

The 11th Sunday after Pentecost
“An advantage not to be taken lightly”
Luke 13:29-30
August 24, 2025
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 11th Sunday after Pentecost is from
Luke 13:29-30

“They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”

So far the text:

Jesus speaks of a great movement of people coming to the kingdom of God, coming to His kingdom of grace where He offers salvation to the sin burdened wearied soul. For there is a gate, a door to eternal life that stands open. It is inviting all to enter. It is the narrow gate for one cannot carry one's own hefty baggage of self-righteousness and entitlement by birth, race, or ancestry.

No, to enter the narrow gate, one must enter through the mercy of God, by Christ's righteousness alone. For Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. So Jesus plainly Himself as the door in John 10:7,9.

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep...I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

And again in John 1, we hear of the distinct advantage that the children of Israel had to know Jesus as the Door to eternal life.

“11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Jesus came to His own first! He walked among the children of Israel. He taught them. He performed miracles in their presence. Here in our Gospel reading from Luke 13, Jesus is following up, going through the cities that He had previously sent the 70 in chapter 10 to prepare His coming.

The door was open. Jesus was beckoning the people to repent of their sins and believe in Him as the Messiah. Now was the time of grace before the door is shut and does not open again. For if one is on the outside of the door on judgment day, pounding and crying out “Let us in!”, there is no amount of cajoling, persuasion, or money that will open the door again.

Instead, the Voice of Jesus will solemnly be heard **“I do not know you, where you are from.”**

What was a distinct advantage for the Jews was lost by their self-pride and haughtiness. **“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 you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’**

Near proximity to Jesus doesn’t count. Living in the same neighborhood of Immanuel Lutheran Church or another church that teaches Christ as the Way of Salvation in its truth purity, and administers His sacraments rightly doesn’t help. It’s not a game of horseshoes where getting close counts.

No, to go through the narrow door is to completely trust in Jesus, falling upon His mercy. That’s a ringer. Leapers don’t count. Leaning on the door frame of the narrow door means you’re still outside of God’s salvation.

So, when someone from the crowd asked the question, **“Lord, are there few who are saved?”** Jesus was quick to answer, **“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”**

Entering through Jesus, the narrow gate, isn’t a matter of idle curiosity. If someone is serious about one’s salvation, one doesn’t ask such a question. Jesus didn’t come to gratify man’s curiosity but to save souls.

We’ve been hearing in our epistle readings these past Sundays about the people in the Old Testament who took their faith seriously and followed Christ despite the hardships

that they endured. We've heard of people like Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Moses, his parents, Rahab and others. They ran the race, believing in He who was yet unseen, the Son of God, Jesus. And it was counted toward them as righteousness through faith in Jesus.

We heard last Sunday the opening verses of today's epistle reading from Hebrews 12.

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Jesus speaks to each of our souls this day and says, “You strive to enter the narrow gate.” You make the effort to run the race which is set before you. You run with endurance, laying aside sin through repentance and look to Jesus always for your forgiveness. For He is the author and finisher of your faith! He has put you in the race by calling you to faith in your baptism. He continues to offer you His good gifts of His Gospel of forgiveness in His Word and His very body and blood for your forgiveness in the Lord's Supper.

For Jesus ran the race that we failed to run. He never sinned but endured the cross for us. He didn't leave the race because of the shame, but loved us to the end. He rose from the dead to show He won the race of our salvation and is now seated at the right hand of God, ready to welcome you into eternal life on the last day.

Run then, with your eye fixed on Jesus alone. For He is your advantage, your only advantage to win the race.

In any competition, whether it be sporting or otherwise, the competitor looks for an advantage. I remember when football teams drank pickle juice before the game to give them an advantage in the heat. Some say it worked others don't believe it. Some athletes take banned drugs to give them an advantage over others.

In the race to gain AI supremacy, we hear of people trying to smuggle out technology and secrets to their home countries.

Paul reminds us that the most important race that we are in is our spiritual race. We race against the devil and all evil who would distract us or lead us away from the narrow door, Jesus!.

Paul says in Phillipians 2:

“12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Fear and trembling, not idle curiosity. This race is too important to take lightly. You’ve been given the advantage of knowing Jesus, now run with your eyes fixed upon Him, knowing that it is God who is working good will in you! Yes, God is the author and finisher of your salvation.

To make sure that you run with all effort and striving, God refines your faith with testing.

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

It’s to our spiritual advantage when the Lord disciplines us and tests us, for He does so out of love. He does not want us to ever leave the race.

“7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”

For when we are humbled and despair of our own self-righteousness and strength, then God gives to us His righteousness again and again.

“10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.”

He reminds us that when we are weak He is strong. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:

**“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”
Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ
may rest upon me.”**

Yes, God has given you the Good News of the Gospel that your sins have been pardoned. You the power of Christ, His redeeming love, rests upon you. And so our epistle reading concludes with the Good News about the mountain of your spiritual advantage.

For you have come not to the untouchable mountain of Sinai where animals were killed for touching it, but to

“Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

Yes, Jesus blood has washed your sins away. All of us Gentiles from the East, West, North and South, who have been reached last by the Good News of the Gospel have been graciously given to know Jesus as your Mediator of the new covenant.

Let us run then in the greatest of races through the narrow door, Jesus Christ, to your eternal life with Him and all the assembly in heaven made perfect by His death and resurrection. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)