

If I Were You

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[0 : 0 0] I was turned to Luke chapter 13, Luke chapter 13, that song they just sang I've listened to coming up the road at least on Sunday morning, coming up 183 every Sunday morning probably that I've been here because what I do with you on Sunday morning I hope will glorify God because he's worthy of it all, most appropriate song and I thoroughly enjoy that and I say that for a couple of reasons, one is Lord willing next Sunday I ain't coming up 183 to get to you I'm coming about two blocks because I'm in debt again, we bought a house so and we are thankful moving trucks coming Wednesday, you can get our sticks as my parents called it, they were in the military for 20 years and getting settled so thankful to be a resident here now, thank God some exciting things happening in our church and I'm excited about this day but also some things that are coming up and in the coming days I'm going to invite our men to join me on a weekday morning for some prayer and share time where we read a common book together book that I like reading, chapter a week, that kind of thing and then talk about that book, talk a little bit about life and pray together and spend some time together

I try to do that, try to offer it for a couple of times, one early in the morning where those who are tied to schedule can make it to that and then one later in the morning, those who are blessed to not be tied to schedule don't like getting up early no more so, you know, anyway the details are coming to that but let me get here first and get settled but possibly the first book that we read is a book by a man named, a pastor named Dean in Syria the book is called The Unserved Christian and in that book, Dean speaks of people that think they're Christians hang out sometimes with Christians people who are culturally thought to be Christians there's just one problem they've never surrendered their lives to the Lord and as scripture would put it, they're lost now don't misunderstand me many times they fraternize with the church they play the part the reality is personally they just don't know Jesus and Jesus speaks of the same manner in a parable that we look at today he compares death to a door and I want you to hear what he says this morning

Luke chapter 13 verse 22 said he went on his way through towns and villages teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem and someone said to him Lord will those who are saved be few?

and he said to them strive to enter through the narrow door for many I tell you will seek to enter and will not be able 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'll answer to you I don't know where you come from then you will begin to say we ate and drank in your presence and taught in our streets but he will say I tell you I do not know where you come from depart from me all you workers of evil 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 and people will come from east and west from north and south and recline at table in the kingdom of God and behold some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last let's pray together

Lord Jesus the the definitive word that I just read is stark it's difficult to talk about and it's real and as Jesus spoke it with urgency I know this morning that I'll speak it with urgency God I pray that your sweet spirit will land it in the hearts and minds that need to hear it in the way that they need to hear it and help us all be strengthened by it in Jesus precious name Amen things are not how you think they are those that seem first for the Lord may not always be first for the Lord they talk a good game they may have even convinced themselves but only by ignoring the clear direction of scripture it is my fear but it's also my belief belief that there may be people right here among us even in this room even watching online that will not go to heaven when they die the door will be shut and they will be left behind people from all over the place places that you don't expect will come in but the majority of the world that we live in are lost and will and will spend eternity apart from God and that does not have to be and so today

[6 : 14] I want us to think about our own situation I want you to think about your own heart and your own life and I want you to think about your family and I want you to think about your neighbors and I want you to think about your world and with that in mind I want to give three pieces of advice this morning the first one is this go where few fear to tread because God's way is seldom the popular way that is not new in our culture that has always been the case it may feel new it may be worse than it used to be but the reality is it's always been the narrow way the less traveled way it's not the popular way it is unpopular today to admit our own frailties and sins and that there are responsibility what's popular is to blame somebody else when in reality we all have frailties we all are sinners and it's not popular to ask an almighty God to intervene but the reality is that's the only hope that we have is to do that it's not popular to live for the Lord with great zeal instead of being half-hearted it's popular to do a lot of other things with a lot of zeal a lot of you are like me you were cheering on your football teams yesterday with zeal you know

I'd like to meet that ref that called that targeting on that Alabama quarterback because I am sick of Alabama I hope I didn't distance anybody but anyway if I did so be it but anyway I responded with great zeal people fish they got great zeal about that they're not going to let anything come in the way of that people shop and they got great zeal about it they're not going to let anything come in the way of that you know well we do a lot of things with great zeal but it is not popular and those things are popular but it's not popular to live for the Lord with great zeal it's a whole lot easier to be half-hearted about this thing you know I mean preacher I have blocked off an hour or two on Sunday for the Lord what else do I need to do that's popular what's unpopular is to live for him daily it's unpopular to live in our world and live a life of purity instead of being seduced by the world's influence

