

Hell and How to Stay There

Luke 13: 18-30

#6 in Stories Jesus Told Series

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Prayer

Thank you Lord God. Thank you that I will love you with all of my heart, all of my mind, and I will love you with all of my strength because you said I would. Lord Jesus, thank you that you said, "You *will* love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and strength." I thank you that that is not just some law that you laid down; that is a promise! For when I do love you with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength, I'll realize it's all a gift; everything is a gift. And you are the ultimate gift. Lord Jesus help us to see that. Help us to preach. It's in your name that we preach. Amen.

Message

Clip from *Monty Python Bridge of Death*

[The scene opens with a grungy unkempt bridge keeper questioning a group of knights who are approaching him from crossing a bridge.]

Bridgekeeper: (Holding up a hand) *Stop!*

(The knight stops and looks at him.)

Bridge Keeper: *What . . . is your name?*

Sir Galahad: (Shifting foot to foot) *Sir Galahad of Camelot!*

Bridge Keeper: *What . . . is your quest?*

Sir Galahad: *I seek the Grail!*

Bridge Keeper: *What . . . is your favorite color?*

Sir Galahad: (nervously thinking and answering in a higher pitch) *Blue. No! Yellooooooooooooooowww . . . !!*

[He screams as an unseen force snatches him up and throws him down into the chasm, as the other knight and the king watch his trajectory.]

Bridge Keeper: *Heh-heh-he-he-he!* (Grinning evilly as he turns to see who's next. The king moves forward.)

Bridge Keeper: *Stop! What . . . is your name?*

King Arthur: *It is Arthur, King of the Britons!!*

Bridge Keeper: *What . . . is your quest?*

King Arthur: *To seek the Holy Grail!*

Bridge Keeper: *What . . . is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow?*

King Arthur: *What do you mean, an African or European swallow?*

Bridge Keeper: (Looks confused and takes time to think.) *Huh? I . . . I don't know that!*

Whoaaaauuughhhhhhhhh! [Immediately he is yanked up into the air and flung into the chasm screaming as the last two watch his trajectory.]

Sir Bedimir: (In a high pitched proper sounding voice, looking through a glass at the king) *How'd you know, sir, so much about swallows?*

King Arthur: *Well, you have to know these things when you're a king, you know?*

[He moves forward and starts crossing the rickety bridge as Sir Bedimir follows. Dramatic music plays as the scene shows them stepping over missing planks to cross the treacherous bridge.]

That's the Bridge of Death that leads to the Holy Grail crossing the Gorge of Eternal Peril.

Luke 13: 22 – 23

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. (He's going to Jerusalem to die.) And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

That was an issue of much debate in Jesus' Day¹.

And it all sounds fairly familiar today:

- Who gets saved and who doesn't get saved?
- "What do we need to *know* to find the narrow way, pass through the narrow gate and avoid the Gorge of Eternal Peril?"

Luke 13: 23-24

*And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive (*aganizomai*—it's where we get our word, agonize.) to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*

In Matthew, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus puts it this way:

Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 8: 13-14).

Well, that leads to some obvious questions like:

- How many is many? And how few is few?
- And how narrow is the gate? And how few find it?
- How narrow is the narrow door? And what is that door?

1

The Sadducees taught that there was no after life. The Pharisees and Rabbis usually taught that perdition was for Gentiles and that the Kingdom of Heaven was for Jews – good Jews. And purification in Gehenna might be an option for the bad ones. The folks in Qumran seemed to think only they would get into the kingdom and others would not.

What is The Door?

- You may remember that when Adam and Eve were kicked out of paradise for taking fruit from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” God placed the cherubim and a flaming sword at the Eastern entrance to the Garden of Eden, like a gate, or a door.
- You may also remember that when Joshua and the children of Israel entered the Holy land from the East, they met a God man with a drawn sword—like a sentry at a gate, or a door.
- You may also remember the cherubim on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Sanctuary and a veil – that functioned as a door. In the Revelation, there are twelve doors surrounding the New Jerusalem – kingdom of God. Well, if you were a Jew in Jesus’ day, you would assume that the narrow door is the law.
- In the Revelation there are twelve doors surrounding the New Jerusalem—the Kingdom of God.
- If you were a Jew in Jesus’ day, you would assume that the narrow door is the law. (In some way it must be the law.)

