

The Perfect Wideness of His Glorious Kingdom

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[0 : 00] to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning. And we're back in Luke's Gospel at chapter 13. And you'll see that's page 873 if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles.

Page 873 and Luke's Gospel, chapter 13 and verse 22. Just before you read there, turn over a few pages to Luke chapter 17 at verse 11.

You'll see there verse 11 begins with the words, On the way to Jerusalem. Look back now to Luke 13 and verse 22. As he went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.

That's one of Luke's little marker posts. Right at the very beginning of the Gospel, remember Luke tells us he's written a carefully ordered account. And if you read through Luke and then the book of Acts, which is the second part of Luke's work, you'll find it is indeed a carefully ordered account. And Luke didn't have bold type and numbered paragraphs like we have today in our books and papers and things. But he did put in marker posts so that we could see his ordering.

[1 : 23] And here's two more of them. Chapter 13 and verse 22 and chapter 17 at verse 11. And that tells us that in between those two marker points is Luke's next section of teaching.

And therefore we should be looking and expecting that it would all hang together with some kind of similar theme, some similar concern. And indeed, over the next three or four weeks, that's what we'll be looking at.

And that's what we shall indeed discover. But we're going to read the first section of that teaching now, which is from verse 22 to the end of chapter 13. Jesus 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? And he said to them, you strive 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 and shut the door and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us, then he will answer you.

[2 : 29] I do not know where you come from. Then you'll 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 are from.

Depart from me, you workers of evil. 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, some are last who will be first.

And some are first who will be last. At that very hour, some Pharisees came and said to him, get away from here for Herod wants to kill you.

And he said to them, go tell that fox. Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day. I finish my course.

[3 : 37] Nevertheless, 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.

Oh, 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 would not. Behold, your house. The temple. 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. Amen. May God bless to us. This is word.

Well, let's turn, shall we, to Luke's gospel, chapter 13, page 873. In our church Bibles.

[4 : 44] As I said, our opening verse, verse 22, reminds us that Jesus is on a journey. And all the way along, he's teaching his followers vital things.

And this verse begins, as I've said, the next section in Luke's gospel, which runs through to chapter 17, verse 11. Where we have another one of those little indicators that he's on the road to Jerusalem.

But, of course, Jesus is journeying not only to Jerusalem. In chapter 9, verse 51, we're told he began to set his face towards Jerusalem.

It was because the time drew near for him to be taken up. That is, taken up to heaven's glory. That's where the journey ends. The very last couple of verses of Luke's gospel.

Jesus taken up to the glory of heaven. So, for Jesus, that is the journey he is on to the glory of heaven. But, that journey must be through Jerusalem.

[5 : 46] It's a journey that must go via the cross. That's why Jesus says, back in chapter 9, that anyone who follows me, if anyone would come after me to that glory, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

So, from chapter 9, verse 51, Jesus is teaching his disciples then and now what it means to walk the road to glory with him.

And he's laid out what that path looks like. It is a way of privilege and of rejoicing. But, it will also be a way of pain and rejection in this world. And we've seen in the last few chapters the priorities he lays out for all who will truly live in this world, but for that glory to come.

You'll value Jesus and his kingdom above all other earthly things. You'll seek a real relationship with him, responding to his call.

Real repentance, bearing fruit in your life. Because that's what we were created for. Remember the story he told there of the fig tree last time.

[6 : 56] We're not created for barrenness, but for fruitfulness. Yes, God is patient, extraordinarily patient. He gives enormous opportunity for repentance and for bearing fruit.

But not forever. Remember chapter 13, verse 9. In the end, there comes a time when time is gone and the fruitless fig tree must be cut down.

And so Jesus repeatedly warns, doesn't he? Unless you repent, you also will perish. Now it's solemn talk. But here in the next section, that urgent tone also continues.

Even as the events focus more now on the future than on the present. Jesus is turning to the perfection of his coming kingdom in glory.

And that's why the dominant theme through these next few chapters is feasting. It's all about the sumptuous banquet that represents the ultimate honor and joy and comfort of Christ's coming kingdom.

[8 : 02] And, as we saw in verse 29, it's wideness. It's extraordinarily inclusive, the kingdom of Jesus. People come from east and west and north and south to feast at the table of his glorious kingdom.

