPs of the kingdom. And I'm sitting there at the reception in the blessing of God and though I deserve to die I'm now in the kingdom of God. Well this becomes a very gracious truth isn't it? That you've got people that were the last people that anyone would expect to be in the kingdom and they're in the kingdom. That's a big deal. Let's put it this way number 7, bottom of the right hand column, God saves all kinds of people. (29:03)

#### 7. God saves all kinds of people

All kinds of people, people you wouldn't expect. You're sitting here I think very few have descended from Abraham in this group. We don't have the Jewish blood coursing through the veins of most people I speak to right now. I mean really you are the last people that the Jewish patriarchs would think are going to be the recipients of the promise of the covenant people of God and yet you sit here and I stand here as a Caucasian Preacher saying, "You know what? Jesus the Jewish Messiah is my savior and I'm going to heaven and I'm going to be in the kingdom." You're going to hear a lot of people in Jewish history saying, "You're the last person to claim the recipient blessings of the Messiah of the Bible, come on. You're the last person." Well, whew, God saves all kinds of people, people from every tongue, tribe and nation. I know a lot of people stumble over the left hand column. What an exclusive



God, that's what I don't like about Christianity. It's so exclusive. Well, start at the bottom and think this thing through in light of grace and start to realize this exclusive God that you condemn sure is inclusive, including all kinds of people that you wouldn't expect to be there. People like you and me I trust. God is inclusive. He may not save all the rebels without exception, but he saves all kinds of rebels without distinction. Do you see the difference there? (30:25)

I know we want universalism, I know we'd like him to save everyone. God may not save all rebels without exception but he saves all kinds of rebels without distinction from every tongue, tribe and nation. You ought to be grateful for this verse, Romans chapter 1 verse 16, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, why? Because it is the power of God to salvation to – big word, what's the next word Sunday School Grads? Everyone who believes. Oh, to the Jew first I get that, I understand that, that was the primacy of the mission, to offer salvation to the Jews but also to the Greeks, going to offer that extending offer of free salvation to the people from the east, the west, the north and the south. Greeks by the way was the word they often used in the New Testament to talk about the non-Jews. There's two categories of people, the covenant people of Judaism and those that aren't. And he saves people; it is the power of God to save people to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (31:26)

Now here's the understatement of the whole outline, number 8. In that place, now of course the place he's underscoring in this teaching is the place excluded from the kingdom but in that exclusion there is a picture of what's going on for those included, and that is a banquet with the VIPs of Israel. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Prophets. And they're unfortunately cast out, but listen there are people included from every tongue, tribe and nation, the east the west, the north the south and they are reclining at table in the kingdom of God. They are tabling with these people. They are blessed and the picture as I've said is a reception, it's a party, it is the fulfillment of people's desire to celebrate and rejoice and have opulence and blessing as it's put in the scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 9, as it is written no eye has seen nor ear has heard nor the heart of man has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him. Now those who do love him from east and west and north and south the things God is going to do to fulfill them in this banquet picture, which is like the best thing someone could think of in the ancient near East in terms of a great afternoon banquet, matters of fact they lasted sometimes up to fourteen, fifteen days of a wedding reception, I mean that's where you want to be. That's a party there. The fulfillment of human desires, the satisfaction of the human heart, I mean this is the understatement of the outline but let's jot it down. Number 8 the kingdom will be fulfilling. (33:00)

#### 8. The Kingdom will be fulfilling

If you're a part of that, to the Jew first and also the Greek. If you are those to everyone who believes the power of God to give you that access to the kingdom. That kingdom is going to be fulfilling and we could preach for weeks on that topic but you do need to understand the images of scripture regarding the afterlife for those who are saved is the ultimate fulfillment. As others have rightly said if we find in our hearts desires that cannot be met in this world clearly we start to come to the conclusion that God made us for another world. And he certainly has and that other world is a world as he's going to as it put in 1 Corinthians 2 verse 9 he's going to give you desires and fulfillments your mind has not even thought of, your eye can't see, your ear can't hear it. God's got some amazing things prepared for those who love him and though I recognize this is a teaching about how easy it is for us to reject the truth that would include us, when we think about the exclusion, imagine the inclusion of being a part of this banquet one day and sitting down, not just with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Prophets but Jesus himself. That's what we have to look forward to. Hungry human longing satisfied with a kind of celebration with VIPs from all time enjoying fellowship with God in a place with no reference to sin. That's the best I can do in 5 minutes on the kingdom. (34:22)

