



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
AND
IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
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August 24, 2025

Pastor James Enderle

11th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Isaiah 66:18-24](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 103 CW⁹³

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 12:18-24](#)

Gospel Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Luke 13:22-30](#)

WOUNDS THAT HEAL
The Door is Very Narrow
JESUS ON THE WAY, IS THE NARROW WAY

1. **Many questions but Jesus is focused on you.**
2. **Many wide paths to the same wrong doors.**
3. **A path both inclusive and exclusive.**
4. **Faith and forgiveness in Jesus makes you small.**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Disney has made a lot of cartoon movies over the years. There's one that you still watch today. You've got your princesses and you've got your knights and fairytale stories, and then you've got Alice in Wonderland. You watch that and you're like, "That was an interesting movie" (while scratching your head). We know the book it comes from is quite interesting, but there's a scene in the movie and the book where Alice enters a room and she finds this tiny, tiny door. She has to drink something to get smaller. But then she finds out that she is missing the key. She has to make herself big. She cries and then she's drowning. She makes herself small. It's hard to get through that door when she was too big, too small, and then especially when she did not have the key.

That's what we are going to see in our lesson today, that it's very hard to enter the narrow door. For Alice, that door was so small and then especially, when you don't have the key. For us, there is a narrow door. There's especially a key, one way to enter.

In the first words that Jesus speak, we really see the theme of our message where it says ***He went on his way from one town and village to another, teaching, and making his way to Jerusalem.*** They were going to see that ***Jesus on the way, is the narrow***

way. He set out resolutely for Jerusalem. He is going somewhere to accomplish something. But then as He is going to answer a question, we know the answer. He speaks about a narrow door. We know that He is that narrow door, that narrow way.

The section of Scripture that we enter into is a place where Jesus is teaching. As we talk about these **wounds that heal**, Jesus is teaching many different things. In this section especially, He is talking about the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. So here we have a question that is posed to Him. ***“Lord, are only a few going to be saved?”*** Then He said to them, ***“Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able.”*** He goes on then to talk about how this door will be locked and then many outside will cry out to let them in. But then at the end He says that ***“People will come from east and west...”*** and many will enter. Does Jesus answer the question? The question is ***“Lord, are only a few going to be saved?”*** Does Jesus give a straight answer? No. Often when Jesus is asked a question, He doesn’t answer that question directly but gets to the heart of the question and what needs to be taught.

In my time in China, when you’re living in a Communist country that has outlawed religion and in a world where there are billions of people, this is a question that might be on our heart. It was on my heart. ***“Lord, are only a few going to be saved?”*** You can think about this question, or many other questions you might have. Are there some of those theological questions that you’ve pondered and you think about and you say “God, when is there going to be an answer to this?” Maybe you’ve asked a pastor. Maybe you asked this when you were younger or you say “This really hasn’t been answered the way I want it to be.” My guess is that the people, who asked Jesus this question, are only a few going to be saved, probably walked away saying “He didn’t really answer my question.”

There might be many questions on our heart, like “What about those people in far off places that never got a Bible?” or “What about this person in this situation?” We try to make that door wide. We try to think about all these different questions, but while we have **many questions, Jesus is focused on you**. What does that mean? So often we have so many questions about this person or that person, “What about this,” “What about that,” or even sometimes the silly questions that people have. “Could God be so strong that He could make a rock that He couldn’t lift?” What does that have to do about you? Nothing.

So here, Jesus is pointing them back to themselves, to you. Notice His answer. ***“Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able.”*** What is He saying? He is saying “Strive! You focus!” While many will think about this and say “Strive; that has to do with works”—no, it’s saying “Be focused.” Why must you be focused? You have strive hard to be focused on that one door and not the many others. The truth is that there are **many wide paths to the same wrong doors**. What does that mean? If you do math, there is one correct answer to that math

problem. There are different times when people can show their work and if it's this really complex question, there is one right way and sometimes people can get really, really close but it's still wrong. And then other people are really far off and they don't even try. I think that's how it is with religion. You can look and see that some people are so far off. There are people that don't believe in God.

We are studying Mere Christianity, which is from C. S. Lewis, who is an atheist, and he is trying to talk to people that believe "This is all an accident. There's no God and we get to decide everything for ourselves." We pretty much make ourselves gods, humans. Those people are super far off! But what about those people who believe in "a god?" What about those people who even believe in a type of Jesus? Muslims believe in Jesus, but are they on the right path? They know of Jesus but they are still on the wrong path. And what is this wide path? What are these wide paths? The truth is that these wide paths are work-righteousness. If you boil them all down, there is a narrow path of Jesus, and the other ones are all really all about what you do.

