

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Picture this account. See if you can in some way relate to it.

- It is Thursday morning. Just a normal, usual day in your life.
- But, when you take your morning medications you realize that you are taking the last pill of a medicine that you take twice a day.....when you first get up in the morning and right before you go to bed at night.
- So, you realize you do not have enough pills for your bedtime dosage...so you add to your “to do list for the day” to go to the pharmacy.

The day goes by pretty uneventful.

- Except, you’ve enjoyed it enough that you never thought or took the time to go to the pharmacy.
- You think of it as you are eating the evening meal.

But.....you still have time.....the pharmacy does not close until 8:00 p.m.

- So, you sit down after the meal, relax for a few minutes, start watching some television and get engrossed in what you are watching.

Suddenly you remember.....the need to go to the pharmacy to get your medicine.

- You look at the clock. It is quarter to 8:00 and the pharmacy closes at 8:00
- You really need that medicine before going to bed.
- But, you think you should be okay.
- Normally it takes you about 10 minutes to get to the pharmacy and they close in 15 minutes.

So, in a bit of a panic, out the door you go.

- Getting to the pharmacy is pretty uneventful.
- And, as you pull into the parking lot you can see that the lights are still on, and you can see workers and customers in the store.

So, you park your car and hustle to the door.

- You quickly reach and pull to open the door.
- But it is locked!
- You pull on the door a couple of times and all that happens is that it makes the sound of the deadbolt rattling in the lock.

But the door noises you made does get the worker's attention.

- You see them mouth to you....."Sorry, we're closed."
- You give gestures pleading with them and conveying the urgency of your need.....but it is to no avail.
- The door is locked there is no entry.

Now, contrast this, if you will, if you had gotten there even a few minutes earlier.

- You pulled on the door, it opened, and you were able to enter.
- Even welcomed to the store by the workers.
- And, of course, you got the medicine you needed.

This all gives us a picture illustration of what Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading when He uses the metaphor of an open door for entry into the kingdom of God.

- Our Gospel reading begins by talking about Jesus going on His way and journeying towards Jerusalem for His appointment to be the Lamb of God sacrificed for our salvation.
- It is a top priority mission for Jesus.
- Here is the second of 4 times in Luke's Gospel that Jesus tells us He is heading towards Jerusalem, to the cross for our salvation.

In the metaphor of the day, Jesus has opened the door to salvation for us through His death on the cross.

- But, as we think about a door.....it is opened or it is closed.
- And when it is open, there is some urgency to enter before the door does close.
- You can either enter through it.....or, you can be turned away.

Now back again to our Gospel reading.....So we are told, someone in the crowd, we are not told who, asked Jesus.....

- "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

We hear that question a lot today also, don't we.

- What is the standard for salvation?
- What do I have to do?
- Will I be saved?
- What about those who have led a good life? Will they be saved?
- What about someone who never has a chance to hear about Jesus? Will they get a free pass?

But Jesus takes the question from theoretical to practical.

- Rather than the question will the saved be few.....He makes it personal.....will the saved be you?

And here then Jesus uses the metaphor of not just a door.....but a narrow door.

- Entry that is, to the kingdom of God, through the narrow door.
- And He says, “Yes, only a few will be saved.
- Many will attempt to enter but be turned away.

That is, the door goes from not just wide to narrow, but open to closed.

- That is, the door will be open only so long.
- There is a time, so to speak, when the store hours will end and the door likewise will be closed and locked.
- And when the door is closed and locked, it will be too late to get in.

Go back again to my opening illustration.

- The disappointment and loss when the door is closed and you can’t get in.
- You see not only the workers inside, but also those that had entered the store before the doors were locked.

Jesus speaks to this also.

- He says, in verse 24 of our Gospel reading.....
- “For many, I tell you will seek to enter and will not be able.”

And He goes on.....

- And, “when the master of the house (that would be Jesus) 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 you.’ Away from Me.”
- A sharp contrast to the earlier invitation to enter.
- Words, dear fellow Christians, we never want to hear.
- And to know you in this context and from the original Greek is not just familiarity with the person’s name or face; but rather, to know someone intimately as a close companion.

And then Jesus describes the condition on the outside, separated from Him.....

- “In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see those who have entered the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.”

There is grave disappointment, literally grave disappointment when it is realized that the door is closed and they can no longer enter it.

- The opportunity has been missed.
- While the door is open, the door will close.

So, the question then becomes for us this morning, how do I get in the open door, and stay in rather than go back out the door?

- Jesus says, “Strive to make every effort to enter through the narrow door.”

Jesus isn't implying here salvation by works.

- The struggle is not human responsibility but repentance.
- God's Word calls us.....and our struggle is because of our human nature.
- Having the door open and going through it is all the work of Jesus.
- But our human nature is to not enter, nor stay there.

Recall our Gospel account opened with reference being made to Jesus making His way to Jerusalem.

- Jesus is the owner and the one responsible for opening the door.
- And it is His desire that, once entered, we stay.
- It is our human nature to look to the outside.
- It is Jesus' desire that we be with Him.....even reentering as many times as necessary while the door is open.

Notice again that the door is narrow.

- Jesus tells us He is the only way, the truth, and the life.

Again, the metaphor here to the door is a good one.

- In Biblical times the basis for protection from enemies or intruders would be the fortified walls built around the city.
- In the morning the gate to the city would be opened wide.
- At nightfall, of course, there would be more protection needed.

So, the gates would be closed.

- But accessibility to the city would still be needed for latecomers and emergencies.
- And for this, there would be a small individual opening next to the gate that would be accessible, one person at a time.

Jesus says, “No one comes to the Father, except through Me.”

- Entry through the door is about knowing Jesus.
- Not in worldly ways or the thinking of the masses.

Salvation comes through knowing Jesus.

- Again, not just a familiarity with Jesus; but having an intimate, personal, trusting, loving relationship with Him.
- That relationship He invites us to have with Him when the narrow door is open.

Remember the words of Jesus to those who knocked after the door was locked.

- “I never knew you.”

We face many distractions and temptations in this world.

- We try to take the easy way out. We can put things off.
- We get distracted.
- We can give up in despair of life.

And yet Jesus invites us to persevere, to make every agonizing effort to enter the narrow door.

- Jesus is the One who has fought off the forces of evil already for us.

A theme across all of our assigned readings for today is an invitation and entry.

- And the invitation with a door that is yet open is for each of us.

We have talked about this in our Tuesday morning study....the inclusive nature of the kingdom of God.

- The door is open for all who choose to enter.
- Look at the cover of your bulletin for today.
- Jesus speaks of people coming from all directions.....north, south, east, and west.....to take their place at the feast of the kingdom of God.

But there is a day of reckoning.

- We dare not lollygag around.
- We dare not ignore the open door.
- Because the door is closing for each of us.

As we bring this message to a close.....

- There is more good news for you.
- It is what I have entitled this message, “The Door Is Still Open For You.”
- And the door is not only open for you but for your loved one that still remain on this earth with you.

Today the door stands open.

- The invitation from Jesus remains, “Strive to enter through the narrow door.”
- While there’s breath in your lungs, there’s hope in your soul.
- Don’t ignore the open door.
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.