

# Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,  
day after day, and that the people of God  
were filled with joy!

**Friday - Please read Luke 13:22-30 – Be among the first!**

V29 Those who will be sent out of the presence of Jesus will not only experience the most horrific just and eternal punishment, they will observe something that will also haunt them. They will see people coming from the four corners of the world. Heaven will not just be a place for those descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - Jews, who have repented of their sin and believed in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. Heaven will be full of Gentiles, those numbered among the spiritual descendants of Abraham (Galatians 4:29), and aren't we thankful to God for that. Such a thought was unthinkable to the Jews. That they could be excluded, and that Gentiles, as many as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the heavens, would sit at the table in the Kingdom of God. I wonder who we will be shocked at seeing in heaven?

V30. And behold, some who are first will be last, and some who are last will be first. This is not about 'timing', that is, about when a person will enter into the Kingdom, but about their 'position' in heaven. There are those in the church who think of themselves, and may be considered by others, as eminently godly. They may well be, but there are countless numbers of apparently insignificant men and women, people who barely register on the scale of church activities, who love God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind, and give themselves to daily obedience of God. They are waging war against the enemy in prayer, they are practicing the true religion of caring for the widow and orphan (James 1:27). They are doing the will of the Father, in unseen, unattractive ways, doing tasks many in the church turn their noses up at. God says, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7).

I exhort you – strive, be intentional and deliberate, 'agonize' to fulfil your salvation in Christ by obeying your Heavenly Father. As you do so, you will both make your calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10), and you will grow in the assurance that, come the day, you will enter through the narrow door to life in the presence of Jesus for all eternity.

Q1. In what sense is the church a global entity? How do we find expression of that in the RP Church around the world?

Q2. What does Jesus mean when He talks about being 'first' and 'last'?

**Thursday - Please read Luke 13:22-30 - It's either Strive or Depart.**

V27. Jesus' words to those who think they should be in heaven, but will not be, are shocking in their specificity and concluding pronouncement. First, the pronouncement – "depart from me". It is emphatic. It is final. There is no way back; the door is closed, never to be reopened. The opportunity had been freely given; they had been pleaded with and implored to be reconciled to God in Christ. They had heard it so clearly, and yet they had not heard it at all. They had apparently received it so willingly; however, their hearts had been cold and completely resistant. In terms of appearance, they were fully on board, but their feet had not moved an inch from the path marked, 'submission to self and self alone'. They had never ceased being a worker of evil. For all their outward allegiance, their hearts only did what was evil all the time, even when they were in church 'playing' along. That is why the command to 'depart' is declared.

V28. Surely, this is sobering. The consequences of hearing the words "Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" is truly unimaginable. The words that follow merely add to the trauma – "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth". And note, they speak of what is real, and not of something that is merely pictorial. Hell is a real place where God's Holy presence is absent in the sense of bestowing good, but present in executing just and terrible punishment.

During his lifetime, Jesus spoke more about eternal punishment, of Hell and aspects about it, than he did about 'love'. This phrase alone is recorded six times in Matthew's gospel, as well as Luke's use of it here; Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30. Yet, despite Jesus' repeated use of this horrifyingly descriptive term, people refused to heed it. And it is exactly the same today. Jesus is proclaiming from the rooftops through those whom He has called and ordained to preach the good news, and yet the world says – 'you're a good man and a gifted teacher, we know, but sorry, we just don't understand what you are talking about here'. How incredibly blind the human heart is.

Q1. What will Jesus say to those who have not obeyed God?

Q2. Is this the only time Jesus gave this warning? Why did he say it so often?

**Monday – Please read Luke 13:18-21 - Unseen yet incredible power.**

While the “mustard seed” parable spoke to the Kingdom's massive global growth, this next parable about the “leaven” speaks of the Kingdom's incredible transforming power. Leaven doesn't normally have a good connotation in the Scriptures. Usually, it is used in an evil sense and is associated with that which corrupts, see Luke 12:1, 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, Galatians 5:9. In this instance, though, the leaven represents the good and gracious power of Christ's rule through his Kingdom.

The leaven was placed in the flour; it was hidden in it. There is no reference to any mixing. The leaven is just there, working away, unseen and quietly, without fuss. And what work it does. It's exciting to think that Jesus used the analogy of 'leaven' and how it works to describe the work of the Kingdom. We tend to think of the church as being almost invisible, unseen, and that her work is unimpressive and insignificant. 'What good are we doing? What are we really achieving?', can often be the perception. Yet, we know how the gospel, as it was proclaimed through the Roman empire, often through persecution, had an astonishing impact on the lives of tens of thousands of people. And see how that quiet, unseen, steady growth has continued unabated throughout the past 1800 years.