Notice here that He says, ***"I don't know where you come from. Depart from me, all you evildoers."*** The truth is that at our core, we commit evil. We are sinful. We fall short. And if we try to stack up our good versus our evil, we might think "I can be good enough. If I compare myself to others, I don't murder people. I didn't steal like they did. I haven't committed adultery like that person," but we still fall short. So God asks me to approach and says "Why should I let you into heaven," and I say "I'm a good person," I don't match up to the perfection of God. So all these wide paths lead to the same door of a shut door because that's all about themselves. It's all about trying to strive and work hard to think that they can do it on their own.

But the truth is that sometimes Christianity and people really close to Christianity can be on that wrong path, too. When we start to make it all about what we do, or what an author years ago in a book called Jesus + Nothing = Everything said, that Christians like to get into the door, or into the Church through the Gospel but then you have to add this, add works, add my obedience, and make it all about what you do. And YOU must do this. It's so easy for Christians to do that. "I'm in church. I strive hard. I give this much money." But if it's not Jesus, it's the wrong path. When I start adding myself to it, it's the wrong path.

Do we see that this is such a beautiful path to be on, because this **path of Jesus is both inclusive and exclusive**. It's a narrow path, but it's so wide in some senses because it's inclusive. We heard it in our text. ***"People will come from east and west, from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God."*** For the Jewish people, this would have been shocking. Finding people of all nations? Including you and me? That's pretty good news for us. But it includes the worst of sinners. It includes us all. God so loved the world that everyone is invited. Everyone is invited to the banquet feast. Everyone is invited to come through the door, but many people will

refuse. It's very inclusive because God sent Jesus to die for the sins of the world, everywhere. But it's so exclusive because there is only one path.

Jesus is talking about entering the narrow door, and He is that narrow door. As soon as we try to hang onto anything else, there is a problem. So how does Jesus make it so exclusive and why is it important that it is exclusive, that any other way does not get you in? What does Jesus mean for us? As Jesus says, He is ***"the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me."*** ^(John 14:6) He is the Way. He gives us life. He is the Truth. How is this?

As the people are standing outside the door saying "Lord, open the door for us," why can't they get in? It's the same as when Alice didn't have that key. They're not using the right key. The truth is when we hold onto our own pride, it makes us too big. Or if I'm holding onto sin and I say "God, I know you ask me to follow, but this thing is not that big," those things can hurt my faith. Then I don't hold onto Jesus. Instead I'm holding onto the things that He hates. So we cling to Jesus alone. Why does that matter? What does Jesus do by being the Way, the Truth and the Life? As He went on the way to Jerusalem, what did He accomplish there? He went to the cross. He died for your sins, every one of them. So you might hold onto guilt and hold onto what you think you can do, and that makes you too big. So we need something else. We need Jesus and ***faith and forgiveness in Jesus makes you small.*** Not in a bad way but in the best way that makes you humble and focused on Jesus and understanding that He has forgiven you. He has given you the grace and mercy that no one else can do, that we couldn't accomplish in 1,000 years. That forgiveness purifies us and cleanses us and removes that pride and makes us small to enter through that narrow door. That faith clings to Him alone as the key; as the way to enter in.

If you want to see this in a picture, Luther spoke about this in a way. He wrote that when you try to go through that door, many will seek and will not be able to because many people do not know what the door is. The door is faith, which makes a person small. Yes, it even makes them into nothing at all so that he must despair of all his works and cling only to Christ and let go of all things beside Him. But then those who are proud, the Cain-like saints, believe the narrow door is good works. Therefore, they do not become small and they do not despise of their works or hears what you said. Indeed, they collect them into huge sacks, hang them on themselves and want to go through like that. But they can't fit. They will go through only as a camel with huge humps on his back. They go through an eye of a needle. So we understand here, what Luther is saying is that when we hold onto these other things, we're too big. But when we cling to Christ, we're small. And we elevate Him and know that He has done it all.

This text, as we read it, if you were to do highlighting of it by saying, "How much of this is Law and how much of this is Gospel," the truth is 75%-80% of it sounds like Law. It's talking about those people who are outside the door and wailing and saying the door is narrow. But understand that this invitation is both extremely exclusive, because it's

through Jesus, and it's also extremely inclusive, because God says those will come from the east and west and north and south and everyone is invited. We get to share this good news with everyone. Did you hear the hymns we sang? Good News of God Above. We're saved. We're on the narrow path and we cling to Him. We know the Truth. But we also know the truth of how our hearts sometimes don't like that narrow path. We like to hold onto those other things, that baggage. But we also know what happens as we share that Gospel message with others.

This thing is so simple and beautiful. Jesus died for the sins of the world. The hearts want other things; like pride. So as you go out and share, you know that many people will see that door and say "That's too narrow. I want something else." But that doesn't keep us from sharing the truth. And as much as you might have questions and wonder and say "Why, God, this way?" or "Why haven't you answered this question?" this text is really to focus on you; to strive for that narrow door and to have the peace and assurance that, in Christ, you are on that narrow door. That door, in truth, is made wide open through Jesus—through Jesus, who on the way, is the Way, the key to eternal life. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.