

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 13:22-35

(Discussion questions are at the end)

(13:22-30)

This section of Luke revolves around the question posed to Jesus: *“Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”* (13:23 NIV)

As we analyze/reflect on this question, some questions come to mind pretty quickly: What precipitated this question being asked? What was their understanding of being “saved”, and how similar vs different is that from our understanding?

Regarding what prompted this question, we must assume the preceding parables of the mustard seed and yeast (combined with a more general understanding—or lack thereof—of what they had heard Jesus teach up to now) is what prompted the question.

Our minds tend to jump immediately to “eternal destination” (i.e. heaven vs hell) when we think of being “saved” or salvation in general. And while that is understandable, it is only partially accurate. The context suggests something more immediate (though the ultimate is not completely out of the picture...just more off in the horizon).

In a first century Jewish person’s mind salvation was ultimately linked to God’s coming kingdom. And Jesus did not correct that but rather reinforced that understanding. Notice that the “kingdom of God” is mentioned twice (see verses 28-29). So whatever the “door” and “in vs out” means, it has something to do with the kingdom of God. What we need to be careful of is making the kingdom of God equated to heaven. While heaven would be included, God’s kingdom is wherever His rule and reign is acknowledged.

And this is really the crux of the warning: the King, Himself, was present and holding the door open to the Kingdom (a narrow door though it may be), and they weren’t acknowledging Him as King; thus He will not acknowledge them (notice that He says twice *“I don’t know you...”*—verses 25b and 27).

Let’s cross-reference this passage with a couple others: back in 12:8-9 Jesus states, *“I tell you, whoever acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But he who disowns Me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.”*

Additionally, the apostle John in both his Gospel and his first epistle allude to the same idea: pretty much all of John chapter 10 speaks to this; John 12:26 states, *“Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me.”* And I John 2:3 states, *“We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands.”* The point is this: to know Jesus is to follow Him, serve Him, obey Him; and He is the door/access point to the Kingdom of God!

For those of the “crowd” or “multitudes” that hung around Jesus, simply listening to Him speak or even rubbing elbows with Him was not enough. Likewise, simply going to church or assenting to some specific doctrinal points about Jesus isn’t enough. We are made to KNOW Him, to SERVE Him, to OBEY Him. And to this Jesus said, *“Make every effort...”* Following Jesus is what it means to enter through the narrow door.

If you think about it, we could turn the question around. Why would someone want to enter into the Kingdom of God (or want to have anything to do with the Kingdom of God for that matter) if they didn’t want to know, follow, serve, obey Jesus? Why would anyone want to be part of a particular Kingdom if they didn’t like, or want anything to do with, the King?

Here in lies the difference between “religion” and the reality of the Kingdom of God. Religion is man-made. Man makes the rules; man determines who’s “in” and “out”, who is acceptable and unacceptable. In God’s kingdom God/Jesus makes the rules and determines who’s “in” and “out”, who is acceptable or unacceptable. And we have to be OK with that. Because there will be some included that we may not like, and some not included that we wish were. This is the point of verses 29-30. People from the east, west, north, and south (i.e. Gentiles/pagans/non-Jews) will *“take their place at the feast of the Kingdom of God”*. So while the door/access point is narrow (Jesus) the call/invitation is wide. And we are not in control of anyone else’s response to that invitation but our own.

As we’ve seen leading up to this passage, the Jews had a BIG problem with the Gentiles, namely their Roman oppressors. But even the Romans would be invited. So what we see is that the mindset/heart set of the Jews at this time was not in harmony with God’s heart. So even though they were God’s covenant people, they weren’t aligned with God. Their mindset/heart set (i.e. their hatred) was becoming a barrier to their response to Jesus and their entrance into the Kingdom. This leads us to the next section...

(13:31-35)

We see the mindset/heart set on display in the Pharisees. To paraphrase their response to Jesus, “Go away!” (13:31). Perhaps the threat of Herod out to kill Jesus would motive Him, they thought. But Jesus would not be dissuaded. He had a mission to fulfill, and the fear of man, even to the point of mortal harm, would not distract Him.

Nevertheless, the heart set/mindset of the Pharisees (and many of the Jews at that time) grieved Jesus deeply. Verse 34 is poignantly beautiful and stands in stark contrast to the heart set/mindset of the Jews. Whereas they wanted to get rid of Jesus, Jesus wanted to protect them...both presently and in the future. If they didn’t repent from their attitude the Romans would wipe them out (as did happen in 70 AD). If they didn’t repent their entrance into the kingdom of God was at stake. His heart set/mindset was to save as many of them as possible. And He would go to the length of the cross to do so. That was His commitment to the Father and to humanity.

- Q. Describe a time when you were denied entrance/access to something. How did you respond? (possible icebreaker)**
- Q. If you could ask Jesus a question what would you ask Him? (possible icebreaker) (HG Leaders: if you ask this, pay attention to people's responses. The questions we have reveal more about us than we often realize.)**
- Q. A great challenge posed to us is while we are called to share/spread the Gospel of Jesus and His kingdom, we are NOT called to spread "Christianity". How would you describe the difference? How can we make sure we are clearly differentiating between the two? (Note/Hint: many people have a negative reaction to "Christianity" and "the church", but a positive reaction to Jesus. What accounts for that difference?)**
- Q. We pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's kingdom is where His rule and reign, His will, is unhindered/unobstructed. Our biggest challenge, and really the biggest rival to that pray/idea, is that we typically function more from the position/sentiment, "MY kingdom come, MY will be done...". How have you faced that challenge on a personal level? How have we faced that challenge on a communal or societal level?**
- Q. How would you describe the difference between knowing Jesus and knowing about Jesus? What are you actively doing to know Jesus better/deeper (as opposed to simply knowing more about Him)?**
- Q. Notice that Jesus didn't directly answer the question that was posed to Him, "Will only a few be saved?" That is likely due to it being the wrong question to ask (and it's basically synonymous to "who will be saved?"). It demonstrates the human preoccupation with "Who's in vs who's out?" To paraphrase Jesus' response, "You better just worry about yourself, and don't assume you're as 'in' as you think you are." This could raise all kinds of questions regarding "eternal security" ...though that's not really the angle Jesus was coming from, nevertheless it's an understandable question considering the 2000 years worth of baggage we've accumulated. OK, enough prefacing of the question, here it is: Do you feel secure in your salvation? Why or why not?**
- Q. Jesus was grieved at the mindset/heart set of the Jews. On a personal level, do you have a mindset/heart set that might grieve Jesus? Explain. On a communal and/or societal level, what do you think might grieve Jesus presently?**