So it's all about perfection. The coming perfection and the delight of great celebration in the kingdom of Christ. Hence, in chapter 14 that follows, we have the parable of the banquet.

And then in chapter 15, there's a great celebration and feasting that follows when the lost is found.

The lost coin, the lost sheep, but above all, the lost son. And then in chapter 16, there's the story of the poor man and Lazarus.

Poor Lazarus, starving in this life, but at last, comforted wonderfully. At the side of Abraham in the kingdom. Wonderful feasting.

And yet, there is also great sadness because in each one of these cases, some miss out on the perfection of the glory to come. Either unconsciously, as in the first and the final stories, like the people here in chapter 13.

[9 : 10] Or the rich man in chapter 16. Who through presumption, neglect the call of Christ on their lives. Or, as in the middle two stories, it's much more consciously.

Those who are invited to the banquet and refuse. Or the elder brother who refuses to enter. Who purposefully reject the call of Christ on their lives.

And Jesus' teaching is very clear all the way through these stories. There are two and only two possible destinations for eternity.

Either there is perfection, an everlasting gain. Or there is perdition, everlasting loss. And his repeated warning is not to miss out on his coming kingdom of perfection, of honor and joy and

comfort.

Whose bounds are wide enough to encompass every tribe and language and people and nation. Don't miss out either through unconsciously but presumptuously neglecting Jesus' call.

[10:20] Or through consciously and purposely rejecting Jesus' call on your life. And right here in our passage today, we have the first movement of this new section of teaching.

And we hear this warning very clearly indeed. Verses 22 to the end of chapter 13 focus on the perfect wideness of Christ's glorious kingdom that is to come.

But the message is loud and clear. Don't neglect God's grace in Jesus Christ presumptuously. You must strive to enter now.

By responding to the exclusive call of Christ. The one who alone comes in the name of the Lord as this world's savior. And you must do so, says Jesus, before the exclusive door of entry becomes for you an excluding door of exit.

From God's coming kingdom. Well, you see the passage falls into two paragraphs. So let's look first at verses 22 to 30. Which are all about wideness and weeping.

[11:27] Jesus says there will be painful weeping for some. Despite the perfect wideness of Christ's coming kingdom of glory.

Verse 28. Though people come from east and west and north and south to join the joy, some will weep bitterly. You will see yourselves cast out, says Jesus.

Now Jesus' words here are precipitated, you'll see, by the question in verse 23. Lord, will those who are saved be few? We don't know the motivation for that question.

We don't know whether it was Jesus' radical talk about priorities for all who follow him that made people wonder, well, who could possibly follow that road? Or maybe it was just the kind of speculative theoretical question that people often ask.

Usually as a way of sidestepping the challenge of the gospel. It certainly does seem strange, doesn't it, to assume, as this man seems to, that few will be saved. When in the verse going before it, Jesus has only just talked about his kingdom as being like a vast tree that will provide nesting places for all the birds of the earth.

[12:35] Or like leaven which proceeds through all the loaf until the whole thing is leavened. It's a picture of vastness and wideness, isn't it? But you see, people very often do ignore what the Bible is really saying, don't they?

And they ignore the questions that the Bible is really posing and like to focus instead on all kinds of questions that the Bible doesn't pose and doesn't answer. At any rate, Jesus doesn't give a direct answer to the question, but nevertheless he gives a very clear answer.

He exposes the questioner and he turns the tables. And he says to them, never mind that, never mind the hypotheticals. What about you? Will you be saved?

That's the real question. It's like when somebody asks the question, well, what about the unreached tribes in the Amazon rainforest who have never heard the gospel, have never had opportunity?

What will happen to them? And Jesus says, never mind them. What about you who do have opportunity right now? That's the real question. You all have responsibility to enter the kingdom, says Jesus.

[13:47] No one can presume and therefore neglect the call of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus himself says in verse 24, do you see, some will be excluded.

Many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When they finally realize that they need to, for some, in fact it's Jesus who says for many, they'll find the door shut.

It's the master, verse 25, who controls the door, not you. And when it's shut, it's too late. You can no longer enter in, not ever.

