

Sunday, April 7, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

Week 19 | Luke 13:22- | "Rejection"

Two weeks ago, before Easter, we talked about **humble beginnings** (e.g., Microsoft, Apple, Nike, Coca-Cola, etc.). Arguably, **the best example** of a small entity becoming large is Christianity. After all, Jesus—its founder—was little more than a roaming rabbi. Yet, amazingly, he started a movement that has all but encompassed the globe. For instance, Baltimore sits 5,800 miles from Jerusalem. What are the odds that we'd be talking about a teacher from the Middle East over 2,000 years later?

We then **explored how Christianity became large**. While there are many good arguments to make, using Luke 13:10-20, we saw that from its inception, **the marginalized were treated with dignity** (e.g., handicapped women), **and all human life had value** (e.g., people are more important than animals). And Jesus was so confident that his movement would thrive that he compared it to **a mustard seed** and **leaven**. Both analogies highlight a crucial principle about Christianity: *Jesus' movement will be massive. **Though it has humble beginnings, God's Kingdom will permeate the world.***

Today, we'll be talking about *rejection*. Have you ever watched a sports show/movie where some star athlete gets harassed by some deadbeat parent once they've made it big? Inevitably, there's a confrontation, and the athlete will say, "If you didn't know me when I was a *nobody*, I won't know you when I'm a *somebody*." If a person only wants a relationship because it benefits them, they don't deserve to be associated with that person. A true friend or family member sticks with someone through thick and thin.

The Jews (not unlike the deadbeat parents just mentioned) missed a golden opportunity with Jesus. He was their Messiah, and yet, they turned their back on him; they *rejected* the Son of God. Such a decision has severe consequences. Though the Lord is longsuffering, today, he'll present Israel with a choice: enter through the narrow door or be cast out into the place where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth.

There are **two** rejections in this passage:

- i. **A Lord rejects some strangers.**

READ: Luke 13:22-30 (ESV)

²² He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, ²⁴ “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

²⁵ When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and 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 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. ²⁹ And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the Kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

Vs. 23-24 – Notice that Jesus does not give a direct answer to the question, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” Rather than provide a number, he says, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. Many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” In other words, “While I will not tell you exactly how many will be saved, I will say this: there will be *many* who will try and *fail* to enter the Kingdom of God.” Since many will be denied entry later, a person had better make sure they're already a part of God's Kingdom. Or, as Bock puts it, "In effect, Jesus turns the question from "Will the saved be few?" to "Will you be among the saved?"¹ **While the question, “How many will be in heaven?” may be an important one, arguably, the question, “Will I go to heaven?” should take precedence.** Yes, we should care about the destinies of others, but not so much that we forfeit our own (e.g., airplane O² mask).

In fact, we should be so intent on entering God's Kingdom that, according to Jesus, we ought to "strive [emphasis added] to enter through the narrow door." The Greek term translated as "strive" is ἀγωνίζομαι (*agōnízomai*), and it refers to “ferve activity” (cf. Col. 4:12), such as “contend” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25), or even “fight” (cf. Jn. 18:36). **In the ancient world, the term often referred to an athletic competition or (get this) combat.**² Thus, the idea conveyed here is that as Olympians strive to win gold, we should also strive to enter through the "narrow door." As

¹ Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-25:53*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapid, MI; Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1241.

² Edwards, James R., *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), p. 401.

boxers **fight** to become the world's heavyweight champion, so too ought we to **fight** for our place in heaven.

Now, to be clear, this isn't talking about works-based salvation; instead, the effort Jesus is referring to is that of faith (cf. Jn. 6:29). He has presented himself as the Messiah, and he's told his people that they have a golden opportunity that no one else has ever had (cf. Lu. 10:13-14). And yet, they persist in their unbelief and *willfully* ignorant. They refuse to believe the miracles and Jesus' claim. Thus, the "**striving**" that Jesus is talking about is the kind that a person does to overcome their own stubbornness; it is a ruthless and dogged determination to adhere, no matter what, to God's Word. **Make no mistake, salvation is a struggle, not a stroll; it demands both heart and soul.**³ This is not to say our sanctification is the result of human effort *alone*. We must rely upon God and abide in his Word if we want to experience a fruitful Christian life (cf. John 15:1-17; Phil 4:13). However, neither is human effort a foreign concept in the process of sanctification. Paul says, "**I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified**" (1 Cor. 9:27). **We, like God, have our part to play. Admittedly, it is the more minor part of the two, but still, it is an integral part as we follow Christ.**

Vs. 25-27 – To illustrate how important it is to take stock of one's heart, the Lord tells a story about **some visitors who come knocking on the door of someone they thought they knew.** It is an unusual story because rather than use third-person pronouns (e.g., they/them), Jesus uses the second-person pronoun "you." In other words, the characters in the Lord's story were not figments of his imagination; he was thinking of his audience. The Lord was talking directly to the crowd.

