

The Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time
(Year C)

<i>First Reading</i>	Isaiah 66:18-21
<i>Response</i>	Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 117:1, 2
<i>Second Reading</i>	Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord; no one comes to the Father, except through me.
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 13:22-30

The 21st Sunday in Ordinary time for Year C continues our journey through the Gospel of Luke, and this Sunday the gospel reading is taken from chapter 13 of Luke's gospel, when Jesus is asked a very profound question about the number of the saved. Will many people be saved or will very few people be saved? And this is the question I think a lot of people wonder about, especially in our day and time. So we're going to look at Jesus' answer to the question and we're going to look at how he describes salvation with the imagery of the banquet of the kingdom of God, which is going to be one of his favorite images for describing the age of salvation, describing what we might call the afterlife or the glory of the resurrection, as a great everlasting banquet of God's kingdom. So the gospel reading today begins in Luke 13: 22-30. Let's read that through together:

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. And some one said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you 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 iniquity!' There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. And men will come from east and

west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”¹

Now this gospel takes us into the next several weeks in the Gospel of Luke, what some people have called “the hard sayings of Jesus”. They’re going to have a number of examples of sayings of Jesus that are tough, that are difficult. Not only is it necessarily difficult to understand, but difficult just to accept. And this is one of those teachings of Jesus that he’s pretty clear on what he means, but it can be very difficult to accept what he’s actually saying. So I want to walk through it with you, try to put it in its original context and also see how it connects with the Old Testament readings and the psalm for today, as well as how it’s been interpreted in the living tradition. So the first point I would highlight here is the context. Jesus gives this saying about salvation and the kingdom on his way to Jerusalem. He’s still heading toward Jerusalem, so he’s heading toward the city where he’s going to die. And we’ve seen that that is an important part of Luke’s gospel, the theme of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. And as he’s on the way, someone, we don’t know who, the person’s anonymous, asks him a question: “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And the Greek word there, few, is *oligós*, and it literally just means “a few.” Will they be a small number? Now most people blow rather quickly into...kind of move quickly into Jesus’ answer to the question, but I’d like to press pause here for just a second and ask, “well, why does this person ask the question?”

What would it have meant in the 1st century A.D. for someone to ask a question like, will those who are saved be many or those who are saved be few? That’s the implicit (you know) counter question there. And in this case, I think it’s important to realize that based on our evidence from ancient Jewish writings, like the *Mishnah*, there appears to have been a debate over the number of the saved. How many Israelites in particular is what the question was about. How many of the people of Israel, the 12 tribes of Israel, will be saved? Is it going to be everyone who’s descended from Jacob, all twelve tribes of Israel or will it be a remnant, a small portion of the people of Israel? So this was actually a debate that different Jews had different views about in the ancient world. So let me give you this quote from the *Mishnah*. I’ve quoted from the *Mishnah* before, it’s a collection of ancient rabbinic

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

traditions. It isn't written down until about 200 A.D., but it contains traditions that are dated back to the time of Jesus. So for example, listen to this quotation from the *Tractate Sanhedrin* 10:1 and following. It says this:

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: ...

And the *Mishnah* goes on to list a number of different groups:

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.²

That translation of the *Mishnah* is from Herbert Danby. So notice what its saying, on the one hand, some rabbis are saying "all Israelites have a share in the world to come." So if you're part of the covenant people of God, you're in. You're going to enter into the world to come. The *HaOlam HaBa*. And what the world to come was in ancient Jewish eschatology was the new creation. It was the expectation that when God sent the age of salvation, he would take this fallen world of sin and suffering and death, and he would make it new. He would renew it. It would be a new world or a new age.

And so you'll sometimes see, in fact you'll frequently see in Jewish writings, the future age described as the world to come. So what they're debating here is, will all Israelites be saved?" (in other words, enter into the world to come) Or will some not be saved? So after that more universal position is stated then the *Mishnah* gives some other views. Some people say, "well, look, no. The generation of the flood is not going to enter into the world to come." Remember, this is Noah's time. They were all wicked and they were violent and murderous and so when God destroys them by means of a flood, that's a sign that they're not going to be saved at the end. Other examples it gives is the Babylonian exiles. The people were so sinful that the Temple was destroyed by Babylon and then they went into exile. Accord-

² Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 10:1-3; trans. H. Danby

ing to that view the generation of that dispersion is not going to have a share in the world to come. And of course the men of Sodom, the same thing. These are all examples of temporal punishment in the world. Fire from Heaven on Sodom, exiles by the Babylonians, the ten tribes (this was the Northern ten tribes of Israel) also are taken out into exile. So some Jews evidently thought, “no, not everyone will be saved.” But these various examples of wicked generations or wicked cities or wicked groups of people are not going to enter into the world to come. And then at the very end, the *Mishnah* gives examples of the ten tribes, the lost ten tribes. Now this is different than the Babylonian exile. The Babylonian exile in the 6th Century B.C. was the two Southern tribes of Benjamin and Judah, but the Assyrian exile in the 8th century before Christ was the ten tribes of Israel. I’ve mentioned it before in other videos, the lost ten tribes, and apparently there was a debate. Some rabbis, like Rabbi Akiva, thought that the ten tribes would also not enter into the world to come, whereas Rabbi Eliezer said, “no, no, no. They will be saved eventually.”

