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# Knowing Jesus

## **The Exclusiveness of Christ**

**Luke 13:18-30**

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**3/10/2019**

**Main Idea: Entrance into the Kingdom of God comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ**

**Lesson Objective: We must choose to follow Jesus no matter the consequences.**

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## Introduction

*As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

During the '80s one television show captured the imagination of a generation. The program was appropriately dubbed, Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, because it showcased the lifestyles of conspicuous consumption enjoyed by the world's richest celebrities. Each week the host, Robin Leach, would lead his audience on a tour of the most palatial mansions imaginable, appointed with everything from rare art collections to gold-plated bathroom fixtures. Like most viewers, I found myself drawn to those champagne dreams and caviar wishes.

Unfortunately, only one half of one percent (.05) of the American population will ever join the exclusive club known as the super-rich. In a nation of bounty, this miniscule group enjoys extreme wealth and tremendous influence. Although only making up one half of one percent, the super-rich own a full fifty percent of the wealth! So great is their opulence that they tend to be set apart from the rest of us. They run in small, exclusive circles, and they live and play in places where most of us would never gain entrance.

Let's dream a little. What if all we had to do to gain access to this privileged lifestyle was to want it? That wouldn't be much of an obstacle for most of us, right? If desiring to be super-rich were the only criteria for becoming super-rich, wouldn't most of us gladly give up the worries of living with limited resources? Few would hesitate to accept the power and the prestige enjoyed by this elite class of people. Instead of being the exception, extreme wealth would instantly become the norm.

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Now, back to reality. Unfortunately, most of the factors that make it possible to become super-wealthy are beyond our control. These are people who were born to an elite family, or were blessed with some unusual talent, or happened on to just the right set of circumstances, etc. Even in America the desire to be super-rich fails 99.5% of the time! Certainly, a strong desire for this lifestyle might improve the odds slightly, but no one joins the class of the super-rich just because they wanted it for themselves.

Jesus Christ spoke of a far greater kingdom, and along with it, a far greater opportunity. In this kingdom the complications that prevent 99.5% of us from realizing all of our earthly dreams are of no concern. You don't have to be born in the right family to make it big. You don't have to graduate from the right school to be accepted. You don't have to strike oil to qualify. All you have to do is ask!

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## Powerful Potential

### Luke 13:18-21

*18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 19 It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."*

*20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."* [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#).

Luke told of how Jesus had healed a woman with a sickness on the Sabbath and the indignant response of the religious leaders. Jesus confronted their hypocrisy caring more for their animals than for a fellow Israelite. Upon hearing the rebuke, the crowds cheered, and then Jesus began to teach the people about the importance of the Kingdom of God.

One connection of the healing story to this parable can be seen through the very small, individual actions that Jesus was doing in the sight of many people. This action would cause a response in their hearts and draw them closer to Him. The healings were significant to the people receiving them, but it was not all that Jesus was doing. When Jesus came to this earth, He brought the kingdom near the people, where they could see it. But during His time on earth, it was so small that it was not obvious. It wasn't long before this almost invisible nucleus would expand into a grand kingdom that no one could miss—a kingdom that would eventually determine salvation or eternal punishment for the entire world. In fact, when we sit back and look at the miracles of His brief ministry on this earth in comparison to the work of the church since its inception, we would be amazed at how large Jesus' ministry has actually become.

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Another connection would be to emphasize that since God's kingdom had already come, the call to repent (13:3, 5) should be heeded, for both Jesus' hearers and his readers were living in the last period of God's grace (13:6–9). Although the present realization of the kingdom may appear insignificant (like a mustard seed or a little yeast), its power is already made manifest (13:10–13), and its consummation will be immeasurable.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus called the listeners to think of the size of the mustard seed compared to the mustard plant that can grow to a height of ten to fifteen feet. He used the past tense in order to contrast the insignificant mustard seed and its final product. The point was that the consummation of God's kingdom would be as different from its inception as a mature mustard plant was from its seed. Most first-century Jews expected the kingdom of God to make a grand entrance into world history. The great battle in which the Jews would defeat their enemies and the inauguration of the new empire under the rule of the Messiah would be events known throughout the world. Jesus' approach to kingdom building (giving sight to the blind, curing lepers, and preaching to poor people) was hardly noticeable outside of the villages he visited and the Jewish leadership which began to oppose him. From the perspective of the book of Acts, Luke demonstrated the fulfillment of Jesus' words. For even though the kingdom did not reach its final culmination, by Acts 28 it had reached Rome, the capital of the empire, and it has "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).<sup>2</sup>