The story goes that a "**master of the house**" has gone and shut the door to his home when, suddenly, he has some surprise visitors at the door. They say, "**Lord, open to us.**" But the master of the house replies, "**I do not know where you come from.**" As the next verse will make clear, the master's response was dismissive, which said something like, "You are not welcome here." **The visitors were not actually strangers; instead, the master of the house was treating them as strangers.** In response, the strangers say, "**We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.**" Here, they're insisting that they have a personal relationship with him. After all, they shared a meal (an act which would've implied at least some level of camaraderie), and they listened as the master of the house had "**taught**" in their neighborhood. But the master of the house will not be persuaded. He says, "**I tell you, I do not know where**

³ Garland, David E., *Luke*, The Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2001), p. 561.

you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" Notice that he characterizes them as being "workers of evil." While good works have never saved anyone, they have always been indicative of the saved (cf. Jam. 2:14-26). The master of the house knew these people, alright; he knew them to be agents of unrighteousness rather than righteousness. They worked against good rather than for good.

Vs. 28-30 - So, the master of the house casts out the "workers of evil;" but where do they go? In a word, *hell*. The Lord says, "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the Kingdom of God." Jesus spoke more on hell than heaven. It is a real place, my friends, and one of the most terrifying things to me is that there will be people in hell who thought they were going to heaven. Jesus meant this when he said, "And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." The Jews, in Jesus' day, thought they had priority, and, in a way, they did. They were the descendants of Abraham, and they were recipients of God's OT promises. However, just because they were of God's chosen lineage did not, by default, grant them access to the Kingdom. Just as a non-Jew must put their faith in Jesus, so too must a Jew. Pedigree means nothing to God (cf. Mat. 3:10); he cares only about the sort of *faith* that leads to *repentance* that, ultimately, leads to a *changed life* (cf. Rom. 11:20).

Knowing *Jesus* is far more important than knowing your *family tree*. This is why, on that last day, there will be many Jews who actually lived in Jerusalem, the City of Jehovah, that will be cast into hell. In contrast, there will be scores of non-Jews from the farthest reaches of the world, most of whom will have never laid eyes on Jerusalem, who will be allowed to "recline at table in the kingdom of God" alongside the likes of "Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets." Some of those who were literally Abraham's offspring will not sit next to him in eternity; amazingly, those who have no earthly connection to Abraham will be seated amongst his family.⁴

ii. A city rejects its Lord.

READ: Luke 13:31-35 (ESV)

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast

⁴ Garland (2001), p. 558, "Those who belong to Israel do not have racial priority that automatically secures them a place at the table, despite the fact that many took it for granted that "all Israel will have a share in the world to come" (see *m. Sanh.* 10:1, citing *Isa.* 60:21; *b. Sanh.* 90a)."

out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’

³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

The Herod referred to here is Herod Antipas, a Roman-appointed governor who ruled over the provinces of Galilee and Perea (a region east of Jerusalem on the eastern side of the Jordan River). Though the Lord moved around Palestine during his earthly ministry, he spent most of his time in Galilee.⁵ Needless to say, Jesus was quite familiar with Herod, and, in his estimation, he did not like the ruler. The Lord even called the Roman governor “a fox,” which, in the first century, could either refer to “a person of no significance,”⁶ or (more likely) a worthless con artist.⁷ Either way, it was *not* a polite nor respectable way to talk about someone with so much power and authority (e.g., in *The Emperor's New Groove*, Kuzco throws an old man out a window for throwing off his "groove."). Case in point: Tiberius—Roman emperor during Jesus’ lifetime—once had a fisherman’s face torn to shreds by carbs simply because the man startled the emperor by mistake.⁸

QUICK ASIDE: Jesus vilified Herod for two reasons. First, like all Roman leaders at the time, Herod Antipas used underhanded tactics to gain and maintain power. In fact, Caligula exiled him because Antipas tried to denounce one of the emperor's closest friends. Second, (and more pertinently) Herod had John the Baptist—Jesus’ own cousin—beheaded. We talked about that in Luke 9.