What is The Door?

- Law

In fact, in Matthew, when Jesus says this bit about the gate and the way, He’s just expounded the law saying, “*Don’t think I’ve come to abolish the law . . .* (Matthew 5: 17) and (Matthew 5: 48) “*You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*”

In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, God gives Israel the law and tells them that if they obey the law – they will enter.

In Deuteronomy, the law is summed up with this statement, “*You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength.*” In chapter 28, the Lord tells them that if they obey his commandments, they’ll be blessed – enter the land; and if they don’t they’ll be cursed, exiled, and destroyed – lost to the land. In chapter 30, he says, “*Choose life,*” and in chapter 31 he says, “*But you won’t.*” And, as you know, they all die in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb.

In the last chapter of Joshua, Joshua says, “*Choose this day whom you will serve*” (Joshua 24: 15); “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24: 16). The people say, “*We also will serve the Lord.*” And Joshua says, “*You are not able*” (Joshua 24: 14). People will sometimes say, “God will never tell you to do what you’re not able to do.” Yet, it seems like the whole Old Testament is the story of God telling people to do what they’re not able to do . . . at least not yet . . . except for Joshua. And just who does this Joshua think he is? He says, “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*”

Well, the only way you could join Joshua’s house is if he were to, like, adopt you or marry you. And that’s not simply your choice. First it must be his choice – Joshua’s choice. And that’s not only true for Israel in the Old Testament. Right here in our story, Jesus, (which, by the way, is just the Anglicized form of Joshua) Joshua Jesus says, “*Agonize to enter through the narrow door.*” And then, we’ll soon read, to the very same people in these verses he says, “*You will stand outside and the master will say to you, ‘Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.’*” He says, “*Try to enter*” and then seems to say, “*You’re not able.*”

Don’t you think “agonize to enter through the narrow door.” is more like agonize, think, explore, trouble yourself, puzzle over your salvation, or work out your salvation? We cannot do it ourselves, but Jesus wants us to know our salvation, know him. Seems like a lot of exploring is called for here (physically, emotionally, spiritually, as in a marriage.) And he opens himself to do that, showing us.

Well if any man, other than Jesus, obeyed the law it was Rabbi Saul – that is the apostle Paul. In Philippians 3: 6, he writes that “*as to the law*” he was “*blameless.*” But, in 1 Timothy 1: 6, he writes that he is “*the chief of sinners.*” In Romans 3: 20, he writes: “*No human being will be justified (made right) in God’s sight by works of the law.*” So, if the law is the door, it just reveals the truth that we can’t justify ourselves. It reveals that we are “*dead in our trespasses and sins, and the uncircumcision of our flesh.*” So then, we can’t find the way because we’re dead, and we can’t fit through the door because we’ve got too much flesh.

You’ll remember what Jesus said about the rich young ruler who claimed to have obeyed all the commandments, but wouldn’t follow Jesus. Jesus said, “*It’s harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle.*” Maybe the narrow door is as narrow as the eye of a needle. And maybe the things the rich young ruler needed to lose were not only physical possessions, but psychic possessions, (His ‘Psyche’) – (His life.) As we noted: You can get a rich young ruler through the eye of a needle, it’s just very hard on the rich young ruler. For he must lose his “psyche.” He must lose his life to find it.

Well, Paul had been a rich young ruler and he wrote, “*no one will be made right by works of the law.*” The law may reveal that your wrong, but it can’t make you right. And y’all know this: the law describes love, but it’s not love. And by “law,” I don’t just mean Old Testament law, but any law, rule, value, principal, or ordinance. Aren’t they all an attempt to describe love and then legislate love, but they all reveal that we don’t love because if we loved, we wouldn’t need them.

If you need a law to tell you to speak truth, it just reveals that you don’t love the truth. If you need a law to tell you to love, it just reveals that you don’t love Love. Instead, you want the knowledge of love so you can act like you love – act like you love and thereby use love to get what you want, which is not love. You actually hate love in the name of love. The law reveals that we don’t love and makes us compete at acting like we do love. Right? You’ve hung out with religious folk. We compete at love.