We need to hear these parables and take encouragement from them. Our daily communion with God, as individuals and families, is, by its very nature, quiet and unseen. Our public worship of God on the Lord's Day morning and evening is unassuming and simple. We come, we worship God using His Word, and we leave. Not much seems to change from week to week, but Christ is at work among us. The leaven is being hidden in our lives. And when the growth comes, as it will, it will come quietly, almost imperceptibly. We will see it in the coming months and years, in our own lives, in our children's lives and in the salvation of those whom Christ will bring to hear the good news of the gospel of peace. The seed is being sown, and it will reap a harvest to the Father's glory in His time and for His glory.

Q1. Is the illustration of leaven used in a good or bad sense here?

Q2. What must we remember as we pray for the growth of the church?

## Tuesday - Please read Luke 13:22-30 - Who will be saved?

As Jesus makes his way through villages and towns towards Jerusalem, he continues to teach at every opportunity, and it is on one of these occasions that he is asked a question about who will be in the Kingdom of God for eternity. This is probably the reason why Luke inserts it here, that is, after the two parables about the size and power of the Kingdom.

Jesus answers the general question by addressing it to the person asking it, as though it were put to him in a personal way, i.e., 'Lord, how can I be sure I will be saved?' And this is so important when dealing with matters of religion, for too often they are addressed in the general sense, and not to the heart. Preaching can be exegetically correct, it can say what is in the passage, and it can be doctrinally sound, but unless it places its finger on the heart, then it is not preaching the way Jesus preached. Jesus preached and taught to the heart, and for the preacher or teacher today to do anything less than that, is to fail. Why? Because the heart is where we gain understanding (Acts 2:37). The heart is the seat of our reasoning ability (Luke 5:22), where motives are framed (Hebrews 4:12) and faith established (Romans 10:8-10). It is the heart which God searches (1 Chronicles 28:9), looking to see if it is broken and contrite before Him (Psalm 51:17-19).

Jesus addresses this man's heart, and the hearts of those listening, when he challenges them to “strive” to enter through the narrow door. Strive means to exercise wholehearted action in the pursuit of that which is important. It is the word from which we get the term 'agony' and 'to agonize'. So, this seeking to enter through the narrow entrance to the Kingdom of God is not something we are to approach with a carelessness, 'as and when it suits' attitude. It is a matter of the utmost seriousness and takes ongoing intentional effort, something we are to experience agony in doing. Note, of course, there is nothing that even hints at works righteousness in this.

Q1. How does Jesus respond to the man's general question?

Q2. Why does Jesus personalise his response and speak to the heart?

## Wednesday - Please read Luke 13:22-30 – You must strive to enter today!

In response to the question of "Lord, will those who are saved be few?", Jesus focuses on the individual's need to 'strive' to enter the narrow door to eternal life. The fact that the door is narrow makes it clear that people will not be able to saunter up and stroll nonchalantly through it. The narrowness brings focus and concentration, and requires action now, today. What follows is sobering, very sobering, and should cause us to closely examine the desires of our heart.

A day is coming when the narrow door will close; it will not stay open indefinitely. The 'master' of the house will exercise his power to close the narrow door at a time of His choosing. The question is – 'does this refer to a closing off of the gospel to a specific individual, or to what will happen when Christ returns?' Both. There are the ongoing acts of individual closing, and there is one great final act of closing for all eternity. God is longsuffering and patient, but the free offer of the gospel today is not to be taken for granted; it is a gift from the Lord and must be received today. Once the door is closed, no amount of knocking on the door will see it reopen. No matter the intensity of the requesting, even in the name of Jesus and on the basis of a profession of faith, the door will remain closed.

This is clear. Those pictured as knocking use the term 'Lord', indicating that they saw themselves as being subject to Jesus as their Lord. These people are 'good' church-going people. But what is missing? Intentional obedience to the will of the Father in their lives. Yes, they had been present with Jesus. They had heard Him preach, teach, and witnessed Him heal, but had done nothing with what they had heard and seen beyond being interested and excited by it. When not in the presence of Jesus, they had continued living their lives for themselves. They may have thought about doing what Jesus was telling them, but it had never taken root in their hearts and therefore never worked its way out into their lives. A willingness to be with Jesus for a part of their day – 'certainly, not a problem', but when asked the question, 'are you willing to follow me with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?' Well, that is a different issue.

Q1. Why does Jesus use the term 'narrow' when talking about the door?

Q2. Will the door be re-opened for those who want to plead their case?