Now for some, such as King Herod, as we'll see in a moment in verse 32, for some that door of opportunity may be closed even when we're still living. But for all, it'll certainly close when the master returns to call us to account, either on the last day or if we die before that, like the rich fool in chapter 12, do you remember?

Tonight, your soul will be required of you. And Jesus can hardly be plainer here. We can't avoid it. There is such a thing as finding the door of his kingdom closed upon you forever.

[15:07] However, that's what he's saying. Not so the bishop that I heard the other week on the Today program. Some of you perhaps heard him speaking about the reburial of the notorious King Richard III in Leicester Cathedral.

He didn't seem to think that because when he was asked by John Humphreys or whoever it was, whether it was right that a king with such a wicked reputation, if it really was true, that if he really was as wicked and as godless as everyone said, that we should be treated as a saint in a new Christian burial.

And the bishop said, well, of course, he's forgiven now, as we all will be. In other words, according to the bishop, whether you strive to enter through the exclusive door of forgiveness, through repentance in Jesus' name, or whether you don't, is no matter at all, because it will all be the same in the end.

But I'm afraid, Mr. Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ says, not so. Many will seek to enter and they will not be able, says Jesus, because the master of the house, God himself, will at last shut that door. And even great ones, like the wealthy farmer of chapter 12, or King Richard, or any other king, may hear God say, you fool, this night your soul is required of you.

[16:37] And notice verse 26, you see, there will be for someone that day great perplexity, great perplexity. You see, they claim to know Jesus, they claim to have a claim on him.

We ate and drank in your presence. You taught in our streets. They may know Jesus socially, but they don't know him spiritually. And that is the only thing that really matters, according to Jesus. They weren't like Mary, back in chapter 10, do you remember, who sat at Jesus' feet and let his word direct her life. My true family, says Jesus, are those who hear the word of God and do it. See, it's not familiarity with Jesus that counts. It's real faith in Jesus. It's not even family connection with God's people that counts.

Connection with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets of the kingdom, verse 28. No, it's faith. It's entering personally by the narrow door, the exclusive way and truth and life that is Jesus Christ, the Savior himself.

[17:46] And Jesus says that some people will be shocked, surprised, perplexed, and even protesting their exclusion.

But friends, we need to be very clear if Jesus is to be believed. It's not being around Jesus and his people, around the church, even involved in the church.

Not that that counts. In Matthew 7, verse 22, Jesus is even more explicit. It's not even being involved in ministry in Christ's church that counts. Prophesying, doing mighty works in his name. Jesus can still say to such people, I never knew you. Nor is it being born and baptized into the privileges or heritage of God's people.

Inheriting the nurture and admonition of the scriptures and the blessings of the church, which are many and great blessings. Don't be mistaken. But these great blessings confer very great responsibilities.

[18:53] These things are to propel you to enter through the narrow door, to respond to the grace of God and Jesus Christ, the Savior. When Jesus says to strive, of course, he doesn't mean it's a matter of religious zeal or merit or good works.

Of course he doesn't. Strive simply means to make an absolute priority, to ask, to seek, to knock, so that he will give you what he has promised.

He will open. You will receive. He will give his Holy Spirit to everyone who asks. We've read that, haven't we, just a couple of weeks ago in chapter 10. But you must ask because there comes a time when it will be too late to presume upon God's Spirit, to neglect the call of Jesus persistently is, according to Jesus, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus was clear about that, wasn't he, in chapter 12, verse 10. That cannot in the end be forgiven. And it must lead tragically to the response of verse 27 here, depart from me, you workers of evil.

You can't presume and just neglect the call of the Lord Jesus. If you do, Jesus himself says great perplexity will enter, in verse 28, to great pain, weeping, gnashing of teeth.

[20:27] What's described here in verses 28 and 29 is the pain of irreparable loss. Not only, says Jesus, will there be terrible deprivation, there'll be the added agony of a conscious perception of what is forfeited and what otherwise could have been.

You will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets of the kingdom of God and multitudes from every nation, north, south, east, and west, but you yourselves cast out weeping and gnashing of teeth, conscious frustration and regret and horror and agony of a deprivation that is monumental and ongoing and without end.

