

SEIZE THE DAY! - LUKE 13:22-30

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ August 30, 2015

²² Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, ²⁴ “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ ²⁶ “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷ “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’ ²⁸ “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

A popular musical on Broadway today goes by the name *Newsies*. The musical comes from the movie by the same name which came out in 1992, with the original storyline being taken from the real-life newsboys’ strike in New York City in 1899. The plot is simple, the newsboys take their plight to the owners of the Newspapers over an increase in the price of papers. But how could such a rag-tag bunch of boys stand against the most powerful men in New York City? By seizing their opportunity to tell the world about their story. And one of the hit songs in the musical goes by the name “Seize the day!”

But SEIZE THE DAY is not unique to the *Newsies* musical. It has been used since ancient times to describe taking advantage of the day we have before us, because we don’t know what tomorrow will bring. It was the Roman poet, Horace who coined the well-known phrase *Carpe Diem*, which means, “SEIZE THE DAY!” While this has been and can be used for any and all purposes, we can also look at this phrase, SEIZE THE DAY, in a Christian manner as well.

In fact, this is essentially what Jesus was calling on his disciples to do as we look at our gospel this morning. A man had asked Jesus if only a few people were going to be saved, and his response was, “**Make every effort to enter through the narrow door.**” He might as well been saying, “SEIZE THE DAY.” Take advantage of the opportunity you have before you today, not tomorrow, to be assured of your salvation. SEIZE THE DAY!

1. For the way is narrow
2. For the time is short

Last week we heard the warning that God's Word can and does cause divisions - between households and friends. This week, Jesus has another warning for us. The warning that the way to heaven is narrow, and the time to get there is short, this gives us all the reason we need to SEIZE THE DAY.

We hear this warning from Jesus as he was traveling about in the towns and villages preaching God's Word to people. There was no town too large, no village too small for him to go to. But on the way, someone asked him a pertinent question. "**Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?**" What brought this question up specifically we don't know. But it was valid enough that Jesus gave a response to it. And because it is recorded in Holy Scripture, it's a question we should pay attention to as well.

Jesus' answer begins like this, "**Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.**" "**Make every effort.**" Just like an athlete will do everything (within the rules) to succeed on the field, court or diamond, so we are to make every effort to enter through the narrow door. This doesn't mean we try once and call it good, it's a constant effort we are putting forth, a constant striving to succeed.

Now maybe you're saying, "I thought Jesus made every effort so that we don't have to. Why does Luke write here that we need to make every effort?" These are not contradictory statements, but complementary. Yes, Jesus has made every effort for us so that heaven is ours. But that doesn't mean the devil will just give up on us. He is going to do everything he can to tear us away from God's hand, he will use every means possible to divert you away from that narrow door. And if you're not on guard against that, he will succeed. That's why Luke writes, "**Make every effort,**" as you fight against the devil's temptations.

We are to SEIZE THE DAY, for the way is narrow. I think we all understand what it means for something to be narrow. Maybe you're hiking somewhere in the hills around Tucson and you come across a rock outcrop that you decide to climb up. You find that at a particular point, the way is narrow. You have to drop all your gear and squeeze through that narrow opening. In sports terms, it like Anu Solomon, the QB for the U of A football team, threading a pass to a receiver through a narrow window. When something is narrow, it is challenging to get through. And the same is true for the door to eternal life.

What makes the door to eternal life difficult to get through? It's not all the work we have to put into getting through, but all of the stuff we need to leave behind. Yes, many, if not all of us realize that Jesus is the only way, to get to heaven. But do we fully realize what that means? And if we do, do we fully accept it and live our lives accordingly?

A person who is confident in who he is and what he is done is not able to fit through this narrow door. A person who is carrying a bag of unconfessed sins counting on God being a loving God and will take me bag and all, will not fit through this narrow door. A

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person who grew up hearing God's Word but never took it to heart, never took it seriously will not fit through this narrow door. Do any of those people describe you?

I think we all have at times taken confidence in who we are - this is true every time we think we deserve to get to heaven more than someone else. I think we all at times have carried our unconfessed sins - this is true every time we call our sin a small mistake or a bad habit. I think we have all been guilty of not taking God's Word seriously all the time, because we keep falling back into those same bad sinful habits. And that makes us no better than those who are striving but never entering the narrow door.

