

Reflection Questions: Luke 13:22-30

For the message, "Salvation's Narrow Door" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on September 19, 2021

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Luke 13:22-30

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."

Let's get started...

In our study on this passage, the pastor referenced an article in Patheos titled, "I'm a Presbyterian Minister who doesn't believe in God." In it, Pastor John Shuck writes, "I believe one of the newer religious paths could be a 'belief-less' Christianity. In this 'sect,' one is not required to believe things.... But what about belief in God? Can a belief-less Christianity really survive if God isn't in the picture? Can you even call that Christianity anymore? In theory, yes.... Someone quipped that my congregation is BYOG: Bring Your Own God. I use that and invite people to 'bring their own God' — or none at all. While the symbol 'God' is part of our cultural tradition, you can take it or leave it or redefine it to your liking. That permission to be theological do-it-yourselfers is at the heart of belief-less Christianity."

- How does this quote strike you, and why?
- Why do you think this ethos of being a "theological do-it-yourselfer" finds traction in our culture?

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- Jesus is journeying towards Jerusalem where any self-respecting messiah-figure would declare war on Rome, the occupying force in Israel's capital. When you hear the person in the crowd

asking Jesus, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?”, what do you think s/he might be asking or wanting to hear from Jesus?

- Jesus doesn’t answer the question directly with a “yes” or “no.” Instead, he tells his audience, “Strive to enter the narrow door....” Here, Jesus connects those who are “saved” with those who enter “the narrow door.” Considering that Jesus in another place called himself the door (“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved...” - John 10:9), what is Jesus communicating to his original audience the urgency to embrace him and to respond to his message about the coming kingdom of God?
- Jesus goes on to give two short parables about the danger of being left out of the coming kingdom of God. No doubt they would have found what he said offensive (“We are not workers of evil” we might imagine them saying. “That describes Rome and the other non-Jewish peoples”). What do you make of Jesus’ willingness to speak truthfully to these folks, even if he runs the risk of offending them?
- One commentator said, “Familiarity with Jesus is not the same as having a place in the kingdom of God” (Ralph Davis). Do you find this helpful in understanding what Jesus was driving home in this passage? Why or why not? Also, how might this commentator’s quote be applicable today in our 21st century context?

2. Let’s think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus’ followers.

- No doubt, churches are finding it challenging to communicate Jesus’ message of being “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42, 1 John 4:14) and calling people to faith and allegiance in him. What happens when churches—and even ministers like the one referenced in the above quote—reject Jesus’ message about salvation’s narrow door and opt for a seemingly more open-minded message of a DIY spirituality?
- In your mind, what would a community of faith look like that is at once faithful to Jesus’ message about salvation being found in him alone AND also that is winsome, humbly-bold, and loving in it’s testimony about Jesus?

3. Let’s think about how this text applies to our city.

- Think through this quote from Pastor Tim Keller as he address the common notion in our culture that any sincerely good person can find God.

“It sounds very open-minded to say, ‘I believe that any good person can find God, not just Christians.’ But what is the premise? That the good can find God and the bad do not. That’s very ‘exclusive.’ Very. If you don’t have to believe in Jesus to find God, then good works are enough. And if good works are enough, then God accepts people through performance. Everyone knows that somewhere there is a ‘cut-off’ point for moral performance, or goodness of heart, etc.’ But that is quite exclusive.”

- How might we help others in our city understand Christianity to be more inclusive in it’s exclusivity that the moralist’s exclusive claim that only the sincerely good can find God. Recall the “whosoever” of the gospel: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him might no perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).