Make no mistake, be in no doubt about it. All through the gospels where you read Jesus using this imagery of weeping and gnashing of teeth, he uses it consistently alongside speaking about outer darkness, about the fiery furnace, of the worm that does not end, of the everlasting fire of eternal punishment.

And a great part of that punishment described here is the never-ending conscious torment of knowing what could have been but what you, by your personal failure, have denied yourself and instead created for yourself something unimaginably terrible to live with forever.

Have you ever discovered that you've made a mistake an error, a terrible misjudgment, something that has resulted in dreadful consequences, things that you have to live with, something that torments you for the rest of your life.

[22 : 25] Like the person you know who leaves the gas on, goes out and suddenly remembers and rushes home and discover, well, it's too late, the house is burnt down, there's been a huge gas explosion.

Or the doctor who gives the wrong drug or maybe the wrong dose of drug to a patient and it kills them and they have to live with that.

Or the mother who leaves the break of the pram off when she's chatting to somebody in the street and turns around and sees the pram careering down the hill and heading for a lorry and then crumpled and crushed underneath a lorry.

Imagine how terrible the torment of living with something like that for the rest of your life. life. And how much worse if you've been repeatedly warned by people not to be careless, not to do these things, lest you live to regret it, but you've just done it anyway.

Imagine all of these things and a hundred thousand others worse beside and imagine a never ending eternity of these things replaying before you again and again and again in a never ending present with no dulling by the passage of time.

[23 : 54] That's what Jesus is saying here, will be absolute hell. and a never ending reminder of your absolute folly and perversity in choosing that, choosing to be excluded from rescue from that into the perfect joy and comfort and honor and delight that you see others experiencing.

that is what it will be for some, says Jesus here. And you'll see, as verse 30 says, there is also in that great pain a great paradox.

Some who seem most likely in the world's eyes to be honored guests in heaven, if there is a heaven, will be quite absent. Whereas some whom the world hasn't even noticed their existence, will be guests at the honored table of God himself.

Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last. Some with all the privileges of upbringing, of spiritual heritage, of great opportunity, will not be where they ought to be in the kingdom of glory.

There's a word for every young person born and growing up in this church fellowship with all the privileges that you have. because it's not by family or familiarity with Jesus, but by faith that you enter exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ.

[25 : 34] It's a narrow door, says Jesus, that gives entrance into a kingdom of perfect wideness. And, according to Jesus, it is a closing door, which ultimately if not entered into in the day of opportunity will be closed, make no mistake.

One day that exclusive door will become an excluding door. And some are first. It will be last and lost forever.

But some, says Jesus, are last now and will be found and found forever. even though they had no privileges in life, only privations.

They'll be welcomed from east and west and north and south to feast at the king's table because the grace of God is the great leveler and the sovereign mercy of God is the great lifter.

I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion. Even the very lowest, even the very least to deserve it.

[26 : 50] God is a God of sovereign grace and love abounding over sin and death and hell. And there is a wideness in God's mercy that is wider than the greatest sea.

And some who are very last and last in line to deserve one iota of God's mercy will be elevated beyond their wildest expectations their place at the table of the king.

But you see, lest any of us should think that in any way God's sovereignty is capricious or unjust, trust.

This next paragraph here in Jesus' teaching is very clear and very, very important. If there shall be, as Jesus says there shall be, painful weeping for some despite the perfect wideness of his kingdom of grace and mercy, we must be very clear, the fault in that is not God's, not God's. God will exclude no one who does not freely and willfully also exclude themselves from his saving grace.

[28 : 06] You see, verses 31 to 35 are all about willingness and willfulness. And again, Jesus is absolutely plain. It is perverse and willful rejection of a persistently willing redeemer that results in the awful judgment of a sovereign God.

Verse 34, how often would I have gathered your children, but you would not. In these solemn words here that follow, Jesus is applying the parable that he's just told directly into real life to his immediate hearers in his own generation.

Both an individual, Herod, one of the first in the land, who Jesus dismisses with contempt as last, and also to Israel as a whole, to a privileged nation, a most favored generation, familiar with Jesus for certain, but with no faith in Jesus for the most part.