Working our way up verse 26 and 27, they tried to get in saying we ate and drank in your presence, come on. You taught in our streets, we heard you teach. We hung out with you, but he will tell them, verse 27, I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil! Now I know we have to take that coin and flip it over to get any silver lining out of that but I do realize this, there were some in his presence who ate and drank with him that weren't Judas. There were some there who heard his teaching that actually responded as it's put in scripture with their whole heart sincerely responding to the teaching of Christ. And those people's lives were transformed as we heard in the last baptism that I performed in this tank over here that first memory verse in Partners. If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation, the old things pass away the new things come. People no longer are categorized as workers of evil because they actually start to work righteousness in life that God has given them. I put it down this



way, number 9, salvation transforms lives. (35:27)

#### 9. Salvation transforms lives

That's a little bit of what we testified to this morning and I understand everyone is quick to say, "You Christians you think you're holier than thou." Well listen I hope we are holier than you if you're not a Christian. Well that's not the answer I expected. No, no, no, that's what God does new creations it changes our status. You're claiming to be perfect. No, no, no, not what we're claiming. Christians are not perfect we understand that but we are now put on a path of steady progress. It's not about perfection it's about direction, it's not about being sinless as was testified to this morning, but it's certainly about beginning to sin less and there's no way around the transforming work of the gospel because the Bible says if you respond in repentance and faith he grants you the Holy Spirit and that Holy Spirit is going to guarantee you don't live like the way you lived before. That's just not it, you're not going to live the way you did before because God changes people because of the presence of the Spirit. There's assurance of that's why 1 John as Pastor Ben referenced this morning. It hits us so hard because of the reality of the Spirit in our lives it can easily diagnose whether or not we have been saved because of the change in the trajectory of our lives. God saves all kinds of people, the kingdom will be fulfilling beyond anything we can briefly explained. Salvation is going to transform lives. People are going to hear him, going to fellowship with him and they're going to be changed. Not everyone, but real Christians are. (36:55)

Moving our way up number 10, middle of verse 24, he says, "I tell you many are going to seek to enter and will not be able. Once the master of the house has risen and shut the door and you being to stand outside and knock at the door saying, "Lord, open up to us," then he will answer you, I do not know where you come from. Wow, how can you make that a positive? Well I suppose the only way for us to understand this as a positive is to put ourselves in our seat on the tarmac in the plane with our headphones on and we hear the stewardess say, "The cabin door has been closed." I'm always excited to hear that. Let's get on our way and go. Now I don't want to hear that when I'm running through the terminal trying to get to the plane. The door is shut is bad news if I'm on the outside of the door but it is good news if I'm on the inside. (37:48)

Now a plane is one thing but let's talk about the ark in Genesis 7. There's that interesting phrase that says the Lord shut him in the ark. I mean that's a reference that we talked about on Good Friday this last year. We talked about the reality of that statement, the way it's stated, I mean it seems like a supernatural event, I mean a GT1 where God supernaturally shuts the door of the ark. Shuts them in. The cabin door has been closed. Now that's bad news once it starts raining and I'm on the outside saying, "Now I'd like a seat now Noah." I know you preached a lot about getting on your ark, I want to be in now. Being dragged to detention the consequences are coming can I go back and reconsider that? Well there are no second chances. What's the flip side to that? If you have responded and you are shut in there's security in that and the Bible talks so much about that security for Christians. If you're shut into the kingdom guess what? You're not getting out of the kingdom. And one thing I often think, well what happens if I do something stupid and I sin my way out of the kingdom one thousand years from now? It's not going to happen, you will be shut in. You'll be, let's use this word, locked in. Number 10, the saved are locked in. (38:55)

