



Community Group Discussion Guide

May 4, 2025

Luke 13:22-35: Jesus Is the Way

MOTIVATE

- ⇒ ***Starter question: Can you describe a time when you were lost and had to find your way back to a familiar person or place? What concerned you most about your state of lostness?***

DISCUSS

Almost everyone has been “lost” at some point in life. Sometimes children wander away from their parents. Sometimes a hiker gets turned around in the woods. Sometimes a driver takes a wrong turn and winds up in unfamiliar territory.

In an eternally devastating way, every person is born a sinner, spiritually “lost” and separated from God by sin. In Luke 13:22-35, Jesus portrayed Himself as the narrow door of salvation who saves sinners through His sacrificial death and victorious Resurrection, which would be accomplished in Jerusalem. Jesus declares that the only way to be reconciled to God and enter His kingdom is through Him. No other way of salvation exists. Yet Jesus reminded His listeners that not everyone would be saved. Some would refuse to enter through the narrow door and participate in God’s kingdom. Despite proximity to and familiarity with Jesus, they would be “cast out” from the presence of God.

- ⇒ ***When did you discover just how spiritually lost you were?***
 ⇒ ***Why do people seem to bristle at “exclusivity”—the biblical claim that Jesus is the only way of salvation?***

1. The Narrow Door

Luke 13:22-27: *22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, 24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the master of the house 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 where you come from.’ 26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ 27 But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’*

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem where He would be crucified, buried in a borrowed tomb, and raised from the dead on the third day. On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus was asked a significant question: “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” The parables Jesus shared in the previous section (Luke 13:18-21) may have prompted the question. The inquirer was likely captivated by the size of the mustard seed and the small amount of leaven, leading to his question about the number of those who would be saved. This was a frequent topic of debate among rabbis.

In response, Jesus exhorted His listeners to “strive to enter through the narrow door.” Jesus was not suggesting sinners were saved by human effort—this would go against the New Testament’s teaching on salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:21-26). Rather, He emphasized the earnestness with which we should seek God’s kingdom, which can only be entered through faith in Jesus. He is the narrow door, and all who desire to enter God’s kingdom must come through Him. We cannot custom-design our own salvation. We come to God on His terms or not at all. If we have not entered the narrow door, hope is gone.

- ⇒ ***If we cannot enter God’s kingdom on our own efforts, then what are we striving to do?***
 ⇒ ***What are God’s terms for salvation?***

There is an urgency to Jesus’ words. The opportunity for salvation will eventually disappear.

Jesus said many people “will seek to enter and will not be able” because the owner of the house “has risen and shut the door.” At some point, either through physical death or at the end times, the door of salvation will be closed to them. Once closed, a person will be unable to enter God’s kingdom.

They might “stand outside to knock at the door, saying ‘Lord, ‘open to us,’ but the Lord will answer, “I do not know where you came from.” They may have eaten meals with Him and listened to His teaching, but they did not receive Him or possess a relationship with Him. Therefore, He will say, “Depart from Me, all you workers of evil.” Every “door” other than Jesus leads nowhere. Failure to recognize this reality and embrace it will lead to disaster.

- ⇒ ***What are some “doors” people believe will gain them salvation?***
- ⇒ ***Do you or did you ever strive to get to Jesus on your own? What was the result?***
- ⇒ ***Why does the way of religious righteousness not result in salvation?***

Jesus as the “narrow door” has two implications for believers.

a. Those who profess to be Christians must examine themselves and make sure their faith rests in Jesus alone for salvation.

- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: He died to take away our sins for the simple reason that we cannot remove them ourselves. If we could, His atoning death would be unnecessary. – John Stott¹***

b. Those who profess faith in Jesus must share about Him with others. Christians should resolve to tell unbelievers there is only one way to be saved, and His name is Jesus

- ⇒ ***How are you pointing others to Jesus alone for salvation?***

Luke 13:28-30: *²⁸ 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. ²⁹ And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”*

Jesus described the destination of the wicked: a place where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Jesus used this language to paint a vivid picture of the grief and anguish of those who cannot enter the kingdom of God. Rather than enjoy a meal in the kingdom of God, the wicked will experience pain and sorrow. Those who ate meals with Jesus and heard Him teach are left outside if they do not trust in Him.

- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: The interaction between Jesus and those who cannot enter God’s kingdom teaches a powerful lesson: familiarity with Jesus is not a substitute for faith in Jesus. These “seekers” are turned away because they failed to enter through the narrow door while it was open.***

Their despair is compounded by the fact that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets participate in God’s kingdom while they are left out. The God in the Old Testament is the same God here in the New Testament. But through Jesus, the narrow door and the only way, we see more clearly that the one God is triune—one God in three Persons. Those who don’t believe are outside, looking into the kingdom of God where the patriarchs and prophets enjoy a meal at God’s table, while they are excluded.

