

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 13:22-30

"Only ONE Way"

Today's Holy Gospel from Luke gives us a powerful portrait of God's Only Son, Jesus the Messiah – Yeshua Ha'Mashiach - telling those who ask Him point blank – who will go to heaven. He surprises many by telling them three things:

1. There is only One Way to heaven
2. Not everyone will get there
3. Do not wait too long – it just may be too late!

That is a scary Gospel – but it is the Truth!

These are not messages that are a part of a 'feel good gospel' – for many. These are messages that are convicting – and thought provoking, but unfortunately – many often push these messages under the rug – or customize them to their liking – so that in their minds everyone gets to fit in. Jesus was VERY clear in His message and He made those 3 points:

I. There is only ONE Way!

To me it is heartbreaking when I hear people say that 'there is more than one way to heaven' – or that 'Jesus is A WAY – but not THE way.' I do believe that the words from Proverbs 16:25 are fitting - that say "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*" We are surrounded by people who believe in 'a whole lot of things' – and many who *think* they believe in Jesus – only it is *a different Jesus!* The Jesus, who is God's Son – spoke plainly and with certainty that **there is only one way to the Father**. On the night before He died Jesus said in **John 14:6** "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" In these words there is no room for interpretation or dissection – Jesus said it – so you can believe it! **There is no wiggle room – no twisting and contorting of the meaning to fit some 'progressive' agenda. Jesus is the only way to salvation!** Luke reminds us of this fact in his writing of the Book of Acts 4:12 "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*" My brothers and sisters in Christ –

- Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed One,
- Jesus is God's Son,
- Jesus fulfills the Scriptures,
- Jesus died on the cross, and because of that – He saved humanity,
- Jesus rose from the dead –
- and Jesus is the only way to heaven –

and those points are non-negotiable! Plain and simple - if you don't believe that – then you are NOT a Christian! If these points are not part of your beliefs then honestly I don't see how you could possibly call yourself a Christian! My daughter Theresa, when she was younger, often reminded me of one of her favorite Bible verses: Hebrews 13:8 "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*"

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In today's Holy Gospel – Jesus was asked about the way to heaven and He replied “*Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.*” (Luke 13:24) And you know that this was not the first time that Jesus spoke in these terms. In John 10:9, Jesus unmistakably laid the way for us, saying “*I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*” Complete and eternal rest can only be found in Him! Jesus further explained in Matthew 7:14 saying that the way would not be an easy one: “*But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.*” The Truth is undeniable - **Jesus is THE WAY to heaven** – He is not one of many – or an alternative route that complies with political correctness, or the culture of the day which allows inclusivity; trying to not make people feel left out. There is one certain thing: Jesus is the target of a modern agenda –

- a politically correct,
- multicultural agenda, driven by sympathy for the marginalized;
- an agenda that says diversity is always good, truth is not firm but instead negotiable, (I'll believe my truth, you believe your truth; and can't we just get along?)
- and every opinion is equally legitimate.

I almost drive off the road when I see that sign over by the hospital. It is filled with rainbow colors; and you know the sign I am talking about.

Truly following the Jesus of Scripture – and not a Jesus who has been sculpted by the whims and agendas of society – means that we need, as followers and believers in Him, to do three things:

1. **Seek Him and Call on Him** - "*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*"(Romans 10:13)
2. **Submit to Him and Surrender your will to Him** - "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that **everyone who believes in Him** may not perish but may have eternal life.*" (John 3:16)
3. **Share your faith in Him – Make our faith in Him public** - "*Everyone therefore who acknowledges Me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.*" (Matthew 10:32) Remember – the Great Commission - **Matthew 28:19-20** “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them **to obey** everything that I have commanded you.*”

Ty Cobb, all-time baseball great and Hall of Famer, born in Narrows, GA (northwest of Atlanta) and known as ‘*the Georgia Peach*,’ played 3,033 consecutive games, and for twelve years led the American League in batting averages. Incredibly for four seasons, he batted over .400. **He was, possibly, the meanest and most unlikable man ever to play the game of baseball.** He used to sharpen his spikes so that when he slid into a base – he would really leave his mark on the opponent – drawing blood, and trying to get them out of the game. With all this - on his deathbed, July 17, 1961, a transformation took place; he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He said, "You tell the boys I'm sorry it was the last part of the ninth that

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I came to know Christ. I wish it had taken place in the first half of the first." What awesome hope – that instantly takes me to the parable of the workers in the vineyard – it didn't matter if you began at the end of the day – the eleventh hour, or you began at dawn – the reward was the same. That's good news, knowing Jesus Christ means salvation. But... here's Jesus' second point –

II. Not Everyone Will Go To Heaven:

Would you believe that not everyone that WANTS to go to heaven - WILL – it has to be on God's terms – and not ours! The evidence is overwhelming:

Luke 13:3 Jesus said *"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish"* There's that word again that makes so many people uncomfortable – **repent!**

Matthew 18:3 Jesus told His disciples: *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* Another uncomfortable word for some people – **change!** "Well, I don't want to change!"