- Love is sacrificing self to save another.
- Competition is sacrificing another to save the self.
- Competition is the way of all flesh. We refer to it as the survival of the fittest.

So the law makes men of flesh, compete at love, which means we act like we want another's best when we secretly want another's worst. We act like we make ourselves last so others can be first, all in an effort to make ourselves first and others last. We become actors, "*hypocrites*," hypocrites, "*white washed tombs*" like the walking dead walking around: the unrighteous, acting righteous with unrighteousness. "*Dead in our trespasses and sins and the uncircumcision of our flesh*," the un – cut-off-ed-ness of our flesh.

The Lord said: "*The day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you will surely die.*" And when he found them hiding in fig leaves and trees, he issued a curse saying, "*You are dirt and to the dirt you will return.*" You know, if Jesus undoes the curse, he doesn't do so by making God a liar. So, "*the day you eat of it, you will die.*" "*Dust to dust and ashes to ashes.*" So, are we dead or not? And what day is it? Those are questions to ponder.

Well, if the door is the law,

- How many seek to enter and aren't able to enter?
- How many seek to be good and can't make themselves good?
- How many try to get into heaven and don't know what it is or where to find it?

Language scholars point out that in the New Testament, "many" often means "all."

So, how narrow is the door?

And how few find it?

Maybe:

- It's so narrow, it would kill us to enter.
- And the few that find it is only one – only one has found it and fit through it – only one has fulfilled the law – only one is righteous and that's Jesus and maybe one day His house.

And yet, He says to all of us, "*agonize to enter . . .*" Well, maybe we should back up and read this in context. In Matthew, he says these things at the end of the Sermon on the Mount where he expounds the law. In Luke, He says these things after two parables of the kingdom, which we studied a few weeks ago².

Luke 13: 18-19

He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

If the Kingdom is like that, maybe the door to the kingdom is like that: something very small that leads to something very big. In the Chronicles of Narnia, the children enter a whole new world

² Jesus seems to have told some stories on several occasions, which is extremely encouraging to me as a preacher always looking for stories in a different location in the book of Matthew.

through a wardrobe door, and they must be children to enter. When their older sister, Susan, thinks she's grown up (when her psyche gets big), she can no longer enter through the narrow door. At the end of the books, they leave the old Narnia and enter the new Narnia through a stable door. Digory says, "Its inside is bigger than its outside." Lucy responds, "Yes . . . In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world." In the book *Alice in Wonderland*, looking for a party, Alice follows a rabbit down a hole, falling past all sorts of biblical metaphors³.

She lands in front of a door that's not "impossible" but "impassible," for she is large and the door is small, like the "eye of a needle," not "impossible" but "impassible" in her current state⁴.

Well, Alice drinks from a cup labeled, "Drink me," and she shrinks. Then she eats a wafer labeled, "Eat me," and she grows. But the door talks saying, "Drink again, and she shrinks again – big in one way, but small in another (like a toddler in her Father's eyes). She shrinks and then she passes through the door into wonderland. Maybe we all have to get small to enter wonderland.

Luke 13 verse 20-21

And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

The door is small and hard to find, but maybe it's everywhere like leaven. At one point in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Lucy says to Aslan, "Oh, Aslan, will you tell us how to get into your country from our world?" And Aslan replies, "I shall be telling you all the time."

Well, Jesus tells them about the mustard seed and the leaven.

Next verse: Luke 13: 22-28

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

I'm not so sure that Jesus likes this question or the energy with which this man asks it. Perhaps he wants to be first, while others are last. . .

"Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And Jesus said to them "agonize" to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen . . .

That's an interesting phrase. Jesus is going to Jerusalem to die, and then rise.

³ A light, a mirror, a book, a clock, a rocking chair, a fire, and then her world is turned upside down.

⁴ After Jesus told the disciples about the rich young ruler, and the eye of the needle, they exclaimed, "Who then can be saved? And Jesus said, "With man it's impossible, but with God all things are possible." Not impossible, but maybe impassible.