I want to be clear this morning and I ain't throwing stones I'm just telling the truth God still stands for marital monogamous heterosexual purity period that has not changed the society in which we live has shifted and changed and will continue to and that may be popular but the truth of God's word is still just as true as the day it was penned it is the timeless truths of God's word and I promise you that when society seems to be so much different than God's word it was when it was penned if you don't believe that study the Roman Empire study the atmosphere in which the Apostle Paul wrote study the atmosphere in which Jesus spoke what he did the reality is the very things that are popular today were just as popular then how they took something that was sedacious and sinful and made it as if it was elite much like we deal with in our society today it is unpopular to say that some will be angry with me about that because of decisions their families made because of ailments that they've been through but I'm going to tell you something folks whether we like it or not whether we agree with it or not it's truth and it's unpopular to say that it's unpopular to try to influence your world with the gospel instead of silently putting along not concerned about the state of the heart of others but Jesus impels us time and time again to reach out to speak to others to make sure that we live out our faith to be a fragrance of the gospel of Jesus Christ all those things are unpopular but they are godly and they are right and they are blessed and Jesus calls those the narrow way or the narrow gate

I want you to listen to how he put it in the greatest sermons that's ever been preached it's in Matthew 7 verse 13 to 14 and he said enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter it are many for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few we face a fork in the road of life my friend and we have to do something about that fork that fork Yogi Berra put it this way he said when you come to a fork in the road take it well it's not that easy Yogi because there's more than one fork in life's road spiritually there's a huge fork what are you going to do with Jesus you have to do something with it and when you delay your decision to follow Christ when you feel the spirit of God nagging at your heart when you feel conviction in your heart and your need to respond to Christ and you refuse to do that because you don't want to make a decision like that delaying such a decision is making a decision and that decision is no how many times have you been on a car lot and said just let me ponder it and then left and never came back

I called a buddy who sells cars for a living and I said what's the percentage because I I went through a sinful spell in my life of selling cars and I'm kidding I'm kidding I was I was transferring from junior college at Greenville Tech to Gardner Webb was going from a quarter system to a semester system I had an extra long summer and they were hiring and so I hey \$200 draw in a car living at home man that's that's money I was rich you know anyway I didn't last long but I know we study the strategies of it and so I asked him I said what's the chances when somebody walks off your lot that they're going to come back he said if they walk off the lot there's only a 25% chance that a customer returning that will return if they walk off the first time only a 25% chance they don't want you to walk off but how many times have you said let me ponder on it and took their card and never bothered again it is my burden that week after week folks sit in this place or watch online and they say you know that's something to think about

[13 : 47] I think I'm going to ponder on that and then we walk outside and walk through that beautiful portico and forget it at the meal and never readdress it again in our lives never deal with it and I want you to know that's not putting off a decision you made a decision and that decision was no if you're prompted in your gut to give your life to Christ do it do not wait because you're at a fork and you have to make a decision at that fork what you're going to do you may not realize that you headed the wrong way I heard about a guy who was driving down the interstate and his cell phone rang and he answered and his wife said honey be careful out there I was watching there's somebody on the interstate going the wrong way he said oh baby it's worse than that they all going the wrong way look sometimes people go the wrong way and they don't even realize they're going the wrong way for the slow ones he was the one that was going the wrong way you live life upside down

I heard it described as a funnel that if you that if you live your life with the wide end of the funnel up and all the stuff in your life you start wide and you try to take in all the world that all that stuff narrows down into one result and that is a life of disaster and a life of difficulty but if you turn that funnel upside down and you narrow it in on Christ and Christ alone you open yourself up to a life of eternity and of opportunity and few fear to do it so my first piece of advice is go where few fear to tread the second one is this be quick about it be quick about it I don't want you to read me wrong when Jesus says many will seek to enter and will not be able he's not talking about rejecting those that surrender their life to Christ

Christ don't do such as that he don't reject folks that surrender their life to Christ scripture is clear in Romans 10:13 for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be safe you don't have to wonder today if God will accept you today regardless of the wrong that you've done regardless of who may know about it or who may not know about it you don't need to clean up your areas of your life to come to Christ matter of fact you can't clean up the areas of your life to come to Christ you need to come to Christ the way you are you'll never be successful doing it on your own and when you acknowledge that you'll never be successful in doing it on your own you surrender your life to follow Christ and come as you are and thank God by the power of the Holy Spirit he'll clean you up he'll give you a Holy Spirit to empower you to rise above your habits and vices and he has surrounded you with a bunch of other sinners who struggle with the same type sins we're not going to talk about it we're not going to advertise it but the reality is folks there ain't much difference between any of us and God has put us together to help one another along to come alongside and encourage one another not look down on other folks because they got caught and we didn't but instead to encourage and surround them and love them as they grow in the