The reference to birds could be an allusion to the Gentiles, but Luke's primary purpose in mentioning them was to emphasize the power inherent in

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<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Stein, [Luke](#), vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 375–376.

<sup>2</sup> Mark C. Black, [Luke](#), College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 1995), Lk 13:20–21.

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the seed. This power is implicit in the kingdom, as Jesus' healing of the woman has just demonstrated.<sup>3</sup>

Yeast, like the mustard seed, starts off very small. But, also like the seed, yeast grows. While the seed grows into a tree that benefits all those around it, the yeast infiltrates all of the surrounding dough. Three measures of flour would have been a large amount. This would be slightly more than a bushel. Jesus spoke of a woman who had worked the yeast until the mixture was literally leavened. The past tense again reveals that the point of the parable is not in the growth process of the sourdough, but the contrast between its small size at the beginning and its final condition. Just as yeast transforms the dough it is added to, so the power of Jesus transforms the lives of His followers.

**What everyday object would you use to describe the kingdom of God's influence today?**

**What evidence of the kingdom of God do you see in your life and in the world around you?**

**What does the contrast between the seed and tree teach us about the power of God's kingdom?**

**What does the imagery of the yeast teach us?**

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<sup>3</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, "[Luke](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 972.

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## Narrow Entrance

### Luke 13:22-25

*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.’ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)*

As Jesus was teaching the people on His way to Jerusalem, someone in the crowd asked, **“Lord, will those who are saved be few?”** Jesus’ reply emphasized not the “how many”, but the “who” could be saved. He pointed out that the answer could be found in the ones who seized their opportunity now. He went on to describe that once the time for decision had passed, the attempt to enter into salvation afterward would be impossible.<sup>4</sup>

There were a couple of wrong beliefs that were circulating in those days. One was a belief among some of the people that “all Israelites have a share in the world to come (*Sanhedrin* 10:1).” Jesus confronted this universal concept of salvation many times in His ministry. The other was a works based righteousness. We can see that by answering this person’s question, Jesus confronted both of those wrong beliefs. He affirmed that salvation required effort on the part of the individual, but not the type of effort the Israelites had assumed. The Pharisees proposed a wide door for the people who tried to carry out their tradition, while others believed that the door was opened for them

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<sup>4</sup> Liefeld, 973.

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simply because of who they were, Israelites. Little attention was given to the attitude of the heart, because the main focus was on their heritage and the rituals. Jesus countered this idea by stating that the door wasn't broad, but narrow.

The first two are connected by the concept of a "door," although the analogies are different. The first exhorts the hearer to enter through the narrow door which leads to the kingdom. The second changes the door imagery, pointing out that Jesus controls the door of the kingdom, and unless one commits to following him now, he will deny that person entrance. The emphasis is less on the individual seeking to enter and more on the Lord's control over who enters and the limited availability of the door. The time for enrollment is limited. The period of grace will irrevocably end, and the time of judgment will begin.<sup>5</sup>

The reason some are not able to enter does not have to do with who we are or whether we are good enough, but only by having the willingness to repent (Luke 13:3, 5). This was something that the religious leaders refused to do. The main point of the verse centers on the need to make sure one is part of the "few" who have through repentance and faith experienced God's mercy and grace. The only door to heaven is narrow. There is only one way, and that is through the cross of Jesus. He took the wrath of God against sin on Himself, in our place, and through belief in Him we gain salvation. Rather than rules and rituals, salvation involves surrendering your life to Jesus and striving to follow Him, whatever the sacrifice.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 378.