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." Then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets." But he will say, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil (adikia un-righteousness)!" In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth . . ."

"In that place."

Well, where is that place? . . . THAT PLACE is right where they are.

Do you ever think, "What the Hell is wrong with this world?"

Well, maybe that's your answer, Hell is wrong with this world.

In one sense, that's bad news . . . And in another sense, very good news.

Like Chesterton wrote:

[When I was] told . . . that I was in the right place, . . . I . . . felt depressed even in acquiescence, but [when I] heard that I was in the wrong place . . . my soul sang for joy, like a bird in spring . . ."

Last time, I titled the sermon "Heaven and How to Find it." This time, I thought "Hell and How to Stay There." According to Scripture, Heaven can begin here, but Hell – (that is Hades) – has already begun here. That's why there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" here. I'm not saying it won't get much worse here, for I believe it will . . . but I hope you see we may be far more acclimated to Hell than Heaven. In fact, I may be the sight of Heaven that elicits the greatest fear for those in Hell.

Luke 13: 28-30

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. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold—LOOK some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last (literally, "There are last who will be first and first who will be last").

Well, "*Weeping and gnashing of teeth*," that's a rather terrifying text, and for years it really bothered me:

- This narrow door and our inability to find it or enter it
- The fact that the Master of the house doesn't know who these people are or where they're from
- How could God the Father or God the Son not know who they are or where they're from?
- He knows everything that's anything, and he is the source of all things
- He doesn't know where they're from, yet he knows their works are un-righteousness, not-righteousness.
- He keeps saying, "I don't know where you're from?"

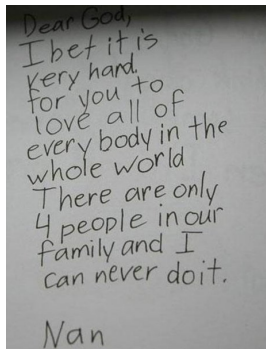
One day, I was reading this and thought: "Why don't they just tell him where they're from?" I mean maybe the door is the Truth.

What is The Door?

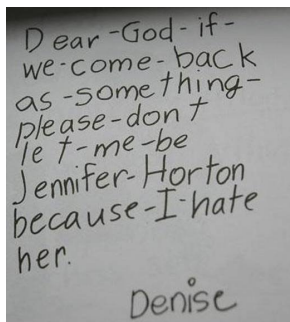
- Law
- Truth

Not just Truth out there (like “knowledge of good and evil), but Truth in here. [Peter points to his heart.] Truth we’ve ingested – honesty. Remember how Adam and Eve hid themselves in fig leaves and trees, when God came walking in the Garden? They had a hard time dealing with the truth and acted like it wasn’t their fault, and it was agony for them, to be naked before their creator.

Jesus said, *“Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”* And He picked up a child and said, “You must become like this little child.” Little children don’t have a problem with being naked, and they’re not very good actors. They’re good at playing, but not acting – not acting because little children tend to tell the truth and don’t know how to lie, at least not well. Have you ever seen the book “Children’s Letters to God?” Here are three of my favorites.

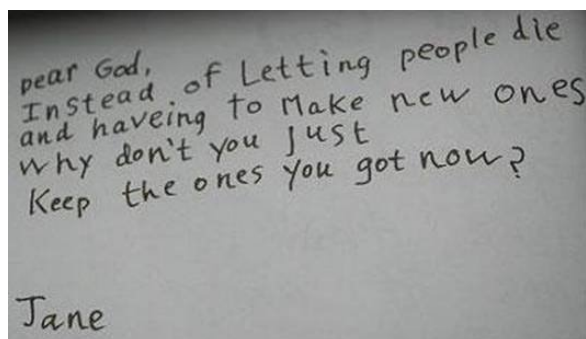


“Dear God, I bet it’s hard for you to love everybody in the whole world there are only four people in our family and I can never do it” – Nan



“Dear God, if we cam back as something please don’t let me be Jennifer Horton because I hate her”– Denise

Every adult thinks stuff like that, but we've learned not to say stuff like that.