These habits are no better than the people who look to please God with their puny actions, they're no better than people who don't see the need to say sorry for what they've done, they're no better than people who have never heard or care to hear God's Word. Greek mythology tells us the story of Sisyphus, a man who was condemned to push a boulder up a hill, only every time he neared the top, the boulder would roll back to the bottom, and all his effort was wasted. This is the reality for everyone who strives for eternal life outside of Christ. They think they are making progress, when suddenly, all their effort is wasted. We can only hope they find out their efforts are wasted before it's too late.



This is why it is vitally important to **SEIZE THE DAY**, for the way is narrow. And the only way we are going to fit through that narrow door, the only thing that separates us from those who like Sisyphus waste their effort, is by letting God's holy law make you small compared to the mountain of guilt you've accumulated before him. Then, trusting in the forgiveness of Christ you can pass through that narrow way. The only way we will fit through that door is to let go of the bag of unconfessed sins and stop arguing with God on what God's Word really says. Then, unburdened by your sins, you can pass through that narrow way. We do this with a sense of urgency, because the narrow door will not be open forever.

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Jesus tells us clearly that the door will not be open forever with a brief story, **"Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading."** Just like God closed the doors of the ark before the flood, the door to heaven will be closed on the Last Day. There will be no more opening it, there will be no more people let in.

So many people don't **SEIZE THE DAY**. They continually put off and put off the matter of their soul's salvation - some arguing they're fine, others waiting until tomorrow. But one day they will wake up with a fright, realizing that all is not well between them and a Holy God. Oh how then they will long to enter the narrow door, but it will be too late. They will make all sorts of excuses and give all sorts of reasons, but the God they rejected in this life, will reject them in the life to come saying, **"I never knew you. Away from me you evildoers."**

And so Jesus' words, **SEIZE THE DAY** are ever more important, for the time is short. We do not know the day or hour when God will end this world. It could be tomorrow, it could be thousands of years from now. But that should not be reason to put off **SEIZING YOUR SALVATION** this day.

Because there may be a day much sooner when God calls you home. And how joyous it will be when you will be taken to your Savior's side and **"take your place at the feast in the kingdom of God."**

But SEIZING THE DAY is not just about **"Making every effort to enter through that narrow door,"** although that is a very important part of it. We must also **"make every effort"** to help those who are trying to enter but are not able to. And I'm not talking about Christians from other denominations. I'm talking about who don't know Jesus, people who don't believe the Jesus of the Bible. Because we have what is stronger than a rejecting heart. We have the power of the gospel - a double edged sword which can penetrate a stubborn heart.

"OK, Pastor, so all of this sounds good in theory, it's something I agree with, but do I have to do that today?" I would ask you, what part of SEIZE THE DAY is unclear? We can always say we'll talk to people tomorrow, we'll invite our friends next week, I'll get involved in the next church activity. Why settle for tomorrow? Today is as good a day as any. If it makes it any easier, break it down into simple steps. First, think of a specific person you want to help. Next, think of the different ways you can help them, so that it might open a door to share the gospel. Next, think about why you like this church - and go further than saying "it teaches God's Word in its truth and purity."

Not only is this a part of the mission of every Christian, it's especially part of the mission here at Grace-Vail. SEIZE TODAY, not tomorrow, because who knows where we'll be tomorrow, next month, next year. If you look at this warning that Jesus gives, you realize how important it is for people to be able to enter through the narrow door. But they aren't able to do that, unless you show them the way. Don't be afraid to show them the way, don't be afraid to SEIZE THE DAY.

In the movie, turned Broadway musical, the newsies of New York City felt they had something to fight for. For many of them they were fighting for their own livelihoods. This is what motivated them to SEIZE THE DAY. As Christians, if you think about it, we have something even more to fight for, we are fighting for a trip to heaven. If this isn't enough motivation for you, at least be selfless and think about SEIZING THE DAY for others who are trying to enter the narrow door but are unable to. May we always make every effort to enter through that narrow door, and bring as many people with us. Go ahead, SEIZE THE DAY! Amen.