#### 10. The saved are locked in

To reference John 10 the Shepard who calls to his sheep hear his voice and they follow him and when they follow him Jesus says now you're mine. You're in my flock. It's like you being in my hand and no one is going to take you out of my hand. The Father is greater, in other words, that picture of strength. You may look at the humbled incarnate Messiah and think well I don't know? This is a hard truth about you being all powerful. Well think of the Father, mightier than I certainly in the incarnate state he can make that comparison and he says, "No one is mightier than him." And you know what? If you're in his hand no one can snatch you out of his hand. You're in your seat the door closes and you hear the door has been closed, I know that's a dreadful thought if you're still in the terminal. That's a secure thought if you're in the ark. The saved are locked in. (39:44)

When judgment comes and you're on the right side of this, there's eternal security that we have understanding that no one can snatch us out of the kingdom. Number 11, the question and the answer about the narrowness, the minority, someone said to him, "Lord will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them – verse 24 – "Strive to enter through the narrow door." Mike there's just no way to make that a positive, is there? Well, there is a door and he says get through it. I mean this may be as fundamental as it gets, number 11, let's jot it down, we can be saved.



(40:28)

## 11. We can be saved

If you're hearing my voice right now and it's not on some broadcast delay after the rapture you can be saved. You can be saved. Now again Mike you pointed out really well that if we're creating our own religion we would want people to be saved. We want all people to be saved or at least all but the 11 o'clock news people to be saved. Let's get most of the people saved. Now here's the thing, let's stop for a minute thinking about how God should save everyone and let's start pondering that God would be gracious enough to save anyone. And let's just make that statement as the grace of God and the gracious truth that God is saying, "Hey, enter through the narrow door, the door is open. The door of mercy is open." (41:10)

I read an article this week about people keeping skunks as pets. We're nearing the end of the world folks. Not one time in reading that article did I think you know I am shocked that all skunks aren't adopted as pets, never once did I think that. My shock was that any skunks were adopted as pets. I thought, are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? Then I read that 18 states have legalized the keeping of skunks. If you get a permit you can keep a skunk in 18 of the 50 states here in the good ole United States of America and there's a lot of problems with California but this ain't one of them. It's still illegal in our state. Can't keep a skunk. Not one time in reading the article about all the states that will allow you with a permit to have a skunk in the corner of your living room, and they teach you all about how to put your little litter box out there and you can have your skunk in your living room. Not once did I say, "Why don't all 50 states allow this?" I was never outraged by that. I never thought, oh I just, those other states are so narrow I just, crazy. Okay maybe I'm wrong about it so I started studying about skunks this week. You wonder what I'm doing all week, right? Well maybe wrong, maybe I'm wrong. No, they're prone to rabies, they have super sharp claws, they get round worms regularly, oh by the way they stink really bad. All my thoughts about skunks I think are true, you've got to do a lot to get a skunk to be a pet and to sit there in the living room watching your television show and petting the skunk that crawls up, nuzzles up next to you, that it takes a lot to get to that point after all the things that you as a human being are offended by and can be hurt by. (43:08)

I know we like to think God just creates all these people and puts all their pictures up on his the refrigerator in heaven and sits there and goes, "they're so cute. Oh that one's a little naughty, a little naughty that one, but oh but I love them so much." Yeah, He loves them. You know how he loves them? By keeping them alive long enough to have an opportunity for them to respond to the gospel of Christ. To feel the conviction and pang of guilt in their hearts and respond to the light that they have, which you know what? They refuse because they're rebels. God is a God in his grace that sends his rains on the crops of the evil and the good. But here's the thing, he's a holy God and he looks at sinful people like you and I as rebels. And those rebels by nature, he is at enmity with, he is hostile toward, there's just no way around that. Holding back his wrath is an act of loving grace. That's called common grace; the amazing grace is that he would adopt skunks like you and me. Number 11 may sound like a really simple thing to jot down but it's the biggest thing that could possibly jar our thinking this morning if we could think biblically, we can be saved. (44:17)