Yet the exclusion of the wicked does not mean only a few people will enter God’s kingdom. Jesus described people “from east and west, and from north and south” who would enter. The kingdom of God is not reserved for Jews alone. People from every tongue, tribe, and nation will enter God’s kingdom and “recline at the table in the kingdom of God” for the final, eternal banquet.

- ⇒ ***Why would Jesus’ words indicating an inclusion of non-Jews be so offensive to the***

Jews?

- ⇒ **Discuss some of the Old Testament prophecies that indicated the Gentiles would ultimately be included in God's kingdom. (Examples: Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6; 66:18-19; Jeremiah 16:19) Why is this good news for us today?**

The traditionalist of Judaism thought they were guaranteed a place in God's final kingdom. They thought everyone must submit to their religious rules and regulations to enter the kingdom—to the exclusion of the Gentiles. The Gentile inclusion indicates an eschatological, or end times, reversal, which is why Jesus said, "And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." The Gentiles, whom Paul described as being "strangers to the covenants of promise" (Ephesians 2:12), are sharing the banquet in the kingdom of God. Though the door is narrow, it is available for anyone to enter.

In these verses, Jesus described the upside-down nature of God's kingdom. Many of the religious Jews assumed they would be first, while the Gentiles would be last. Yet Jesus said many who ate with Him and heard Him teach would be cast out. This reversal reminds us of two things:

- Familiarity with Jesus is not a substitute for faith in Jesus. To have a relationship with Jesus is to really know Him, not just know of Him.
- God's grace upends expectations and extends to all people.

- ⇒ **What are some other examples of the "upside-down nature" of God's kingdom?**

2. The Coming Death

Luke 13:31-33: ³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³²And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.' ³³Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

After Jesus's teaching on how some will be cast out and some will be invited into the kingdom, a group of Pharisees came and warned Him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." The Gospel writers often portray the Pharisees as enemies of Jesus who challenge His authority, question His miracles, and oppose His teaching. Yet here the Pharisees' motivation is unclear. The Pharisees may have been looking for a way to get Jesus to move on and leave quickly, or they could simply be delivering a message. Regardless, the chief antagonist in the passage was Herod Antipas.

Herod is a family name, so many Herods existed. Herod Antipas, mentioned here, was a tetrarch, one of four rulers. He governed over Galilee and Perea and was known to be sly and deceitful in his rule. He beheaded John the Baptist.² His father, Herod the Great, was reigning when Jesus was born and unsuccessfully attempted to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:1-18). Like his father, Herod Antipas wanted to kill Jesus and threatened to accomplish what his father could not. Eventually, Herod Antipas, in concert with Pontius Pilate, succeeded in killing Jesus (Luke 23:8-12), but here Luke simply recorded the threat, which was intended to intimidate Jesus and deter Him from accomplishing His mission.

- ⇒ **Even though Jesus faced opposition, He refused to be distracted from His mission to redeem sinners by dying on the cross. What are some ways obedience to God's mission might lead to opposition for Christians today?**

Unintimidated, Jesus replied, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'" The exact meaning of the fox imagery is unclear. Jesus could be highlighting the craftiness of Herod, or He could be mocking Herod as a fox rather than a lion. Regardless, Jesus would not be deterred by Herod's threats. Jesus continued performing miracles as He traveled to Jerusalem, specifically casting out demons and healing people. These further demonstrated He was the Messiah who had come to save His people.

Ultimately, Jesus knew His mission would result in His death. The Pharisees hoped Jesus would not continue traveling to Jerusalem. Yet Jesus knew He would die in Jerusalem because He told the Pharisees “for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.”

Jesus’ response reveals that His death was part of God’s providential plan and that He was going to fulfill that plan no matter the cost. While Herod and the religious leaders conspired to put Jesus to death and were responsible for their actions, God was sovereignly working through them to redeem sinful humanity. “Neither the Pharisees nor Herod direct Jesus’ destiny; only God does.”³ The journey to Jerusalem is not coincidental. The opposition of Herod is not accidental. These things are all part of God’s good plan to save sinners through the death and Resurrection of Jesus.

⇒ ***How can Christians take comfort in the fact that God is in control, He is good, and He is working all things out for His glory and our good?***

Jesus knew He had to die for the sins of the world. He knew where He would die: Jerusalem. He knew how He would die: by being crucified. He knew these details because He is the Son of God and had determined to do exactly this for the salvation of humankind. His love and faithfulness to His people set Him out on a seemingly impossible task where He sacrificed and suffered not only in His death but in His life. He was opposed, mocked, persecuted, abandoned, and betrayed—finally resulting in His torture and death. And He continued on this journey for you and for me to give us new life and to ensure our sins are forgiven. Why? Because of His love for His Father and us.

⇒ ***How might you express your gratitude to Jesus, who endured the cross in order to save you?***

3. The Future Adoration

Luke 13:34-35: *³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*

Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem to die, which should not have been surprising given the city’s importance and history. Jesus lamented over the city and highlighted its bloody past: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! The Old Testament recounts the death of various prophets like Uriah (Jeremiah 26:20) and Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:21). The city of Jerusalem, specifically the Pharisees and religious leaders, had rejected Jesus and would eventually kill Him, just as they had killed the prophets who came before Him.