A people who exalted their house, the temple, but who scorned God's words and his true messengers always, and who were therefore forsaken by Jesus. The door was shut upon them because they would not recognize and enter the door of saving mercy, that it was extended to them when it came to them in the person of the Son of God, seeking to woo them into eternal life.

And Jesus' words here in verse 32 to Herod are first of all words of real solemnity. Here is an example in the flesh of a man for whom the door of opportunity has already been slant shut by Jesus himself and to whom Jesus is saying even now in these words, I don't know where you have come from.

[29 : 56] Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. See, he's dismissing him with contempt in verse 32. Herod had many privileges, many opportunities.

He was a king of Israel. He had scribes and teachers of the law and priests galore in his court. More than that, back in Luke chapter 3, do you remember?

He had John the Baptist himself come to him and proclaim the gospel to him personally. Jesus says, John is the greatest prophet who has ever lived and he came personally to this man and proclaimed the salvation of the kingdom of God.

But Herod didn't want John's message because he didn't like John's message because John called him to repent of his evil ways. Not least of his sexual behavior, which John dared to say was sinful and therefore must be repented of and changed.

So Herod imprisoned John and later killed him. The outraged reaction to calling sinful and perverted sex wrong is not a new thing.

[31 : 04] It's not new in our generation. But God should dare to tell human beings how to enjoy the gift of sex in the way he has planned for it to be.

That outrages people. It always has and it still does today. And people will still try to silence those who talk in that way just as they will try to silence us.

Look at Elton John's ridiculous outburst a few weeks ago against Dolce and Gabbana. How pathetic and sad. But prominent people and powerful people especially will not tolerate that sort of criticism. And where they can, they'll respond with vehemence and even with violence. And some of us, friends, will face that in our society today. It's inevitable.

Look at Chalmers Church in Edinburgh just a few weeks ago and the aggressive opposition they faced from the LGBT brigade. But that was Herod. Herod rejected John willfully.

[32 : 02] And in doing so, he willfully rejected the one that John proclaimed. And in Luke chapter 9, we're told later, when Herod heard about Jesus, after he had killed John, he was perplexed and he sought to see Jesus.

But Jesus did not engage Herod or indulge him. And his words here are very dismissive. In fact, they're withering. Go and tell that fox. Jesus is full of scorn for this man.

He's a king of Israel, but he's no lion of Judah. He's just a fox. A destructive vermin, neither great nor straight.

And Jesus dismisses him as one who may seem to be first, but who will be last on any measure that counts, that really matters in the end.

They're withering words, they're very solemn and chilling. Later, in chapter 23, we read that Herod, when Jesus was brought before him, was glad and wanted to hear what he had to say and wanted

to see some kind of sign from him and questioned him at length.

[33 : 17] But Luke records there for us the fateful words, but Jesus made him no answer. King Herod is met by Jesus only with scorn here and with silence on the day he comes before him face to face.

because already for this man it's too late. The door of opportunity has closed. He willfully and persistently has resisted God's word and his challenging call to repent through the scriptures that he's had all his life, through the prophets who have come to him and been sent to him, through the evangelists come right before him.

And in doing so, he has willfully rejected God himself because he had rejected God totally in his heart. And so when Jesus later stands before him and wouldn't dance to his tune, it's no surprise that we read at Jesus' trial that he just gives vent to what his heart had always been saying right from the very beginning.

He joins in with his common soldiers and we're told he treated Jesus with contempt and mocked him. And on that day he and Pilate became friends.

He became friends with the man who could kill Jesus for him. All because for a very, very long time he had willfully rejected the real Jesus because he wouldn't stoop and humble himself and enter through the narrow door of penitent faith.

[34 : 56] That is the only door because he wouldn't find forgiveness. that even kings and great ones must find if ever there to have a place in the only kingdom that will ever last.

The only kingdom that counts. And sadly and tragically long before that fateful day when he met Jesus face to face the door had been closed for him.

The door had stood open and inviting but now it must be closed. And friends that is the tragic story isn't it of many a great man in this world.

First in his life in his career in his business in his profession in his reputation in his sport in everything else. Too big though too full of self to humble himself to enter to strive to enter such a narrow door.

