

Theme Sentence

We need to act urgently to ensure that we are 'inside' his eternal kingdom.

Launching Question

Try to write out a one-sentence definition of 'complacency'.
What would turn a Christian into 'a complacent Christian'?

READ Luke 13:22-30

There are two issues to try to sort out first in this paragraph:
The first question is: **who will enter God's kingdom?**

Questions

Who will be inside?
Who will be outside?
Looking at the context, who do these two groups represent?
What is the significance of v29?
What does verse 30 mean, as we think about the 'who'?

Thinking it through

What does this story tell us about God?
What does this story tell us about who will enter God's kingdom?
Why must I 'strive to enter' (24)?

The second question is: **how does someone enter God's kingdom?**

Re-READ Luke 13:22-30

Questions

First of all, how might people think that they enter God's kingdom?
What does this passage imply about how people do enter it?
OR: how have the people of v29 have got in? (think hard here!)

Thinking it through

How can someone who is last become someone who is first?

Now we can re-visit the initial question of verse 23 ...

Does this passage suggest that 'few' or 'many' will be saved?
Why does Jesus answer this question by saying 'strive to enter'?

From this passage, what is the wrong way to 'strive to enter'?
And what is the right way to 'strive to enter'?

What reasons does Jesus give as to as why I should 'strive to enter'?
For whom is the message intended?
For whom is this passage a warning? (... both then ... and today)
How could I become 'a complacent Christian' about it? (see *Launching Question*)
For whom is this passage an invitation?

Luke 13:22-30



Where are we in *Luke*?



At 9:51, Jesus began his final journey to Jerusalem, and therefore to his death. He is still 'journeying' there at 13:22.

Since this journey to his death began, he has switched from teaching about **who he is** to teaching about **eternal life**. So far he has taught:

- **eternal life comes through Jesus alone** (10:16-24). For this to make sense, he could only begin to teach it after revealing who he is, and after his disciples became clearer about who he is. We need to ask God for eternal life (11:9-13) and listen to him/fear him (11:28; 12:4-10).
- **eternal life cannot be obtained any other way**, and certainly not by good works (10:25-37) or religion (11:37-12:3).
- **eternal life is about life in the next world, not this one**. This has been the big theme. Our natural tendency is to focus on life in this world, but it is transient (12:16-20) and a place of conflict rather than peace (12:51-53). Instead, we should set our hearts on heaven (12:33-34) and live ready for Jesus' return as Master and King at any moment (12:35-40). Repentance (13:1-9) ... and not religion (13:10-17) ... is how to be ready.

Our current passage is an introductory section: two big themes are introduced, which will then be examined in more detail in 13:31-14:35.

13:22-30	the two issues introduced
13:31-14:24	<u>issue one</u> : who will enter God's kingdom?
	• 13:31-14:6 not the Jewish religious establishment
	• 14:7-24 but 'outsiders' who are compelled/exalted
14:25-35	<u>issue two</u> : how does someone enter God's kingdom?

[NS]

Theme Sentence

We need to act urgently to ensure that we are 'inside' his eternal kingdom.

Application

- 'Strive to enter' is Jesus' application. Whatever else we may want to emphasise, this is where Jesus lands the teaching of this paragraph.
- 'Strive to enter' is both an invitation to come in ... and a warning against presuming you are in (if the things you are relying on are not the things that get you in): make sure that you do actually enter in!
- In this context, 'strive to enter' is an evangelistic message for all the world.

