



## ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH

### PRAYERS AND REFLECTION

MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

#### BASED ON LUKE 13:22-31

##### The Narrow Door

<sup>22</sup> Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?" He said to them, <sup>24</sup> "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. <sup>25</sup> Once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then in reply he will say to you, 'I do not know where you come from.' <sup>26</sup> Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' <sup>27</sup> But he will say to you, 'I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!' <sup>28</sup> 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, and you yourselves thrown out. <sup>29</sup> Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and take their places at the banquet in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

##### The Lament over Jerusalem

<sup>31</sup> At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."

**OPENING PRAYER:** Lord of all, I come before you today with humility and reverence, inspired by the words and teachings of Jesus. As I seek to enter through the narrow door, Holy One, I pray for strength and wisdom to go along the path which leads me to eternal life. Help me in my quest to live rightly with you and to embody your love in my daily life. Lord, remind me that although many seek to enter your kingdom there are also many who won't be able to do so. May this be my motivation to not only seek my salvation, may it also motivate others to follow, in sharing your grace and truth. May my heart be open to transformation on my spiritual journey of humility, knowing that entrance into your kingdom is a gift, not earned by my deeds but through your mercy.

I pray for the people who feel so very far away from you, that they may come to know your inviting presence and the joy of being part of the body of Christ. Let me not be like those who are shut out, but rather, let my life be a witness to your compassion, goodness and love reflecting the joy of being in a complete relationship with the risen Christ Jesus. I ask for your guidance each day as I navigate through the circumstances of life and, that I always do my best to follow your teachings. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.



## **PRAYER POINTS OF THANKS AND PRAISE**

- ✚ Thank you, Lord, for people who are involved in emergency services
- ✚ Thank you, Lord, for people whose love for you keeps them involved in witnessing their faith to the communities in which they serve
- ✚ Thank you, Lord, for those who are committed to continue learning more about you and your kingdom.
- ✚ Thank you, Lord, for your mercy and love.
  
- ✚ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, for the sun in the morning and moon at night.
- ✚ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, for the bread and wine that sustains my strengthening compassion, kindness and grace
- ✚ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, for the Spirit which guides me and spurs me on with each breath.
- ✚ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, for the small wins of encouragement during my journey towards the narrow door.

## **PRAYER POINTS OF CONFESSION**

- ✚ Forgive me Lord when I take you for granted and make assumptions that I don't need to do any more than I do.
- ✚ Forgive me Lord when my witness for you is less than it could be
- ✚ Forgive me Lord for the times when I would rather close my eyes and mind to what's happening in your world than confront it and try to understand it more completely.
- ✚ Forgive me Lord for the moments when my motivation is misdirected and indifferent to your message.

## **WORDS OF GRACE**

Lord, I have placed the worst of my thoughts and actions into your hands of love, mercy and grace. You have promised to cleanse me when I confess my sins. I do now so confess and rest peacefully in the cleansing palm of your hand. Thanks be to God amen.

## **REFLECTION**

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, and he plans to be there for his final Passover feast. Like any other time in his life Jesus is teaching. Only this time he is emphasising how urgent it is to do a complete turnaround in the way the people are living (repentance), and to get more familiar with the reality of God's Kingdom. At the beginning of the reading, you will have read the question concerning the number of people who will be saved, which prompts Jesus to shift the focus from just numbers to a deeper calling of an individual's commitment.

Here, Jesus, speaks of the 'narrow door', highlighting that entering the Kingdom requires us to make an effort and to be determined that that is our complete heart's desire. From this image we can be confident that a pass through the 'narrow door' isn't automatic; it demands an active choice to follow Jesus and embrace his teachings. The narrowness of the door tells us that the path we follow with Jesus will often be challenging, filled with problems and we may need to sacrifice something along the way it is also always open to all those of us who are genuinely seeking to pass through it.

As Jesus continues, he warns that many who presume they belong to the Kingdom- those who have been close to him, seen his miracles, and heard his teachings may find themselves excluded. This

serves as a sobering reminder that familiarity with Jesus isn't a guarantee to a pass into God's Kingdom. Rather, it's a relationship with Jesus which is founded on an authentic faith, obedience, and love that's important and required.

What's also quite important here is the inclusivity in God's grace. Thankfully God's grace isn't bound by our biases, or any sense of fairness, nor is God concerned with where we come from, only our love for God is what God wants from us. Our love for God determines our actions and words. The Kingdom will be filled with those who responded to God's call. In the end Jesus emphasises that it is the humble and faithful who will find a place at Christ's table.

In thinking about what Luke shares with us today we know we have been invited to assess our spiritual journey. Are we doing all we can do to enter through the 'narrow door'? Are we living in a way that reflects our commitment to Christ or are we engaging in behaviour of improving our status in community, or just showing how impressive we can be? This scripture reading is full of encouragement to continue looking for a deeper relationship with God, ensuring that our/your faith is active rather than passive, transformative rather than static, always preparing us for the eternal fellowship Christ offers.

## **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Holy One, once more you have given me words of inspiration. I ask for your guidance and strength as we endeavour to enter through the narrow door. Help us to recognise our need for you in our lives and to continue to journey into a deeper relationship with you.

I pray for those who are lost and searching for meaning to their life. May they be drawn to the light of your truth, finding hope and eternal life through the blood of Christ. Open their hearts to the message of love and grace, enabling them to step through the narrow door into your kingdom.

Lord, may I ask you to lift up our communities and the world around us. Help us to be instruments of your peace and love, reaching out to those in need. Grant us the courage to share the Gospel and support one another in our walk of faith, so that together, we can all try our best to enter into your eternal embrace.

Living Lord, I ask for you to intercede for those who may feel excluded or distant from you, that they may encounter your mercy, and grace. Remind them that your invitation is for all, regardless of their past or circumstances. May they find solace and belonging in your presence.

Finally, Lord, I pray for myself, that I don't take our relationship for granted. Help and strengthen me to live a life that is reflective of your love, humility, and dedication as I follow the path upon which you have planted my feet. Keep my heart focused on you, and lead me in my faithfulness towards your kingdom.

In the name of Christ Jesus, I pray amen.

Sit quietly and comfortably as you listen to this beautiful reflective song by Sons of Korah.