No narrow religious extremism for me. One day they'll discover that there only was one door that mattered and that door is now shut forever from the inside.

[36 : 13] And even the master key of the kind of man whose money and wealth and power and position seems to unlock every door in life that they ever want to unlock. Even that master key that they have in their hand won't do anything in the one door that really matters.

It's a word of real solemnity that Jesus speaks here. We need to listen. It's also though a word about real sovereignty. Jesus is saying to Herod here you may be king but you don't rule me. I'll finish my course. Verse 23 he's saying I'll do it my way. I must go on my way and I choose how and where and why I give up my life.

I must go and perish at Jerusalem. He says must. We've seen it again and again haven't we? It's one of those words all the way through Luke's gospel and Acts. Again and again Jesus tells his followers that he sees his death coming.

That it is according to God's sovereign plan and purpose. Not only planned but published and prophesied in the scriptures right from the beginning. The son of man must suffer and be rejected by this generation.

[37 : 28] Chapter 17 verse 25 The scripture must be fulfilled in me. He was humbled with the transgressors. Chapter 22 verse 37 Everything written about me in the law and the prophets must be fulfilled again and again chapter 24 after his resurrection and many many other places too.

His was a mission sovereignly planned and executed. None of this is outside God's sovereign design and perfect plan. None even a king like Herod could possibly derail it.

None of it is second best. Not Christ's terrible death on the cross. However hard it is for us to understand how that must be and how could that be part of such a perfect plan of salvation that the Son of God should die.

But it's not second best. Nor is the exclusion from Christ's eternal kingdom those who reject the Savior.

However hard it is for us to understand how that could possibly be part of a perfect plan of a loving God which seems such an apparent tragedy to us.

[38 : 51] But it is God's plan. It may be a great shock to many on that day and great perplexity at their exclusion.

But Jesus is clear it will not be a surprise and a shock to God. That's something both Jesus and his apostles are absolutely at one about. Jesus is utterly plain in his teaching here.

We can't avoid it can we? Just as Paul is in Ephesians chapter 1 where he tells us about God's predestinating grace before the foundation of the world willing the adoption through Jesus Christ of his own to the praise of his glorious grace and his grace alone.

Just as Peter is equally plain in 1 Peter chapter 2 about those who stumble in Christ they stumble he says because they disobey as they were destined to do.

The wideness of the scope of the Savior's eternal glory is perfect. It is as God has sovereignly purposed in Christ that it must be there will be no surprises for God in his kingdom.

[40 : 08] He is the door and he is the doorkeeper. But that does not for one moment mean that his judgments on those who are excluded from the kingdom are in any way unjust or undeserved.

It's quite the reverse and that's why Jesus says here it must be Jerusalem where he would perish at the hands of those who for countless generations had been at the very center of God's gracious attention.

to whom verse 34 says he had sent prophets and saviors all throughout their history and yet they had willfully refused and rejected them all.

All the representatives of the sovereign majesty of God. God is utterly sovereign over his world and because he is sovereign when his sovereign command is rejected and resisted only terrible judgment and loss can possibly ensue and Jesus says that is loss that leads to everlasting pain and sorrow and that's what these last two verses speak of is it not words of real sorrow both the tragic sorrow of loss for those forsaken by God but also the very real sorrow in the heart of God himself for whom judgment is a strange work and not ever ever ever something he delights in Jesus speaks here of the heart of God and out of the heart of God of centuries of unrequited love as he showered his love and mercy upon his people how often would I he says how often he had sent prophets and saviors to them and yet they stoned them they killed them and in doing so spat in his face how often read through

Stephen's great speech in Acts chapter 7 and how he says to the people how God sent them Joseph to be a savior in Egypt and they rejected him and God sent them Moses to be a savior to bring them out of Egypt and they turned and scorned and rejected him and all through their history to David and Solomon and all the prophets always you resist the Holy Spirit of God himself says Stephen and then true to form they stone Stephen too so how can there be anything but judgment not just now exile to Babylon for a time for Israel but according to Jesus exile to outer darkness and destruction to weeping and gnashing of teeth for eternity behold your house verse 35 the temple that they idolized but rejected and hated the lord of the temple your house is forsaken there'll be devastation just as the prophets spoke of his quoting here the words of Jeremiah from chapter 12 and chapter 22 but this time far more devastating far more final and he pronounces what must surely now take place for this generation so utterly privileged yet which turns out to be the epitome of an evil

