

Some surprises as to who will inherit the Kingdom

In his Gospel, Luke tells us that “*Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem,*” (9:51). In today’s Gospel we are told that *Jesus was travelling through each of the cities and villages and teaching as He was making the journey to Jerusalem,* (Luke 13:22). Later in 17:11 we read that “*on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.*”

The border between those two provinces is a long way from Jerusalem. This journey to Jerusalem is hardly in a straight line; it is rather a spiritual pilgrimage interrupted by much teaching and several miracles. But there can be no doubt as to the ultimate goal. Jerusalem will finally be reached. This is the city where the salvation of the world will be accomplished.

A question about salvation often discussed by Jewish teachers was put to Jesus: “*Lord, are there only few who are saved?*”

Some of the rabbis taught that all Israelites would have a share in the world to come. Jesus answers the question in quite a different way

Several of the parables of Jesus compare salvation to a great feast, or banquet, given by a king. That is also the picture He uses here. Entrance into the banquet hall is by a door. The first thing Jesus says about that door is that it is narrow. A narrow door prevents great crowds of people from entering all at once. Entrance into the banquet is gained by going through the door one at a time. That narrow door is a symbol for Jesus Himself. One enters the banquet hall by way of Jesus. Jesus urges His hearers to “*Make every effort to enter through the narrow door!*” A

Greek word is used in the original text which suggests a contest or struggle to enter. The struggle is not against other people but rather against our own sinful flesh and the temptations of the devil.

Jesus has something else to say about that door. The time will come when the Owner of the house is going to close that door. There will be some who come knocking on the locked door demanding entry. But just knowing the owner of the house will not cause him to open. Jesus is obviously picturing Himself as the Owner since the people speak of His teaching in their streets. Just as the time will come when the unfruitful tree will be cut down (13:9), so also the time will come in each individual's life and in the history of the world when the entrance to salvation will be closed. The message is plain: don't delay but strive to enter now.

Finally, in today's Gospel, we have a description of the people sitting at the banquet tables. As is to be expected, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets are there. But then comes a surprise: many of Jesus' contemporaries will find themselves on the outside looking in. Weeping and gnashing of teeth will express their disappointment and shock. They will see that other people from all over the world will be sitting in their places at the banquet of salvation. Those who first had the opportunity to respond to Christ's preaching will find themselves left out; those at the very ends of the earth who heard the gospel message last will find themselves honoured with choice seating at the heavenly banquet.

Jesus does not really answer the question that He was asked. Rather, He is saying to all who will listen, "Just be sure that you are going to be saved."