Lord you'll never be successful on your own and that's why he gives you the Holy Spirit of God to give you the power to do it that's why he gives you the church of Jesus Christ to stand with you to do it that's the promise of the work of the Spirit and the lives of all who call upon the name of the Lord and so I'm telling you do not put it off and that's what Jesus is saying here that's not just a preacher ploy that's what Jesus is saying here Jesus said once the door of opportunity is shut it's shut that could be in your death and you can't predict that and if you wait for either one be clear it's too late it's too late Jesus in case you delineate the difference between the red words of Jesus and the other words of scripture

I believe they're all inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and perfect and without failure okay so I want to be clear about that but I know some people like to just talk about what Jesus said so I'll tell you what Jesus said Jesus said there's a lot of regret in hell that's what Jesus said but it is forever too late forever I want you to listen to how Jesus describes it in Luke chapter 16 just listen to me we're not going to read it this morning but he describes a man that had great riches that did not see a need for a personal relationship with Christ and he is now in agony in hell and he's speaking of a spiritual torment there and he's speaking of physical torment there and he makes two requests in the clearest glimpse into hell that Christ ever gave us the first request he said is could someone dip their finger in water and cool my tongue and number two can somebody go warn those who are living my brothers can you tell them lest they also come into this place of torment if those in hell could talk and scripture says if people will not listen to the word of God they will not listen to the tormented in hell that's what

[20:16] Jesus said so why wait because the door of opportunity is closing I'm not going to close it it's going to close in one of three ways it's going to close in your death it's going to close in the Lord's return or it's going to close in the Lord's deadline there's a door Jesus speaks of it that can be shut spiritually before one dies and the Bible is clear that we only come to God because the spirit draws us it's not of our own inclination that you know you need the Lord that's not scripture is clear that we are dead in our transgressions and sins we don't come up with that on our own he initiates that and there comes a point and I don't understand it but I'm telling you scripture teaches it there comes a point when that initiation is no more that might be at death that might be at his return it might be before that I don't understand that I don't know that but

I'm telling you God knocks and we're to respond Jesus said in John 6 verse 44 no one can come to me unless the father who sends me draws him but you don't have to wonder because I got news for you today that's why I'm standing here if you want to be saved today you can be because God gave you that idea if you're considering it God put it in your heart and he will save you today God's got a deadline and the opportunity is open to everyone at least once but there comes a time when the spirit conviction does not come hardness comes in Proverbs warns us in Proverbs 29 1 he said he who is often rebuked and hardens his neck will suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy there comes a time when the message is not heard there comes a time when the knock does not come and if God is speaking to your heart respond because the door may never be opened again

I want to be clear folks I'm not going to shut it but what happens is somebody gets under conviction and they fail the need to respond but they're concerned about the folks around them they're concerned about what somebody's going to say they're concerned about what somebody's going to think and they let the moment pass and they walk out this building and they never bother with it again if you don't know Jesus your spiritual house is on fire do not be consumed do not go to sleep respond and be quick about it and the third thing is this be sure of it be sure of it you need to know that you're saved John wrote more about the need and the urgency and the exclusivity of salvation through Christ than anyone else and I want you to listen to the end of the gospel of John he wrote in John 20 verse 30 30 and 31 now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name at the end of 1st John because the same

John wrote the big John the gospel of John and the three little Johns okay and at the end of 1st John 5 verse 13 it says I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son that you may know that you may know that you have eternal life he wrote it that we would know Jesus personally and be assured that we knew him personally so don't you dare go through life wondering if it's real or not there's no need for that people have doubts it's common to have doubts what causes doubts let me give you three things that cause doubts and I'll close one is a lack of trust sometimes we doubt because we just don't trust we can't see the God we can't see God move as we want to and that leads us to doubt and there's two problems with that one is we are to live by faith and not by sight and I'm telling you got those curveballs you're not always going to see it coming you're not and if you're trying to figure it out and you're not satisfied with what you're seeing