"Dear God, Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don't you just keep the ones you got now?" – Jane

Children are bad actors, and maybe what we call growing up is learning to be a good actor and maybe that *act* turns into Hell.

When my daughter, Becky, was about four, she used to love to play ponies. We'd get on all fours and pretend we were ponies. She'd say, "Let's go to the meadow" and we'd crawl to the bathroom. Then she'd say, "Let's go to the barn," and we'd crawl to the bedroom. Then "Let's go to the meadow." It was exhausting. I'd lie down and she'd say, "No Daddy, ponies don't take naps."

One day, she said, "Daddy, Daddy, let's play." And I thought, "Oh Lord, don't let it be ponies!" Becky said, "Let's play, let's play . . . let's play that you be the daddy and I'll be the little girl." And I said, "Great!" (Because I know daddies take naps.) I said, "Great!" and went on with life as usual.

Several hours later, I went to the mailbox and Becky came with. We were walking and talking when Becky stopped me, looked up, and said, "Daddy, I'm tired of playing this game. Can we stop playing this game?" It took me a minute to figure out what she meant, and then I said, "Sure, Becky. I won't pretend to be your daddy, I'll just be your daddy and you don't pretend to be my little girl; you can just be my little girl." And then this look of relief washed over Becky's face and she was free, free to just be her happy, bubbly self again. But all afternoon she had been impersonating herself, posing, posturing, trying to be herself, enslaved to her own image of herself. And I remember thinking, "Wow! I think I do that . . . all the time and don't know I do it . . . most of the time." "I pretend to be good and so I'm not good. I'm miserable."

One day, when my daughter, Elizabeth, was about nine, and a better actress than Becky at age four, I came home and Susan said, "Peter, you need to talk with Elizabeth. She got in a fight with her friend, Katie, from next door and called her a poop head (only Elizabeth didn't use the authorized potty word, but the unauthorized potty word, what the Bible refers to as *scubalon*. So I'll utilize New Testament Greek. Susan said, "Elizabeth screamed, 'Katie, you *scubalon* head!' over, and over, and over."

So, I found my little buddy, Elizabeth, and I said, “Honey, do you have something you need to tell me?” And she said, “No daddy, everything’s fine.” She smiled. I said, “Did you call Katie a *scubalon* head?” She said, “Oh no, I’d never say that.” And I said, “That’s funny, because Mom, Jon, and Becky all say you said it.” So I laid down the law and she denied her sin. She did it quite convincingly and *that* terrified me! She was becoming a great actress and so her heart was hidden from me, invisible.

Remember Sméagol in the Lord of the Rings? He acquires the ring of power that makes him invisible. Trapped alone in his own dark heart, he becomes Gollum. Gollum comes from the Hebrew legend of “the Golem” about a rabbi who brought to life the clay figure of a man, using the name of God, which he had stolen from its proper place. Lying is like the ring of power. It’s like stealing the Word of God in an effort to create yourself, but you only desecrate yourself and make yourself invisible.

I looked at Elizabeth, and I realized I didn’t know who she was or where she was coming from, and it terrified me. You know, I didn’t really care that Elizabeth called Katie a “*scubalon* head.” I actually found it rather amusing. But the fact that she was hiding her heart from me terrified me. It was as if she was lost in outer darkness, and now I was lost in outer darkness with her. So I laid down the law and I made Elizabeth suffer, and then I took her to McDonald’s and was kind. I bought her some pancakes and looked her in the eye and then she cracked. She sobbed. It was agony, but she said, “Daddy, I did call Katie a *scubalon* head.” And suddenly I knew who she was, and I knew where she was coming from.

I hugged her and we threw that old Golem into Mount Doom where he was consumed by fire. The Golem was a lie and the product of a lie. What does Jesus, the Truth, not know? Well, how about a lie? The Master says to those at the door, literally, “I do not know whence you are.” Well, when Elizabeth confessed, I was so relieved. I thought, “There you are! You were lost, and now are found, and we had a party – Happy Meals.