Verse 22, number 12, he went on his way through the towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. Why would I make up a point, what's the point of that? Well in chapter 9 of Luke as we studied verse by verse through Luke we ran into this statement that I'll just read it, verse 51 of Luke 9, he set his face toward Jerusalem. Which is an idiom about his resolve to go to Jerusalem. Now that was without comment in Luke 9, we don't get the theology behind it. But if you turned over at some point in your study of Luke 9 to Matthew 16:21 which I think we did, at least we quoted it back when we were studying that text, I said it's very important to know that as he moves from the Galilean ministry to the Judean ministry he's making his way toward Jerusalem and as he says in Matthew 16 he began at that time to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem – here it is - to suffer many things from the elders, the chief priests and the scribes and to be killed. He's going to his death? He's purposing to go to his death? He's set his face to go to his death? That's what's happening and in this text we're reminded of it at the very beginning when he's asked about how many are going to be saved. He went on his way through the towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. Why? Because he's going to suffer many things. And the words of 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18, he's going to suffer many things for the sins of the people. Once for all the righteous dying here now for the unrighteous, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. Oh it may be a minority in the world population but number 12, Jesus earned it for us. (45:59)



## 12. Jesus earned it for us

And I wish I could be a lot longer point because he earned it with a great deal of suffering and pain on his own behalf. He purchased salvation for those that are saved because he went to Jerusalem to suffer and die and be treated, as we said in the baptismal testimonies this morning, as though he were the sinner so that you could be treated as the righteous one before a holy God. You can be declawed, you can have your vaccinations, you could have your stinky sac of stink juice removed or whatever they do to these skunks. And he can change you from the inside out. Yeah, there are hard truths on the left hand column of your worksheet this morning but I hope as we make our way around this text that you'll see the silver lining because it's much more than a silver lining isn't it? It's really the core of what the Bible teaches. It's a book about grace, it's the message of an inclusive God and the news of that inclusion though it's a minority of people, is so good they call it the good news. It's the good news that you can be saved, that Jesus paid the price, that the saved are kept and locked in and salvation will change your life, the kingdom is going to be incredibly fulfilling and he'll save all kinds of people, people you wouldn't even expect. A message of inclusion, a message by the way we need to get out to a dying world as we grow the church and expand the kingdom. We need to set these words very encouraging, positive, gracious words before the people. Like in Deuteronomy 31 when Moses said I've set before you life and death. Yeah both sides are there, they have to be committed to the people. We have to teach both sides and both columns. I set before you life and death, heaven and hell, saved and unsaved, Christian life and non-Christian life, inclusion or exclusion. I've set before you life and death blessing and curse, I'm reading Deuteronomy 30 verse 19, therefore choose life, that's what we're telling our lost world. Choose life that you may live. And you may love the Lord your God and obey his voice and hold fast to him for he is your life. What a great passage. That's the message that may be rejected by many but it will be received by some and there song can become ours, a song of grace that God saves sinners like you and I. Let's pray. (48:12)

God, help us as we process the tough truths of Luke 13, these are tough truths, they are hard truths, if we only look at it from one perspective. But God it'll be good for us this morning to stop certainly in light of these testimonies this morning and remember that what we celebrate though our heart certainly is tempered by the grief we have for so many that reject the gospel, we celebrate the fact that you're a God of grace, amazing grace, not just common grace, but the fact that you would save sinners and rebels, all kinds of rebels, all kinds of sinners from every walk of life from every part of the planet from every tongue, tribe and nation. There will be a lot of people saved, it may not be as many as we might like if we were arranging these truths the way we would want to. But we trust the fact that you're a just God and we won't sit there when we have clarity about your holiness and ask why didn't you save everyone, what we'll really be asking is God why did you save anyone? So give us God a sense of that, a foretaste of that even now that we might worship you with more profound thanksgiving, understanding the fact that you are a God that owes us nothing and yet you've given us an opportunity to enter the ark so to speak, to shut us in, to close us in, to save us. So God as we get back to the fundamentals of our faith this morning thinking about salvation I pray that we might be motivated to get out there into a lost world and to give these words of life to people and encourage them, motivate them, to persuade them to choose life and love God who is our life our only hope of salvation. Dismiss us now God with a sense of that mission and for those God that need to hear this and respond today I pray that they would, they wouldn't dare get in the car and risk their lives on the roads and not be sure, that they're sure that they have real life in you because they have genuinely and sincerely, not just heard your teaching but responded to it, with genuine repentance and faith. Do that God in many lives among us this morning, in Jesus name, Amen. (50:28)