

Will Only a Few Be Saved? (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Isaiah 66:18-21—The Ingathering of the Gentiles

1. Ingathering of Nations: “all nations and tongues” (66:18)
2. Gentile Mission: “they shall declare my glory among the nations (Hb *goyim*)” (66:19)
3. Ingathering of Israel: “they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations” (66:20)

Psalm 117—Praise the Lord, all You Nations!

1. Universal: Praise the “LORD” (Hb *YHWH*), all you “nations” (Hb *goyim*) (v. 1)

Hebrew 12:5-7, 11-13—The Discipline of the Lord

1. Discipline: “discipline” or “training” or “upbringing” (Greek *paideia*) of a child (12:5)

Luke 13:22-30—Will Only a Few Be Saved?

1. How Many Will Be Saved? (13:23-25)
 - a. Question: “Will those who are saved be few (Greek *oligos*)”? (13:23)
 - b. Remnant: only a “remnant” are saved (Isa 10:20-22; 11:10-16; Jer 23:3-4)
 - c. Narrow Door: “strive to enter by the narrow door” or “gate” (Greek *thyra*)
 - d. “Many” (*polloi*): will seek but “not be able” or “strong enough” (Greek *ischyō*)

*All Israelites have a share in the world to come, for it is written, “Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever.... [Isa 60:21] And these are they that have no share in the world to come: ...The generation of the Flood have no share in the world to come... The generation of the Dispersion have no share in the world to come... The men of Sodom have no share in the world to come... The generation of the wilderness have no share in the world to come... The Ten Tribes shall not return again.... So R. Akiba. But R. Eliezer says: Like as the day grows dark and then grows light, so also after darkness is fallen upon the Ten Tribes shall light hereafter shine upon them. (Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 10:1-3; trans. H. Danby)*

2. The Banquet of the Kingdom of God (13:25-30)
 - a. “Messianic Banquet”: stand outside and knock (cf. Isa 25:6-8)
 - b. Strangers: “I do not know where you come from”
 - c. Acquaintance: “We ate and drank in your presence; you taught in our streets”
 - d. Sin: “depart from me, you workers of iniquity!” (cf. Matt 7:21-23)
 - e. Damnation: “weep and gnash your teeth” (= Gehenna; cf. Matt 8:12)
 - f. Salvation: “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets” are at the table
 - g. Ingathering: “Men will come from east and west...” (cf. Isa 11:12-13; 60:4)

The Living Tradition

The Mass Readings Explained

Augustine: Yet doubtless there are but few who are saved. You remember a question which was lately set before us out of the Gospel, “Lord,” it was said, “are there few that be saved?” [Luke 13:23] What said the Lord to this? He did not say, “Not few, but many are they who are saved.” He did not say this. But what said He, when He had heard, “Are there few that be saved? Strive to enter by the strait gate.” [Luke 13:24] When you hear then, “Are there few that be saved?” the Lord confirmed what He heard. Through the “strait gate” but “few” can “enter.” In another place He says Himself, “Strait and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there be that go thereby: but broad and spacious is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which walk thereby” [Matt 7:13-14]. (Augustine, *Sermon III*; trans. *NPNF1* 6:445-46; cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea* on Luke 13:22-30)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. Does the Old Testament envision salvation for Israelites only, or for Gentiles as well?

2. What is Jesus’ answer to the question of whether “only a few” will be saved? What might this question have referred to in a first-century Jewish setting?

3. Why does Jesus depict the Kingdom of God as a banquet?

For Further Study

1. Michael Patrick Barber. *Salvation: What Every Catholic Should Know*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press; Greenwood Village: Augustine Institute, 2019. An excellent overview of the biblical basis of Catholic teaching on salvation.
2. Pablo Gadenz. *The Gospel of Luke*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. Pp. 257-59