Now, whether the Pharisees cared about Jesus’ safety is debatable. It’s possible. After all, Luke gives us no indication that their motives were sinister. However, the Pharisees are mentioned *twenty-six times* elsewhere in Luke’s account, and *all are negative* (e.g., Lu. 11:53-54; 7:29; 6:7;

⁵ Given that Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth, a city in Galilee (cf. Lu. 1:26), and raised Jesus there, he was often referred to as “Jesus of Nazareth” (cf. Mat. 26:71; Mar. 10:47; Lu. 4:34; 18:37; Jn. 1:45; 18:5; etc.). Capernaum, the home base for the disciples, also sits within Herod's domain.

⁶ Edwards (2015), p. 405, “Particularly in Jewish circles, “fox” commonly symbolized an individual who considered himself (or was considered by others) a lion, but was in reality much smaller game.”

⁷ Bock (1996), p. 1247; see Garland (2001), p. 559, for a long list of possible translations, which include “clown,” “cream puff,” and “jackass.”

⁸ Champlin, Edward, “Tiberius the Wise,” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2008, pp. 408–25, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25598445> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2024].

5:30, 33; etc.).⁹ Thus, given what we already know about the Pharisees, it is far more likely they were using Herod as an excuse to get rid of Jesus. They were feigning concern in the hopes that Jesus would go into hiding, thus being removed from the public eye and being out of their hair, if only for a short time.¹⁰

But Jesus was no coward, an apt illustration of what it looks like to “strive.” This message to Herod about how he’ll continue “cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course” is not necessarily a strict three-day timeline. Though, that is possible. More likely, Jesus was saying, “I’ve got appointments to keep and things to do. I’m not going to stop for Herod.” The Lord was too busy to stop and give even the slightest consideration to a backstabbing bearcat who killed one of his family members.

Earlier, in verses 25-27, some strangers claimed to know the Lord of the house. But there was a problem. The Lord of the house said he didn’t know the strangers. In a fantastic reversal by Jesus, we now learn the identity of those strangers: *Jerusalem*. Unlike what we might expect, it is **not** Jesus who has rejected Jerusalem first, **but Jerusalem** who rejects Jesus! Rather than be gathered like a hen gathers her chicks, they remain defiant.

So, what’s the takeaway?

An **alliance** with Jesus, rather than just an **acquaintance**, keeps us from **rejection**.

If your connection to Jesus is nothing more than an **acquaintance**—i.e., what you know of him is only what you hear on Sunday morning, your faith is more theoretical than practical—then you’ve likely forfeited your place in God’s Kingdom. However, if you have an **alliance** with Jesus—i.e., he has your heart and soul, both a *hearer* and a *doer* of the Word—then you’ve secured your seat at God’s table.

READ: Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

You’ve heard me say this repeatedly: **We are saved by faith not by a profession of faith**. *Lip service* to God means nothing if the Lord does not also have your *heart*. You can follow all the

⁹ Edwards (2015), p. 404.

¹⁰ Garland (2001), p. 559.

rules and be the most religious person on the planet, but if you do not have a living/breathing/working relationship with Jesus Christ, *you will not go to heaven.*

If your relationship with Jesus is only a religion, if you come on Sundays and your Mondays do not change, if "Christian" is more of a cultural identity than your actual identity, then, on that last day, you will come to the gates of heaven saying, "Lord, open the door! I know you! I heard your lessons every Sunday!" And then Jesus will reply, "I don't know who you are. You say you know my words, but did they ever change you?"

An alliance with Jesus separates the cultural Christians and the committed Christians.

Video Description:

The Road to Redemption | Week 19 | " (Luke 13:22-35)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Today, we'll be talking about *rejection*. Have you ever watched a sports show/movie where some star athlete gets harassed by some deadbeat parent once they've made it big? Inevitably, there's a confrontation, and the athlete will say, "If you didn't know me when I was a *nobody*, I won't know you when I'm a *somebody*." If a person only wants a relationship because it benefits them, they don't deserve to be associated with that person. A true friend or family member sticks with someone through thick and thin.

The Jews (not unlike the deadbeat parents just mentioned) missed a golden opportunity with Jesus. He was their Messiah, and yet, they turned their back on him; they *rejected* the Son of God. Such a decision has severe consequences. Though the Lord is longsuffering, today, he'll present Israel with a choice: enter through the narrow door or be cast out into the place where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here:

Grace Pointe Baptist Church

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: info@GracePointeLife.com

Website: <https://www.gracepointelife.com>

Give here: <https://www.gracepointelife.com/give/>

Podcast Details:

Season 38 | 18