

Pentecost 11 / August 24, 2025
Luke 13:24
"Strive to enter by the narrow door."

Are you an escalator person, or do you prefer to take the stairs? If you needed to go to an office on the 15th floor of a building, would you take the stairs? When you approach a building do you enter by the automatic door, or do you use the arm-strong method? I knew a woman who in her 90's, would walk up and down ten flights of stairs two times a day. She only took the elevator when the stairs were out of service. The elevator, the escalator and the automatic door all get us to the same place as the arm-strong door and the stairs. They're quick and easy, so that's the means of entrance and method of conveyance, most of us use most of the time. But not all doors lead to the same place and the easiest way isn't always the best way. Some structures have been built so that the easiest entrance leads to the least desirable parts of the structure; while the narrowest and most awkward entrance leads to a much better place. It is from this perspective that Jesus urges us to *"strive to enter by the narrow door."* Jesus is the narrow door. In the gospel of John He said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* The entrance to the kingdom of heaven is narrow, but it leads to the best place, the presence of God.

Sometimes the hard way, the awkward way, the narrow way leads to a better place. The hard way has its benefits. Pulling doors open and walking up and down the stairs benefits your physical well-being, whether you are nine or ninety. There are many routes you can take when travelling. If you search for a location on your phone, the application will offer you a variety of routes, differentiated according to scenery, distance or quickness. But as a trucker once told me, sometimes the shortest way isn't the fastest way. Sometimes the hard way is the only way. Not all entrances give easy access. If you want to be a doctor, a teacher, a lawyer, have to take the hard way, meet certain requirements and complete the course set out by the governing authorities. There is no other way.

There is only one way into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is the way. Unlike the world, access to the kingdom of heaven is not based on our worthiness, or upon our merits at achieving certain goals. Jesus makes us worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven and stand in the presence of God through His merit and the blood He shed to make up for our deficiency. Everyone must come through Him, but everyone who comes to Him receives welcome into the kingdom of God. Jesus said, *"Strive to enter through the narrow door."* The door is narrow, but it is open wide

for all to enter. In John 3:16 Jesus said, *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life."* The door is narrow, but it is open wide and Jesus calls all to enter through faith in His name.

In life we usually get to our destination all the same no matter what route we take, or what door we enter. It usually doesn't matter which door we use to enter a building. Every door gets us into the building. While it might impact our cardiovascular health, the elevator will get us to floor of our choice just like the stairs. If you fly business class, you may get on the airplane quicker, deplane faster and arrive 40 feet ahead of everyone else, but the airplane arrives at the same destination for all passengers. The ancients, said, 'All roads lead to Rome.' In life many paths lead to the same place, but there is only one way into the kingdom of heaven; through Jesus, for the sake of His blood and righteousness.

In the book of Revelation, St. John sees an uncountable number of people in heaven, standing before the throne of God, in the presence of the Lamb. They come from different times and died in different ways, but they all got to heaven the same way; through Jesus and for the sake of His blood that washed away their sins. John is told, *"These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For that reason they are before the throne of God."* A man asked Jesus, *"Lord, will those who are saved be few?"* Jesus answered by saying, *"Strive to enter by the narrow door."* Our main concern should not be the number, but that we are included in the number! Jesus is the narrow door. He is the only way, but entrance is offered to all through faith in His name. The number of people in the kingdom of God will be beyond counting, but we all enter the same way; through Jesus, for the sake of His blood and righteousness.

Some doors are designed to allow limited access. There was a gate in Jerusalem called "The Eye of the Needle." Jesus referred to it in the gospels saying, *"It is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."* The gate let people in and kept animals out. Anyone who arrived at the gate with their camel or donkey, would have to take the long way around and enter by a different gate. The gate to the kingdom of heaven allows limited access. Nothing sinful or unclean can enter into the presence of God. The door is narrow! Only those cleansed of sin by the blood of the Lamb and made holy by His righteousness can enter.

Revelation speaks of the New Jerusalem, where God dwells with His people in His holiness and the fullness of His glory, saying *"Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."* Our names are written in the Lamb's book of life in the blood Jesus shed to wash away the stain of our sin. We gain entrance to the presence of God, when we see our sin, confess faith in Jesus as Saviour and receive baptism into His death and resurrection. In Him we have redemption from sin and death through the forgiveness of sins.

The gate to the kingdom of heaven provides entrance to all who are cleansed of their sin by the blood of Jesus. All who are made holy through His righteousness in forgiveness, pass through the gate and are received into the presence of God. In John chapter ten, Jesus says, *"I am the door. If anyone enters by me he will be saved."* The gate is narrow, but it is open wide and entrance is offered for all people to receive. Jesus says, *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."* He calls all people to enter the kingdom of heaven through faith in His name and baptism into His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin.

The door is narrow because Jesus is the only way. Jesus is the only way, because only Jesus could make a way to the Father. Jesus made the way to the Father, by fulfilling the law in our place; both by what He did and by what He experienced. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law, by living a life without sin. Jesus satisfied the law's demand for justice by sacrificing His sinless self on the cross to pay the debt of our sin. In the second letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote, *"God made Him who had no sin to be an offering for sin, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God."* Only Jesus could make the way, because only the sinless Son of God had the power to live a life without sin, die for our sins and extend the effects of His death to cover the sin of the whole world.

Jesus is a human being unlike any other. He is God from eternity. He is a human being in time. Conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, He is both God and man. In Colossians Paul wrote, *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created through Him and for Him."* As God and man, Jesus did what no other human being could do; He made peace with God for human beings through the sacrifice of His body on the cross. In Him we have peace with God in the forgiveness of sin. Through Him we

have the promise of entrance in the kingdom of heaven when this life comes to an end.

Paul continues in Colossian saying, *"He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross."* Jesus is the narrow door, because, only Jesus could do what needed to be done to gain our entrance into the kingdom of God. The door is narrow, but it is open wide for all to enter. What Jesus did for one He did for all. St. John said of Him, *"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world."* All who come to Him pass from death to life! He calls us and all people to come to Him that we would receive forgiveness and eternal life through Him. He says, *"Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."*

The door is narrow, but the door is open for all to enter. He calls all to enter. He calls us today! Jesus is the door. He calls us to enter through Him. The way may be hard, but it leads to eternal life. He calls all to believe. He gives salvation to all who believe and persevere in faith unto life's end! He gives the power to persevere in faith until life's end/ As St. Paul wrote to Timothy, *"He is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe."* God always grant us faith to seek the narrow door and to hold fast to Jesus through faith, until faith passes into sight and we receive the fullness of life through His resurrection.

In Jesus' Name Amen