

ONLY A FEW **Luke 13:18-30**

Jesus' followers, observing that few are joining them, are becoming disappointed.

This isn't a movement to join to be one of the crowd.

They may have thought that signing up with Messiah would earn them acceptance by their friends—respect in the community.

It hasn't worked out that way.

Following Jesus isn't a movement to join to gain popularity
–to become rich and famous
–to get the girls to swarm around you on the beach

Following Jesus isn't the road to success by popular standards.

If you came to Jesus for acceptance and popularity, you came to the wrong place!

Ex. *My baptism*

The extent of Israel's rejection of Messiah raises the question: what will happen to God's kingdom program (13:18-35)?

FUTURE OF KINGDOM PROGRAM 13:18-35

The extent of the rejection would be discouraging to a faithful observer. It was *not an impressive beginning*—pretty small—

Their depression over rejection leads to

THREE CRUCIAL LESSONS ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM 13:18-30

Only a small number are going to receive Him—His followers need to be expecting that, so they won't be discouraged when they see it happening.

Jesus shows how a small start will grow into something huge and stable.

Also, they need to know all the resistance can't stop God's program.

First, A LESSON FROM THE MUSTARD SEED 13:18-19
God's kingdom is like the mustard seed.

1. It starts out as a very small seed.

2. It grows until it becomes large, a plant twelve feet tall in a summer

The hearers were familiar with the plant's rapid growth from a small start.

In the church, the growth occurred: 12 apostles/120 disciples => 3000 the first day => 5000 men => many => a great innumerable multitude --and on it grows. (U.S. Center for World Mission chart).

3. It becomes a shelter for others

Birds find shelter in the branches of a tree--a common figure to refer to a mighty empire under whose protection other nations found support (Ezek. 31:6; 17:23).

The kingdom of God will grow into a vast empire in which all kinds of people and nations will come together and find the shelter and protection of God.

Second, A LESSON FROM THE YEAST 13:20-21

God's kingdom is like leaven in a large mass of bread dough.

Two views:

a. It might refer to evil

Some scholars believe leaven always represents evil in Scripture.

This parable would be similar to that of the wheat and the tares, demonstrating that the church would grow and be permeated with false seed.

Supported by other Scriptures, but may not be the case here.

This view would relate the two parables => the kingdom grows like the mustard seed, until it becomes large enough to shelter the birds who proceed to corrupt it.

Historically valid--authenticated in Rome and other places (Guatemala)

b. It might refer to an agent of growth --Leaven permeates a mass and causes growth, positive or negative.

In this case it seems to be **positive**, in further answer to the question on their mind: whether only a few will be saved.

1. **It starts small and hidden**—small in comparison to the mass of dough.
2. **It (~~becomes~~) permeates everything** —hidden in a mass of dough

It isn't very impressive or big, but it permeates everything and transforms the entire mass by its presence.

Barclay: "Seneca the great Roman thinker: 'We strangle a mad dog; we slaughter a fierce ox; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown.' In A.D. 60 that was the normal thing. Things like that cannot happen today because slowly, but inevitably, the kingdom is on the way."

Is Barclay right? Is this valid logic? Do we expect too much by expecting Christian influence to permeate the U.S. today? Is this the "post-Christian" era? What does it mean for us and our country?

CONCLUSION: Jesus uses the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast to demonstrate that though the kingdom does not have a large beginning, it will grow from a small potent nucleus into something great. ∴, don't give up!

Now the question is repeated (verbalized this time)

Some of Jesus' followers have begun to notice that He is not exactly taking the country by storm—not an overwhelmingly popular movement. *Is this show ever to get going? Or, are only a few insignificant people going to get on board?*

Third, A LESSON FROM THE NARROW DOOR (GATE)
13:22-30

13:22-27

The illustration of the narrow door indicates:

1. **Though many want the benefits of the kingdom,**
2. **Few want to enter through the door God has provided them.**

Because of the rejection, few will enter His kingdom, but it will grow from them.

Some are clearly left on the outside looking in. Some are locked out!

"You aren't going to be that narrow, are you?!!!" That's just the point.

The way Jesus presents is *the narrow way*. In fact, it's the only way!