So I just give this to you as an example of the fact that even within ancient Judaism, and arguably Judaism at the time of Jesus, like Rabbi Akiva, some Jews were more universalistic. They thought if you were a Jew, if you were an Israelite, you would be saved as a member of the covenant. Others said, “well actually no, there are certain examples of people within the covenant who acted wickedly, like the ten tribes who worshipped the golden calf up in the northern sanctuary of (I always get Jeroboam and Rehoboam confused, but it was) Jeroboam, or the Babylonian generation that lead to the Temple that was being destroyed. They said, “no look, those generations are not going to enter into the world to come.” So that’s probably what’s behind this question. Where does Jesus fall? Is he more universalistic or is he more in the tradition of a remnant theology? And in this case, as you might expect, the Bible itself takes the position of “a remnant will be saved”. You can actually see this in Isaiah 10:20-22, Isaiah 11:10-16, and Jeremiah 23:3-4. Let me just read one example of this for you real quick because you might be thinking, “well, wait, that’s the *Mishnah* Dr. Pitre. That’s a much later document. Can you use that for the 1st Century?” Well, just to give you an example, in Isaiah 10:20-22 (which again, Jesus would have read these books. That’s the scripture obviously, Isaiah is one of his favorites), it says (it’s on the age of salvation):

In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean upon him that smote them, but will lean upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the

sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness.

So you can see there that in the prophets (and this is just one example) there is a theme that actually is pretty prominent in the different prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zachariah), that although Israel is as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return to the promise land or will be saved, will enter into the life of the world to come. That's how it would be described later on in Jewish theology. So the question is posed to Jesus, "will those who are saved be few?" And so let's look at how Jesus answers in Luke 13. If we go back to Luke, with that Jewish background in mind, what does Jesus say?

Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

And literally there in the Greek, *ischyō* is what Jesus says. Literally what he says is many will strive to enter but they won't be strong enough. So the imagery here is of a narrow door or like a narrow gate to a city, and you've got massive crowds of people on the outside trying to all get in through one door. They're all wrangling with one another, struggling with one another, trying to push in through that very narrow door. So if you want a contemporary analogy, think of...like I took my kids to Disney world a few years ago, and you have 10,000 people trying to get in but there's this one narrow gate and everyone's trying to go through that one gate to get into Disney World. Or if you want another image, think of Black Friday at Walmart or something like that, where there are sales on the inside and then hundreds of thousands of people on the outside. Everyone's trying to push through a very narrow door. It's only the strong who make it through that narrow door into that city or kingdom or whatever he's imagining, or even into a house which is what he's going to use as an image there. So Jesus' answer to the question implicitly is, well many will try to enter but only a few will get in because many won't be strong enough. So it's a very sobering answer that is in line with the remnant theology of the prophets, that although Israel is as the sands of the sea, only a remnant returns. The number of the saved is few.

And then he goes on to give a parable (or an analogy) to try to exemplify this and it's the parable of the householder and then of the banquet of the kingdom. So there are two kinds of related parables, they blend into one another with similar imagery, but let's just walk through them together. So the first one he gives is the image of a householder. So he says, "when once the householder has risen up and shut the

door, you're going to stand outside and you're going to knock and say, 'Lord, open to us' And he's going to say, 'I do not know where you come from.'" And then the people respond and say, "Well wait, what do you mean 'you don't know us'? We ate and drank in your presence. You taught in our streets.'" And so he repeats it again, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from, depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!"

Alright, so what's going on here? Well the image that Jesus is using here is that salvation (the kingdom of God) is like a feast that's taking place (a banquet) in somebody's house, and you're trying to get into the banquet but the householder (meaning the owner of the house, the host of the banquet), when he opens the door to you, he says two things: "I don't know where you come from" (first of all), and then second, "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity!"