Commentary

- 22 this verse reminds of the context. At a big section divider (9:51, 53), Jesus 'set his face' to travel to the place where he would do the thing that he came to this earth to do: Jerusalem is where Jesus will die, and therefore also where Jewish hostility against Jesus will be most obvious.
- Since 12:1, Jesus' words have had a dual audience: 'the many thousands' in the crowds, and 'his disciples' whom he teaches in the hearing of the many (cf 12:13, 22). Peter explicitly draws attention to this distinction at 12:41. In our passage, the 'you' (in 25-28) are all the crowd, and/or possibly the religious authorities in particular (cf 13:10-17, 33-35).
- 23 The question of 'how many?' is a natural one after 13:18-21. Jesus seems to be saying that everything about the kingdom is very small in the here-and-now. It's like a tiny seed that will grow, but at the moment it seems insignificant ... as hidden as yeast in a huge quantity of flour.
- Notice that 'entering the kingdom' and 'being saved' must be equivalents.
- 24 Here is the main point of Jesus' reply: 'strive to enter'. The Bible's answer is often like this to our hypothetical questions. For example, 'what about those who've never heard?' Answer: 'tell them!' Or, 'can a real Christian fall away?' Answer: 'make sure you don't!' We want to know how many will be saved, but Jesus' concern is that we're included in the group that will be, rather than whether the group is large or small.
- Why will 'many' be unable to enter? It could be because the door is narrow (24). Or it could be because the door has already been shut (25f). Or it could be a combination of the two: there is a narrow window of opportunity to enter before it is too late and the door locked shut. But it may be best to answer this question from verse 30. The main point is about who will enter. There will be some who expect to be included who will find themselves excluded (as 25-28 will describe). But there will be other people, coming from every point of the compass (29), who may not expect to be included but who will be. Jesus' emphasis persists with the 'who?' question rather than the 'how many?'
- 25 In the parable of 12:35f, the Master is the one who is outside and we are the ones inside, and we should be ready to open the door when he comes. Now the tables are reversed: the Master is inside but has so 'shut the door' that latecomers will not be admitted.
- It's worth noticing here that the door of heaven opens only from the inside. In other words, the way of salvation is a door which God opens and which we are to enter: entry cannot be made without God.
- Twice the master says: 'I do not know where you come from'. This probably means much the same as the simpler 'I do not know you' (Matt 7:23). 'You' may claim that you come from having been present with him, familiar with him, close to him ... but the Master did not recognise 'you' as his own. They are, in the very strong words of 27, 'workers of

evil'. Who is this group? Is it those claiming to be physically close to Jesus-during-his-ministry-on-earth, or some other group?

- 26 They certainly are the 'many' of 24 who 'will seek to enter and will not be able to'. They are the many people who think that they have eternal life but discover, to their horror, that they do not. They are making an inadequate effort to be saved. Prominent in this group will be many Jews who think that they have eternal life because God extended privileges to them in OT times: 'you were close to us and we were close to you'. They think too highly of themselves. They are not actually producing 'the fruit of repentance' that God is looking for (13:6-9 cf 3:7-9) as 13:10-17 made very obvious. The problem, of course, is that they rejected Jesus – God's invitation to eternal life ... and this will become all too obvious once Jesus reaches Jerusalem to be killed.
- In the next section (14:25-35), Jesus will teach everyone that eternal life is only obtained by being his disciple. And that is costly: we must be so committed to him that we will take everything that our culture considers most valuable and use it for him (cf summary verse 14:33).

The next three verses explain the picture of 25-27 ...

- 28 **some will be cast out**
- The picture in this verse is graphic and terrible: those outside are in intense pain, wistfully looking through the window at those inside. They may be inside the nation, but they will be outside the kingdom. However Jesus is clear that this is not a wholesale rejection of every individual Jew: there are some from the OT era who were faithful.
- 29 **some will sit at the table**
- The OT prophets looked forward to a banquet, as a picture of all the blessings of God's kingdom at the end of time (cf Isaiah 25:6-8 where it is linked to God's final victory over death). This reference to a feast looks forward to the new heaven and new earth that God will create.
- If those reclining at table come 'from east and west, and from north and south', Jesus is referring to the Gentiles who are now being drawn in to share in the privileges of 'Abraham/Isaac/Jacob and all the prophets'. We know from Acts 10-11 that even Jesus' disciples would take time to be persuaded that this really was God's way. So this verse must have sounded extremely shocking for a Jewish audience. Inclusion and exclusion go together ... in just the same way that God's final judgment and final salvation will occur together: salvation *requires* judgment on God's enemies (since all that opposes him must be excluded from his perfect kingdom), and salvation is *from* that dreadful judgement (as those who don't deserve to be with him are seated at his table, for ever).
- 30 **who is in which group will reverse expectations**
- This is about the end-time. Then there will be surprises about who is sitting at the table and who is standing outside: 'you're the last person I expected to see here ...!' (cf 14:11). And the parable in 14:15-24 makes clear that if I don't come when the invitation to the banquet is given, my seat will go to someone else.