We are to be like the man in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* who, when he heard of the impending judgment of the city and learned that life was to be found only by entering through the wicket gate, plugged his ears so as not to hear his townspeople calling him and ran crying, "Life! Life! Eternal Life!"

Why are they left out?

1. It's NOT because they don't have enough good works

This isn't a message about **works for salvation**. Christ isn't saying to work harder in order to earn your way into God's presence.

They need to decide that they *want* to go through the narrow gate.

They wanted to go the way everyone else is going—go with the crowd.

The crowd is not going God's way. Most couldn't care less about attending a banquet at God's place!

Cf. Luk. 14:16-18 (Matt. 22:3 says, "They were *unwilling* to come!")

There is nothing "easy" about faith. "Easy believism" is a myth. It's the hardest thing in the world to admit that we're lost.

Ex.—men trying to find their way around a strange town. Admit we're lost? NOT US!

To confess our guilt, our lostness, our inability to do it, and to depend on Jesus, that's not an "easy" option. The crowd calls it foolishness.

2. It's NOT because they've tried and can't make it

The tenses used say to strive **NOW (pres.)**—NOW is the time—because many **WILL (fut.)** seek to enter but won't be able to.

The reason they won't be able to is stated in 13:25—**it's too late**.

They weren't interested in entering when the invitation was open!

BUT,

3. It IS because they weren't interested in entering

Many will eventually seek it—but it will be *too late*! **13:25**
Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, *it's too late*.

You have to come to Jesus while the door is still open.

It's open now and we can enter by trusting His Son.

The choice is still ours.
But the day will come when *it's too late*.

4. **It IS because they don't think they need Him**

-they think they have it made.

13:26

They considered themselves God's people—the chosen ones. God was in their midst, wasn't He? They had a special relationship with Him. They were in the right places at the right time. Jesus says *that's not enough*.

They were going through the motions. They were being nice to Him socially. *But weren't willing to trust Him and make a commitment to Him.*

They were saying: We go to church. We sing the hymns. We attend all the fellowship suppers. We listen to your Word. But *they weren't trusting Him*. They still rejected His offer.

Religious ritual won't cut it with God. It's not enough. They have to receive His Son—enter the door He provided, while it's still open.

A PERSONAL WARNING: Jesus personalizes the response.
It is the narrow door, and not many will enter it.

BUT, they need to be sure THEY do enter. Go against the flow if necessary, but be sure you're on the inside.

Take advantage of the opportunity before God closes the door.

God is patient to wait for them. *But He won't wait forever*. The day comes when He closes the door, and then it's too late.

Immediate application for the Jewish people:

13:28

"Pagans" would take their place (Matt. 21:43).

The weeping and gnashing of teeth is not the result of the pain of hell. It is the common form of lament of the Jewish people.

Weeping => Grief

Gnashing => Rage

They will lament and be angry because the pagans are on the inside, while they are left out—overwhelmed with regret because they have foolishly delayed and now it is too late to get in. **"LOOK! . . ."**

13:29-30

When that day arrives, those who considered themselves first, will be last. People will come from everywhere to enjoy God's blessings. Gentiles are inside.

God had invited the Jews first. They would be last because they refused the invitation. Those at the end of the line were invited to come up front and take the place of those who had refused to enter.

Paul said that the Gospel was for the Jew first, then for the Greek. He calls Israel, the first piece, the root.

We were the rebellious, the disobedient, the far off.
BUT we have been allowed in first.

Now when they want to come on their terms, it's too late!

They can't believe it! The Gentiles are on the inside, and they're on the outside.

What's the answer? Strive to enter the narrow gate. **NOW!** while it's still open.

The root is the our word "agonize"—make a serious effort—be sure you get in.

The direct application deals with Israel; the universal principle of God's dealing with all humanity is still true—

God's way is narrow.
Most don't care to go that way.

By the time they decide that they want in, it will be too late.

Don't delay. —Come to Jesus **NOW!**

Spanish composer Manuel de Falla is the stereotypical example of the "mañana" syndrome, he was notorious for not answering his mail. When he heard that a friend had died, the composer responded, "What a pity! He died before I could answer his letter." The letter had been sent five years earlier. That's the way some of us have responded to God's invitation. "He can wait. I'll answer Him eventually. But it may be that WE will die before we have a chance to respond to His invitation.