Several of Jesus’ parables reflect Israel’s rejection of God’s messengers. The parable of the wicked tenants is one example focused on the theme of rejection (Luke 20:9-19). In the parable, a man planted a vineyard and leased it to tenant farmers. When the man sent his servants three times to gather fruit from the vineyard, the tenant farmers beat the servants and sent them away. Finally, the farmer sent his son, believing the farmers would respect him. Tragically, the farmers killed the son to steal his inheritance. The parable concludes with the vineyard owner returning to punish the wicked tenants.

The message of this parable is clear: judgment awaits those who reject God’s messengers. The servants represented God’s prophets, who warned Israel to repent and return to God. The son represented Jesus, the Son of God who would be killed by the religious leaders and the Roman government. The wicked tenants represented the people of Israel, especially the Pharisees, scribes, and religiously leaders who rejected Jesus during His earthly ministry.

Despite the city’s rejection of the prophets and Jesus in particular, Jesus displayed compassion for the city and its inhabitants. He used the imagery of a mother hen gathering her chicks under

her wings to convey His desire to protect them. The imagery is drawn from Old Testament language describing God as a protective mother bird (Deuteronomy 32:11; Psalm 17:8; Isaiah 31:5). The maternal instinct of the hen is powerful. The point of the imagery is clear: Jesus cares for the city of Jerusalem and expresses His compassion for them. Unfortunately, the people are obstinate. They refuse to come to Jesus and find protection.

- ⇒ ***What are some ways people reject God's compassion?***
- ⇒ ***Why is Jesus' compassion for Jerusalem so beautiful? Do you have compassion on those who have rejected Him?***

Because of their rejection, Jesus pronounced judgment on Jerusalem: Behold, your house is forsaken. This imagery is drawn from the Old Testament as well. The prophet Jeremiah warned about God's judgment on Israel and the possibility of God abandoning or forsaking the people due to sin (Jeremiah 12:7; 22:5). The warning becomes reality, as "Jesus is more emphatic than Jeremiah's statement of the potential rejection of the nation. He states that a time of abandonment has come. Rather than being gathered under God's wings, their house is left empty and exposed. The now-empty house is the nation."⁴ Because they have rejected Jesus, they must face God's judgment.

While judgment was certain, Jesus did not leave them without hope. He pointed to a future time when they would see Him and say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Some have read this as a reference to the triumphal entry, but in Matthew 23:37-29, Jesus made this statement after His triumphal entry in Matthew 21. Jesus was anticipating a future time when Israel would recognize Him as Messiah, praise Him, and trust Him for salvation. One day, Israel will enter God's kingdom through the narrow door.

As Christians, we can be hopeful and optimistic as well. Jesus promised to return for His people, and we eagerly anticipate His coming. When He returns, we will acknowledge Him as Lord and worship Him forever.

- ⇒ ***How can the future return of Christ motivate you to live hopefully and faithfully in the present?***

TRANSFORM: Jesus taught that entrance into His kingdom is difficult and only comes through Him. While all may come to Jesus in faith for salvation, many will not, choosing to believe in some other way to be saved. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Because the way of salvation is narrow, we keep Jesus central in all we do, helping others fix their gaze on Him and trust in Him alone for salvation.

1. HEAD: Jesus is the only way of salvation. No other path of salvation exists. As Peter said in Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." The way of salvation is narrow, and all other "paths" of salvation are dead ends. Therefore, we must reject competing claims of salvation and cling in faith to Jesus alone.

- ⇒ ***How can you communicate the "narrowness" of salvation in a compelling and convincing way?***

2. HEART: Jesus lamented over the city of Jerusalem, which demonstrates His compassion for the people in the city and His desire to save them. Unfortunately, they were unwilling to come to Him. We do not know whether people will accept the gospel or reject the gospel, but we should have compassion on them and share the gospel with them. Our willingness to share the gospel reflects Jesus' compassion for sinners.

- ⇒ ***In what areas can you confess to God concerning your lack of compassion for others or lack of obedience in sharing the gospel?***

3. HANDS: Jesus is the narrow way of salvation, which is a crucial truth for believers and

unbelievers. Christians need to be reminded of the exclusiveness of the gospel and cling to Jesus alone for salvation and sanctification. Security and spiritual maturity are connected to Jesus, so we must remind ourselves and others of the confidence and progress in the spiritual life that come from Him. Similarly, unbelievers need to be informed of the exclusiveness of Jesus and encouraged to trust Him, the narrow way of salvation. There is no hope apart from Jesus. We must communicate the gospel—with unbelievers and believers—so that God can save sinners and strengthen His people.

⇒ ***Who needs a reminder of the good news of the gospel this week that you can share with?***

References

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3. David E. Garland, *Luke, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 559.
4. Darrell Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1250.

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