I got news for you you're not in charge he is and so we live by faith and we trust him and if you live by what you see you're not living by faith in the Lord failing to live by faith will lead one to doubt all kinds of things including one's salvation so don't come to the end of your dilemma and wish you had trusted God put all your eggs in one basket it's safe here put all your eggs in one basket and trust the Lord because he will not fail you and he will bless you because he blesses such as that we live by faith and not sight the other reason that we have a lack of lack of trust is because your salvation is not based upon you it's based upon the grace of God so when you look at your life and think how in the world how in the world could I be saved I'll tell you how you could be saved the same way I got saved by his grace that's the only hope we have is by the grace of God it's unseen but it is sure doubt comes from a lack of trust in God

[26 : 11] I'll tell you something else that causes doubts sin causes doubts your sin alienates you from God and it'll cause you to feel lost and away from God and alone I'll tell you what that is if you've ever surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ a minute with all your heart giving him your life the conviction of the Holy Spirit of God will help you see your sin and then the devil will try to get in there and twist it and try to convince you that you're lost don't ever let sin reign in your life it causes all kinds of misery not only for you but for those around you don't ever let sin reign in your life because when you give your heart and life to God your first step of obedience is baptism and if you haven't done that or it's out of order meaning you got baptized and later you got saved and have not been baptized since I'm just telling you there's not a magic potion around it it's a point of obedience is what it is for some reason

Jesus got baptized and he had never sinned then he'd get saved but he got baptized and then his last words to us was going to all the world and teach and baptize Baptists didn't put the emphasis on it Jesus put the emphasis on it and so if you privately give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ but never publicly acknowledge that through the way in which Christ instructed us to and also showed us how to do it then I promise you that's going to be a stumbling block in your life if you refuse to do that it's going to be a stumbling block that causes you to stumble straight out of the gate but it's not just that there'll be doubt coming in your life for unconfessed sins I mean there's our favorite sins that we harbor and we hold on to real tight we don't want anybody to know about them we don't want anybody messing with them they're just our little sins and they strain sometimes they strain a lot of times they strain on relationships with other people too but they definitely strain on your relationship with God it separates you from God it strains your relationship with God and so that kind of sin hanging around will mess you up repent and doubt no more confess and turn from your sin but sin will cause you to doubt the last thing that will cause you to doubt

I want you to hear me this morning I'll tell you what will cause you to doubt lostness if you're lost you'll doubt and you should not knowing the Lord as your personal Lord and Savior will make you feel like you don't know the Lord as your personal Lord and Savior and you know what that is that didn't come from you that's the conviction of the Holy Spirit of God and the only way to make that doubt go away is to give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ to go where few fear to tread do it quickly if I were you I'd do it now with every head bowed and every eye closed I want you to be clear today that I'm not a manipulator

I'm not trying to conjure you into anything and we're not going to lead you without leading you we'll be thorough with you in the decision you make for Christ but as Jesus implored those with him to be serious about this thing and to make a decision about it he tells me to do the same if you're here this morning and you don't know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior the invitation's open not only from us but from him more importantly he'll save you we'll stand and sing in just a moment more important than singing or standing is for you to come and say preacher I need to give my heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ I need to be changed by him and I think today that I can stand here every day and tell you today's day of salvation Jesus is the same yesterday today and forever he will save you today if you'll come to him maybe you're here and you know you're a Christian but you've never acknowledged that publicly through baptism that's never happened maybe you're floating out there you're not affiliated with the church you're not affiliated with the body of believers and you're struggling and God's leading you to be a part of this church

God's leading you to publicly acknowledge that through baptism we're happy to guide you in that process maybe you're here and you are a Christian and you have done those things but the reality is as you hear this today God's laid somebody on your heart he's laid somebody that needs to know Jesus upon your heart and you're burdened for that person and you need to bring them to this altar you need to pray for them you need to ask God to open opportunities for you to share with them maybe there's stuff that you're harboring in your life sin that you're harboring in your life it's causing doubt it's causing difficulty it's causing rough relationships it's causing all kinds of problems and the reality is you need a touch you need to repent you need to change I have no idea what God's told you I just know what he told me to do and you'll never be satisfied if you don't trust him and follow his lead as he leads you and this is a golden opportunity so you respond as God leads you to

[32 : 07] Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for your love for us and I ask right now dear God that we will not do less than you tell us to do and we will not do more than you tell us to do but God will be obedient and follow you Lord if there's anyone here who does not know you personally as their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ I pray today will be the day of salvation right now oh God I pray in Jesus name amen stay