

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time – C – 2019
Isa. 66.18-21///Hebrews 12.5-13///Luke 13.22-30

→there is a story told about a small plane which was carrying three passengers....a boy scout, a bishop and a brilliant politician.

→the pilot suddenly warned them of an impending crash and said, *“unfortunately we have only three parachutes.....I must take one so I can report the accident to the proper authorities.”* And with that he jumped out of the plane.

→*“I must have one parachute also,”* said the brilliant politician, *“because I have a great contribution to make for humankind.”* And with that, he took the second parachute and followed the pilot.

→the bishop turned to the boy scout and said, *“my son, I have lived a long life and your life lies ahead of you....you take the last parachute and good luck.”*

→to which the boy scout replied....*don't worry we still have two parachutes...that brilliant politician took my knapsack.”*

“Lord, will only a few people be saved?”

→we live in a day and age when polls are quiet common and I would suspect that if a poll had been taken when Jesus said these words about who and who are not saved....that many in the audience of Jesus would have agreed that they are among the saved...

→in fact, I think it safe to say that we too would fall into the group as well because we all hope that we are among the chosen...the saved...the redeemed...I know I hope that I am

→and believe it or not...I believe that is what God's want for us as well...

→and yet.....that seems like a contrary message from what we here in our readings today....

Because we hear in the second reading from Hebrews... *“do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him....”* and in the gospel reading Jesus is asked an interesting question ... *“Lord, will only a few be saved?”* to which he responds... *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.”*and later on for.... *“I do not know where you are from.”*

→[you know] sometimes people think that God gave us laws and rules to live by just to take the fun out of life....keep holy the Lord’s day, honor your parents, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness

→however....these rules...these laws hold us accountable...and God gave them not to make life miserable but rather to insure our eternal happiness forever

→....we all try to do a good job in life...learning how to live right and how to avoid things that are wrong....we all want to grow to be successful in this life...

→and so the question asked today by the stranger *“Lord, will only a few be saved?”* is an important one

→and it is interesting to wonder why he asked it.....

→some have explained the reason as being perhaps he had heard that heaven was a physically “small place” and he was worried about being left on the outside looking in...or maybe he heard that only a select few, if any would make it

→....regardless...I can’t help but think he asks that question

→because he was expecting a precise answer....something likea 10th of you,
or 50% of you, or all of you...

and so, [I'm sure] he had to be disappointed with the answer he got from Jesus
that the gate would be narrow.....

→[and]....maybe that wasn't even the right question to ask

→...perhaps he should have asked... “how do we get saved; or how do we get to
heaven?” rather than “will only a few be saved.”

PAUSE

→...Jesus answers by saying that salvation....requires an effort, a strenuous and
intensive effort---using the image that it will be like squeezing through a narrow door...
many will attempt it but few will be strong enough to get through

→and then Jesus goes on (as we hear) stating that there should be a sense
of urgency....seizing the moment and striving hard BECAUSE...as we hear in the second
part of the gospel reading..... **the door won't always remain open**

→i.o.w what Jesus means is that we should never get smug or complacent about
salvation, because we may be surprised at who gets in and who doesn't

PAUSE

“Lord will only a few people be saved?” is a question to which we are all seeking
an answer to

→and the answer....we always hope to hear from Jesus is... “not just a few ...but
all of us”

--we who go to mass every weekend and receive the sacraments...

--....who strive to live good lives and keep the commandments

--who do our best; get involved, serve others and share what we can... US! you and me.... we're the ones who are going to get in

→but that is not the answer we hear.....is it?

→the answer given...is that....salvation....getting into heaven.....does not come from a mere physical closeness to Jesus

→[that] it's not as simple as having membership in the church or coming to Mass or receiving communion

→[that] it's not a matter of what we do or how hard we work

→...and so "*Lord, will only a few people be saved*" is hard for us to understand...it's hard for us to grasp...because if this salvation is from God and given to us...

→then the challenge for us is to live, accept and embrace this gift and all that comes with it into our own lives....PAUSE

→[yet as we hear] not all roads lead to the banquet...not all roads lead to heaven....there is only one road...one path and it goes...through one narrow gate – and so the question remains.....how do we get through it

Well...we get through the narrow gate when we accept Christ and start to truly follow his will and his teachings.....as we leave this church today and every day in this coming week...

--we get through it when we truly follow him as we discipline our children and treat others in a way that we want to be treated

--we get through it when we decide how we will use our free time and spend our money,

--when we make decisions, when we pray...when we transact business in our offices, when we study in our classrooms

--when we go about every other activity that makes up our daily lives
→realizing....that everything we do, every word we utter, every thought we hold, every feeling we experience....should proclaim Jesus Christ and that **we are** following him through the narrow gate

PAUSE

→in the end...when you think about it.....the stakes our extraordinarily high....because how we live life here and nowwill determine what salvation will be for us

.....and I would hope....the last thing any one of us would want ///// is to have the door shut in our faces...or....even worse....to have God tell us [based on our life here on earth]... *“I don't know who you are and where you are from.”*