

THE NARROW GATE

Learning from Luke

July 21, 2024

*He said to them,
"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*

John Bunyan gets the story right!

1. Dr. Luke, the companion of Paul writes to the church to show that
 - 1) Jesus fulfills the Old Testament story of God, his people, and the nations (Luke 24:46-47)
 - 2) the gospel of Jesus Christ brings certainty (Luke 1:1-4) in this life and the life to come
 - 3) the story of the church is the story of the Holy Spirit (see how Luke continues in Acts)

2. The open gate represents God's invitation

¹⁹ *Open for me the gates of righteousness;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.*

²⁰ *This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.*

²¹ *I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.*

Psalm 118

3. The gate is the picture of salvation

The man, therefore, read it, and looking upon Evangelist very carefully, said, "Whither must I fly?" Then said Evangelist (pointing with his finger over a very wide field), "Do you see yonder wicket-gate?" The man said, "No." Then said the other, "Do you see yonder shining light?" He said, "I think I do." Then said Evangelist, "Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto; so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do." So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not run far from his own door, when his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, "Life! life! eternal life!" So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain

Evangelist points to the wicket gate (*Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 15)

The question: “Lord, are only a few going to be saved?”

²² Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”

He said to them, ²⁴ “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ 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.’

²⁶ “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

²⁷ “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

²⁸ “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

Luke 13

1. Jesus again responds to a “them” question with a “you” answer

¹ Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Luke 13

2. A “great multitude” has always been God’s plan

⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Revelation 7 (see Genesis 15:5 and the Gospel Coalition piece on this question)

3. Mere association is a dangerous thing

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Matthew 7

3. Jesus hints at the “last” and “first” surprises when the gate is closed

¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1

Jesus answers with a picture and a warning

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Matthew 7

1. The gate has always been Jesus

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10 (and go back to Psalm 118)

2. Jesus addresses those who think they don't need to use this door

He said to them, ²⁴ “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ 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.’

²⁶ “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

²⁷ “But he will reply, ‘I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

Luke 13 (in Pilgrim's Progress both

3. The warning is real

⁷ “You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Matthew 5

5. The pastoral response includes urgency and hope

‘Child,’ said the Lion, ‘I am telling you your story, not hers. No one is told any story but their own.’

C. S. Lewis in *The Horse and His Boy*

What we are learning from a narrow gate about Jesus and his work, about certainty for living, and about the Holy Spirit's work in our church and lives?

1. The great theme of the Bible is that God will provide

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

Genesis 22

2. The invitation to enter through the Jesus gate is real!

Then did Christian begin to go back to the right road; and Evangelist, after he had kissed him, gave him one smile, and bid him God speed; so he went on with haste, neither spake he to any man by the way; nor, if any asked him, would he give them an answer. He went like one that was all the while treading on forbidden ground, and could by no means think himself safe, till again he was got in the way which he had left to follow Mr. Worldly Wiseman's counsel: so after a time, Christian got up to the gate. Now, over the gate there was written, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

He knocked, therefore, more than once or twice, saying: "May I now enter here? Will He within Open to sorry me, though I have been An undeserving rebel? Then shall I Not fail to sing His lasting praise on high."

At last there came a grave person to the gate named Goodwill, who asked who was there, and whence he came, and what he would have?

Chris. Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the City of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion, that I may be set free from the wrath to come; I would therefore, sir, since I am told that by this gate is the way thither, know, if you are willing to let me in.

Good. "I am willing with all my heart," said he; and, with that, he opened the gate.

Pilgrim's Progress

3. Luke tells the Evangelist story – and the results are amazing

³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 2



created by the Bible Project

Resources for further study

The Bible Project's Luke poster is available at <https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/>

Doug is referencing these commentaries on Luke:

The *NIGTC* by I. Howard Marshall (Paternoster Press, 1978)

The *EBC* by Walter Liefeld (Zondervan, 1984)

The *New Testament Commentary* by William Hendricksen (Baker Book House, 1978)

The Gospel Coalition commentary by Peter G. Bolt at

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/luke/>

The *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway, 2008) has a good introduction to Luke.

The Gospel Coalition's Luke resources are available at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/scripture/new-testament/luke/> D. A. Carson's "Luke from the Outside In" lecture and study series is especially good at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/the-gospel-of-luke-from-the-outside-in/#course-introduction>

Spurgeon's sermon on this text is found at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/self-delusion/#flipbook/>

Bob Deffinbaugh has a good sermon on Luke 13:22-25 at <https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles>

Gutenberg Press has an online version of *Pilgrim's Progress* at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/39452/39452-h/39452-h.htm> Monergism also has a good e-version at monergism.com

The Gospel Coalition offered this perspective on the "will only a few be saved?" question at

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/people-saved/>

J. C. Ryles' commentary on Luke 13 is at <https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/113.htm>