Well, the older we get, the better we become at acting. And, even more scary, the more we believe our own act; we think we’re good because we’re good at acting good. So, maybe entering the door of truth looks something like this: This is Robert Downy Junior playing The Great Method Actor – Kirk Lazarus, in the movie, *Tropic Thunder*. It’s about a bunch of actors who think they’re acting in a movie, but the movie is reality, and the reality exposes their act.

Clip from *Dude*

[The scene opens with three guys talking in a warehouse type place.]

Tugg Speedman: *Who’re you?*

Kirk Lazarus: (indignant) *Me! I know who I am! I’m a dude, playing a dude, disguised as another dude!*

Kevin Sandusky: (confused) *What?*

Kirk Lazarus: *You’ a dude, don’t know what dude he is!*

Tugg Speedman: (quietly) *Or are you a dude who has no idea what dude he is and claims to know what dude he is.*

Kirk Lazarus: (puzzled, and then angrily) *I know what dude I am!*

Tugg Speedman: *You’re scared.*

Kirk Lazarus: (voice softens) *I ain’t scared. Scared of what?*

Tugg Speedman: *You’re scared of who?*

Kirk Lazarus: *Scared of who?*

Tugg Speedman: *Scared of you!*

Kirk Lazarus: [Startled, he turns his head to look into a mirror and sees his character face. He puts on an angry expression and lashes out, punching the mirror as Kevin Sandusky looks on in the background while holding a rifle.] *Yaaaah!*

[He punches the mirror, it breaks, and he falls to the floor.]

Kirk Lazarus: *Uoh! Uh!*

Kevin Sandusky: *Jesus!*

(Kirk Lazarus sobs as he lies on the floor.)

Jeff Portnoy: (pokes his head in) *What's goin' on?*

Tugg Speedman: *The dudes are emerging.* (tilts his head at Kirk Lazarus.)

Kirk Lazarus: (In a different voice than his own, while still laying on the floor) *He's right, you know. I . . .nuthin'. I'm not Sergeant Lincoln,* (grunting, he reaches to the back of his head and pulls his wig off to reveal his bleached blond hair.) *Osirus.*

Alpa Chino: *We gotta roll out!*

Kirk Lazarus: . . . (Speaking in an Irish accent while ripping fake sideburns off) *Nor am I Father O'Malley, . . .* (then, speaking in low growling American accent while peeling a fake beard off) *or Neil Armstrong.* (He removes the contact lenses to reveal his blue eyes and speaks in his natural Australian accent.) *I . . . I think I may be nobody!*

Do you feel like “a dude playin’ a dude, disguised as another dude,” and then you’re not sure who you is or am . . .? Well, maybe your Father is “I am that I am.” And He knows who you am and He likes who you am, and isn’t so fond of who you ain’t. God makes you in His image with a Word, and we desecrate that image believing a lie. God creates you with his judgment, and we create a false self with our judgment. We create one of the walking dead trapped in outer darkness—a golem, we think that’s who we are and we try to convince ourselves it’s good.

Our judgment is sin and it creates the walking dead. The Master says, “*I know not where you’re from.*” “*I know not where you’re from?*” “*Where are you coming from?*” WHY DON’T THEY JUST TELL HIM? I come from calling Katie a s%#@#head because she made me feel like I was last and she was first, and I want to be first and make her last. Daddy, that’s where I’m coming from.

Why don’t they tell him?

I come from a dark place of loneliness and fear because I’m a pastor who’s supposed to know the good, love the good, and be good and I can’t make myself good.

Why don’t they tell him?

I come from pornography and lust because, for a moment, I could forget about me, lose myself in beauty and feel like I’m potent again.

I come from a three day drinking binge because I want to die, hoping then I could live.

I come from shopping, shopping, shopping because I’m scared I’ll have nothing and become nothing.

I come from gossip, slander – taking life from others trying to make their life my own.

I come from talking with the snake, taking fruit from the tree, and nailing Jesus to that very same tree because, God, I seek your heaven, but I don’t seek you. I only use you. I want to take your life like fruit from a tree, eat your flesh and drink your blood – to steal your kingdom and now I know – that’s the opposite of your kingdom. So, Master of the house, that’s where I’m coming from. Help me.