In **Matthew 19:23-24** Jesus once again spoke to His disciples: *"I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."* Riches don't mean the coin in your pocket – but about who and what you put first.

The Apostle John warned us about non-believers and skeptics who would try to stack the deck with false evidence against Jesus. Don't we find that all around us today? There was that movie – 'The DaVinci Code' where they did their best to show that Jesus was NOT the Son of God; and then all those false gnostic gospels were brought out – the gospel of Thomas and the gospel of Mary Magdalene – which they found out were really written hundreds of years after Jesus walked the earth. In 1 John 5:10-12 John said that *"Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."* Just try watching some of the documentaries on the History channel or National Geographics about Christ and you will hear dozens of authorities, John Dominic Crossan and Elaine Pagels, I don't know what they believe but they are clueless – about the truth of Jesus Christ and who Jesus of Nazareth really is.

A 1991 Gallup Poll showed that 78 percent of Americans expect to go to heaven.

- Many of whom never pray
- Never read the Bible
- Or hardly ever attend church!

The people who answered this poll admitted that they like to please themselves rather than God. So, tell me, how do they think they are going to heaven - Osmosis? It is the same fantasy that many have when they claim that have "lived a good life" – but, without Jesus in their life – the Jesus of Scripture, and not some new and improved invention of interpretation either, - I am afraid that once again the evidence is overwhelming. People think they are going to heaven

– but have not admitted that they are sinners and in need of a savior. They either don't believe that there is such a thing as sin – or they don't believe in the 'consequences of their actions.'

Romans 6:23 is so clear: *“The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* I am afraid that unless you admit that you are a sinner, turning away from that sin in repentance, and trusting in Jesus alone for salvation - then the wages of that sin is eternal death – without Jesus; without God. You see:

- Sin is high treason against a Holy God;
- Sin is like a clenched fist shoved in God's face;
- Sin is a closed heart.

It is difficult to think that there might be someone in your family, someone you work with that might be just going through the motions – saying that they believe, but are living a life that says just the opposite. Today is the day, and now is the time for each one of us to pray that their eyes and hearts would be opened, that they would freely give themselves in submission to our Lord Jesus Christ; *“To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.”* (Titus 1:15-16)

Jesus' third point is:

III. Do not wait too long – it just may be too late!

Going to church is not enough; being sincere is not enough; being a good person is not enough; being religious is not enough! Following is not submitting. Look at Jesus' words from today's Gospel **Luke 13:25-27** *“Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!”* Here were people who had been following Jesus, ate with Him, listened to Him, but may not have truly heard what He said – or it had no impact on them. Another reason might have been that it was just the popular thing to do – to follow the one who claimed to be the Messiah – and they thought they would be covered merely by association. Sadly, I believe we might find that attitude in many churches and youth groups today!

Jesus told us that a lackadaisical attitude would never cut it – that we need to be alert and be ready. In His parable of the Ten Bridesmaids Jesus told of these women – they were unprepared – they wanted to borrow oil from the others – they didn't take it seriously - and they had to leave to buy oil for their lamps. When the bridegroom arrived – they were not there – and when they came later to the banquet the door was closed. They begged to get in – but they were told *“Truly, I tell you, I do not know you.”* (Matthew 25:12)

My brothers and sisters in Christ – if you want a truly remarkable relationship with Jesus – for all eternity – **make today the day – and now the hour** – that you repent of your sins – turn away from them forever and turn to Jesus Christ as Lord of your life - before the door is closed. *“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but*

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only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come." (Mark 13:32-33)

Jesus is holding open the gate of the Kingdom of God – and urging people to enter. He said the door isn't very wide – and it will take real commitment to get in. One day – and not very long from now – that door will shut and then, it will be too late.

Please keep in mind that to truly know Jesus Christ – and to enter through the narrow gate – you must do three things:

- 1) Seek Him – Call on Him**
- 2) Submit to Him – Surrender your will to Him –**
- 3) Share your faith in Him – Make your faith in Him public –**

Jesus, the narrow gate – is the entrance to the pasture of the Good Shepherd – and it is my prayer that the words of Psalm 95:7 lift your hearts and lead each one of us today: *"For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice!"*