[43 : 45] God hating people when you come to Luke 19 verse 41 Jesus again says the same things this time weeping physically over Jerusalem and he foretells the total destruction of the city along with the temple just as it did happen a few decades later in AD 70 under the Romans and all because Jesus said you did not recognize the very one sent to bring you peace and now says Jesus these things are hidden from your eyes the door is closed because repeatedly they would not in the end Jesus says they could not they couldn't recognize and receive their salvation God withdraws his grace and mercy he shuts the door of escape he does it he shuts the door but Jesus is clear they have absolutely brought it upon themselves it's truly and certainly a self inflicted sorrow of eternal proportions friends we really need to understand this the Bible is absolutely clear

God is a sovereign God he and he alone calls into eternal life but it is equally clear there will be none in hell who didn't freely choose that destiny for themselves either by presumptuously neglecting or by purposefully rejecting the call of Jesus Christ the sovereign God is willing how often would I he has promised his holy spirit of life to everyone who will ask and seek and knock everyone but some says Jesus indeed many he says will not you you would not willful rejection whether it seems unconscious or indeed whether we are fully conscious of what we're doing and in the end if we persistently signal to

God that we want you out of our lives he will give us what we want and ask for because verse 35 you will not see me because you don't want to see me he'll only show himself to those who will

welcome him as God's wonderful savior and who will bless him as that as the one who comes in the name of the Lord to bring salvation whether it be individuals like Herod or indeed whether it be whole communities and nations and generations that generation says Jesus had closed the door and it paid a terrible price both in earthly judgment on the nation and for each one who rejected Christ eternal judgment will it be so for every generation of natural Israelites the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh Jewish people well according to

Jesus it certainly will until they welcome Jesus as the true Messiah and unless they do there can be no hope none at all Jesus says later on in Luke chapter 21 verse 14 Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled whatever that might mean some people believe that there will be one day a great turning of Jews to the Lord Jesus Christ a great day of salvation perhaps that may be so perhaps we must be careful mustn't we Paul says in Romans chapter 11 he says this even as his heart yearns for his fellow countrymen rejecting the gospel he says even they if they do not persist in their unbelief will be grafted in that is to God's true vine for God has the power to graft them in again so will multitudes of Jews all over the world be saved on mass one day Paul says God has the power surely we must say may it be so may it be so but it will only be and it can only be if multitudes respond to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and say blessed be Jesus Christ the Messiah sent from God to save us can't be any other way can it but you see that kind of question is really rather like the question that began our passage of verse 22 isn't it it's so easy to get sidetracked into speculation about these kind of things but Jesus always turns the spotlight once again not out there but in here to each one of us now today not the nation of

[49 : 22] Israel or the Jews of the world or anybody else in fact that is actually what Paul does also in Romans chapter 11 what he says in saying those things is this note the kindness and severity of God they the Jews were broken off because of their unbelief but you stand by faith so you who I'm talking to do not become proud but stand in awe for if God did not spare the natural branches neither will he spare you you see what he's saying we may have all kinds of questions speculative questions for Jesus about who will be saved and how many and when and where and how and Jews and Gentiles and all kinds of things but Jesus turns to every one of us this morning and says don't be asking the question will the saved be few be asking the question will the saved be you make sure that you strive to enter the narrow door before

Jesus Christ who is himself the exclusive door of entry a willing savior strive to enter before he must become the excluding door of the just and righteous judge who must eject you ultimately from everlasting life if you refuse to enter that door to his great sorrow and to your eternal sorrow and loss strive to enter through the narrow door for many I tell you will seek to enter and will not be able amen let's pray heavenly father may we heed these words of warning but take them for what they are words of wooing and willing grace and mercy calling us to be yours urging us to ask seek and knock and telling us that you are willing and you will give your holy spirit who brings eternal life in Jesus name to everyone who will enter through the door now so lord may that be so for everyone here this day to the praise of your glorious grace amen thank you my Wow thank you TO