Why don't they say that? Well, you all know why they don't say that. That would be the end of the act and the death of their golem they think they are, and so they choose to remain in 'outer darkness,' "safe as hell."

This is one of my favorite quotes comes from Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
He writes:

In the confession of concrete sins the old man dies a painful, shameful death before the eyes of a brother. Because this humiliation is so hard, we continually scheme to avoid it. Yet in the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother we experience our rescue and salvation.

Jesus revealed that every gate in the New Jerusalem is a pearl. And those pearls are us—the people of God. Every pearl is a wound surrounded by treasure that is grace and God is Grace. So, in every sinner, that believes the Gospel, there is a door into the kingdom and the Master of the house is behind that door. So confess where you've been to someone that has become a pearl – another sinner who believes. That's what a program like AA is all about: confessing your sins to other sinners. Well, Bonhoeffer is saying that when you confess your sins to a believer you die a bit and begin to live a little more in the kingdom of God. It's agony and then your world opens up.

So maybe the door is truth

What is The Door?

- Law
- Truth

And like leaven, it's everywhere. And maybe the door is death

What is The Door?

- Law
- Truth
- Death

You know the mustard seed must die, in order to live.

Confession is a type of death, it kills that prideful, old, lonely you hiding in fig leaves and shame. It kills you and cuts you down to size. The size of the thing that's doing the confessing . . . and I

think that thing is called faith. Elizabeth confessed because she had a little bit of faith in me. (And that was the Elizabeth I knew.) Jesus said, *“If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed...”* I bet a mustard seed would fit through the eye of a needle. And where do we get faith? In Ephesians, Paul prays that *“Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith”* (Ephesians 3: 19). So faith in us is Christ in us, even if He’s just the size of a seed.

In John 12, Jesus says,

“The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life (psyche) loses it . . .”

Well maybe Jesus helps us lose our lives so we can find them. He causes us to make the right confession. When He died, He delivered up His Spirit, the Spirit that descends on us and help us crying, “Abba.” You know, God said, *“...the day you eat of it, you will surely die,”* that was the sixth day. The cross is the edge of the seventh day where *“it is finished”* and everything becomes *“very good.”* *“If we are joined with him in a death like his,”* writes Paul, *“we will surely be joined with him in a resurrection like His.”* DO YOU SEE?

Jesus doesn’t free us from the curse by making God a liar. Jesus frees us from the curse by helping us die; by giving us the faith to die, the faith to say, *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”*

A Christian is someone who dies before they die. A ghost in Hades is someone who’s died, but their *“psyche”* has not died. And so they weep and gnash their teeth in outer darkness, dead but terrified to die, terrified of the narrow door. The door is the death of death, the second death and that’s life.

What is The Door?

- Law
- Truth
- Death
- Life

Jesus said, *“Whoever hears my words and believes **has** eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life”* (John). That is, He was dead, and when He believed, He died to death. Faith is dying to death and that’s life and Jesus is the life. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”* John 10: 9, *“I am the door.”*

What is The Door?

- Law
- Truth
- Death
- Life
- Jesus

“I am the door. If anyone enters by me he will be saved . . .” If you can find the way and then enter the door, you don’t need a savior. But Jesus is the Savior who came to seek and save the lost. You don’t find Him. He finds you. He said, *“The gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction (or lostness) and those who enter by it are many, but the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few.”* The many is all, *“all who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”* And the few is one, His name is Jesus. He fulfilled the law and made himself the door. He fulfilled the old covenant and made the new covenant. Yet the new covenant is older than the old covenant.

Long before God instituted the covenant of law, He promised Abraham that, although his descendants would rebel, they would enter the land - that’s the covenant of grace. They would enter the Promised Land, but not by crossing a river and fighting a war, but by entering a door. The door is narrow as a manger, but rips open on a cross, wide as a cross. And the land isn’t just real estate in the Middle East, the land is communion with the living God. Heaven is God. Luke 13: 24, Jesus says *“I tell you” “many will seek to enter”* and all do seek to enter. They seek to enter Heaven, but don’t know that Heaven is God. Like Paul writes, *“no one seeks for God.”* Yet Jesus says, *“Strive to enter – agonize to enter.”* I THINK HE MEANS: *“Try to fulfill the whole law and then you’ll see you can’t fulfill the law and then you’ll be offended by the Truth and then crucify the Truth, and then see the Truth that I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And even though you take my life, I give my life. I am the Revelation of love.”*

What is The Door?