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Notice that Jesus did not speculate on the abstract question, which belongs in God's domain, but instead addressed the individual's responsibility. Jesus' wanted the people to concern themselves with their own areas of accountability, not God's. The question, however, does receive an implicit answer in the next verse.

**According to Jesus, who will make it through the narrow door and who won't?**

**If God loves people, why isn't the door wider?**

**What stands out to you about the homeowner's response to the people knocking (vv. 25-27)?**

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## Lost Opportunity

### Luke 13:26-30

*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!' 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."* [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

The homeowner's response was sobering for the people shut outside. They had professed to be his friends...people who had shared meals with him, but their actions showed otherwise. The homeowner disowned any relationship with them, and his words carried the assurance that there was to be no negotiation in the matter. Many people profess to be Christians, but their actions and attitudes deny any real relationship with Jesus Christ. For those people who never experienced genuine salvation and surrender, Jesus' words are not "I no longer know you," but "I do not know you." There was never a relationship to begin with. The tragedy is that a time of final judgment will come when entering into that relationship is no longer possible.

The mere fact of being physically in Jesus' presence or being acquainted with Him is not sufficient for entrance into God's kingdom, any more than membership and participation in church is sufficient today. One must repent and believe. For Luke's readers this served as a warning that partaking of baptism and the Lord's Supper did not guarantee entrance into God's kingdom (cf. 1 Cor

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10:1-5). The repetition of “I don’t know you” adds emphasis. The scene is the final judgment (25:41). **“Workers of evil”** is literally unrighteous. Compare Luke 16:8-9; 18:6; Acts 1:18; 8:23. **“Weeping and gnashing of teeth”** described the horrors of eternal punishment. They would see their religious heroes, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom, but would not be part of it. This was another call to repentance.

Another sad truth of the kingdom of God is that many Jews, though they were the original people of God’s covenant, will be excluded due to their unbelief, while many believing Gentiles will recline at the table in full fellowship because they have accepted God’s offer of reconciliation in Jesus (vv. 28-30). There will be much anguish (weeping and gnashing of teeth) among excluded Jews. The kingdom of God reverses many of the world’s values. In the present context, the inversion apparently refers to the fact that believing Gentiles, though they were historically not part of God’s covenant people, became the first to receive the Messiah en masse (see Rom. 4:16-25; Gal. 3:6-9). By contrast, the Jews were chronologically first in God’s plan, but they became spiritually last since so many of them rejected Christ.

The kingdom will not be shortchanged. People will come from all directions to the final kingdom banquet. This could relate to the scattered Diaspora of Jews, spread out over the world since the exile from Israel in 721 BC and in Judah in 587 BC. More likely, from Luke’s perspective this coming was a coming of Gentiles fulfilling the prophet’s oracles that God would save people coming from all directions. Those so secure in kingdom tradition would end up in utter darkness. Those so scorned by the keepers of tradition will parade into the kingdom as the religionists watch, helpless to stop them and helpless to find a kingdom place for themselves.

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Jesus used the proverbial saying “**the last will be first and some of the first will be last.**” This phrase was repeated several times in the Gospels (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31) to close out a main point. The safe and secure religion traditionalists 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. This automatically excluded all Gentiles who did not become Jewish proselytes. Jesus wanted those who thought they were at the head of the line entering the kingdom to know that they had another shocking thing coming. The Gentiles from across the sea would enter the kingdom before them.

**Why isn’t eating and drinking with Jesus enough?**

**What do you think Jesus means by “evil-doers?”**

**Why does love require you have an undivided commitment to Christ’s kingdom? How might you daily remind yourself that surrender to Jesus is the right road to take?**

**What evidence do you have that the kingdom is growing at Crossroads? Is there more you can do to help the growth? If so, what?**

**What would need to change in order for you to show a greater commitment to the spread of the gospel?**

**Do we complicate the decision to follow Jesus? In what way might we do that?**

**How do you know whether you are inside or outside the kingdom? How can you be sure**