- Law
- Truth
- Death
- Life
- Jesus
- Love

The law is a description of Love, but I am love and I fulfill the law in you. I make you my house, my bride, my body. I am the heart of God in you – faith, hope, and love rising in you, righteousness in you.”

You know, I think we all assume that God is asking us to change our desires. That’s why we argue so much about homosexuality, for instance, *“Can you change that desire?”* But in the same passage that Paul talks about homosexuality, Paul mentions greed. Greed is making yourself first and others last. You can act like you’ve changed that desire, but you’ve probably

only increased that desire, substituting spiritual greed for physical greed, happy to inherit heaven while others rot in hell. And maybe that's why we ask, "How many will be saved?" Well, we all assume that God is asking us to change our desires, but maybe we can't change our desires. We can only confess our bad desires and he must give us a new desire, and he is that desire. He is love.

So the commandment is truly a promise – Jesus said, "*You will love*," not "should love," "*You will love*" and He is love given to us.

And love desires to be last so all can be first. Remember what the man asked Jesus, "*Lord will those who are saved be few?*" And Jesus did answer. He said, "*People will come from east and west, north and south and recline at table in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*" In Matthew 8, Jesus calls these people "many." He's drawing on Isaiah 2: 1-4, "*All the nations will flow into the house of the Lord.*" And Isaiah 25: 6-8, "*The Lord will make a feast for all people.*" "...and swallow up death forever."

And yet Jesus *does* say that the man who asked this question will "*weep and gnash his teeth*" in outer darkness—like the older brother outside the party, which was thrown by His Father for his younger brother—the prodigal son.

In Matthew, Jesus refers to those in outer darkness as "*sons of the kingdom*" – Israelites, "*sons of the kingdom.*" And so, they too will eventually be saved. Ezekiel prophesied that the "*whole house of Israel*" will be raised from the dead and enter the land (Ezekiel 37). But, it's not because they find the door, but because the door has found them . . . They have been humbled by God's love, for Samaritans and Sodomites (read about it in Ezekiel 16) . They're humbled by Grace so they can, at last, believe Grace. They don't find the door, the door finds them. Revelation 3: 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock" "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and eat with Him, and He with me."

Do you see what that means? It means the Promised Land, the Garden of Eden, the sanctuary and the Kingdom of Heaven is within you. So Jesus seeks and Jesus finds – you, His sanctuary, His house, His bride, His heaven.

King Arthur spent all that time looking for the Holy Grail, and he is the Holy Grail—the Bride of Christ.

Communion

Jesus said, "*Strive to enter by the narrow door.*" And he took bread and broke it saying, "*This is my body given to you. Take and eat, and do this in remembrance of me.*" And in the same way, he took the cup saying, "*This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you and do it in remembrance of me.*"

This fulfills the law.

This is the Truth.

This is where you die with Jesus.

And this is where you rise with Jesus.

This is the love of God come for you.

This is the narrow door.

And He has a question for you.

Where are you coming from?

Why don't you just tell Him right now? Close your eyes and just tell Him. Tell Him where you're coming from. If you don't know, tell Him that. Just tell him where, at least what you think, you're coming from. Are you afraid to tell him?

Well look: He's already forgiven you from the foundation of the world. So have faith and tell him where you're from and enter the kingdom through the narrow door, and you can begin to party, even here, even now. Dark cup is wine, light cup is juice. They both fulfill the law. They are the Truth. They're the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus. They're life. They're Jesus. They're his life, his grace given to you. Let's worship.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Benediction

So, are you tired of playing this game? Tired of hell? Well then listen to the Truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. You are the children of God, the Bride of Christ, and the house of the Holy Spirit. Believe the Gospel, and things will change. They begin to change here [Peter points to his heart], and then it's everywhere. Amen?

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.