So let's look at the first one. "I don't know where you come from" basically is a way of saying that you're strangers to the host. He doesn't know not just who you are, but your origins (where you're from). That's the first point. Now, what's interesting about that is the people trying to get into the house say, "well, hold on. We're acquaintances (you know), we've eaten and drunk in your presence before. We've heard you preach in our streets." So it doesn't mean they're completely ignorant of the host. They've heard him preach and they've actually sat at his table. But for some reason, he now says to them, "I don't know you." Well why doesn't he know them? That's the surprising part of the parable. Well the answer to that comes in the last line when he says "depart from me, you workers of iniquity." So why is it that the householder doesn't know them? Well obviously in this case, it's not an ordinary story of trying to go to someone's house for a banquet. It's an allegorical parable. The householder here represents either God or the Messiah as host of the banquet, the house and the feast taking place inside represents the kingdom of God, and then the people who are knocking on the door but not getting in represent the people Jesus just described who are trying to get into the kingdom of God but they can't. So what's the problem? Well the last line tells you. You're a worker of iniquity.

So what keeps them out of the kingdom of God? It's their sin. It's that they are doers of evil. Which again, think about this, this parallel is exactly what we just saw in an ancient Jewish tradition from the Mishnah. What are the groups that are excluded from the world to come that the rabbis gave as examples? Well they were all sinners, like grave sinners. The generation of the flood, the sodomites, the

wicked people who in Jerusalem who lead to the Temple being destroyed, the ten northern tribes who worship the golden calf, these are all people who committed grave sins; workers of iniquity. And therefore their sin kept them out of the world to come. The same thing's true here with Jesus. It's their iniquity, their work of doing evil that keeps them out of the banquet of the kingdom of God. Now this is really crucial to grasp because what it shows here is something very important, mere acquaintance with a Messiah or with God is not enough. Listening to Jesus preach and teach in the streets of Galilee or Capernaum or Bethzair isn't enough. He has to know you and you have to leave the life of sin behind and enter into a real communion with him. There's actually a parallel version of this that makes that clear in Matthew 7 (another sobering saying of Jesus but a little more famous than the Lukan version). It's Matthew 7:21, where Jesus says:

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’”

So notice the two elements there. When a person doesn't follow the will of the Lord and doesn't obey the teachings of Jesus, it breaks communion with him. And so what he says is, “I never knew you.” That's the real criterion for getting into the banquet of the kingdom of God, to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, for him to know you. That's why he uses the image of a householder. You're not just going to welcome anybody into your banquet in the middle of the night, but if you know that person you're going to say “come on inside.” And so what Jesus is saying here is you thought you knew me because you heard me preach, and we might have even shared a table together, but because you were a worker of iniquity, I don't know where you come from. I don't really know you and therefore you can't enter into the glory of the kingdom.

Very serious, very somber, very tough teachings of Jesus here. He's not mincing any words about the necessity (note this) of obedience for salvation. This parable here, we're looking at Luke, really blows out of the water the idea that faith alone (in the sense that all I have to do is believe and it doesn't matter how I live and that's enough for me to be saved)...that's just not the teaching of Jesus in the gospels. He's very clear that you have to hear him preach, you have to believe in

him, call him Lord, but you also have to obey him and you can't be a worker of iniquity. And to press on the point, Jesus then moves into an even more explicit image of the banquet when he says, "there you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out." So here the image is of the kingdom as a banquet and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets, they're all sitting at table but you are going to be cast out. Now notice what Jesus is doing there. It's very powerful. He's basically putting his audience into the character of the parable. So one of the things that could happen is when people ask about the question of how many people will be saved, we often tend to think of it as well, "will other people be saved?"

And Jesus turns the question around at the person who asked him and says, "No, no, no. You're going to be surprised when you find yourself thrust out of the kingdom and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets are dining there." And then he ups the offense even more when he says, "and men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and they'll sit at table in the kingdom. And some of the first are going to be last, and the last are going to be first." So what's he talking about here? Well, whenever you see the image of weeping and gnashing of teeth on the lips of Jesus in the gospel, it's always an image for Gehenna (or the realm of the damned). Matthew 8:12, Jesus says the same thing: "They'll be cast into *Gehenna* where there will be a weeping or gnashing of teeth." That usually gets translated as Hell. It's the place of the damned. So for Jesus, you've got these two eschatological destinies, you're either in the joy of the banquet of the kingdom or you're weeping and gnashing your teeth in the fires of Gehenna. And what Jesus is saying is if you don't know me and if you're a worker of iniquity, you're going to be cast out of the kingdom and you're going to be in *Gehenna* outside the banquet of the saved. Now again, just to remember, in a 1st Century Jewish context, Jesus's entire audience is Jewish. He himself is Jewish. So in that initial context of the person asking the question, what he's also maybe trying to do here is make clear that you can't simply presume that because you're a son of Abraham you're going to enter into the kingdom of God. And you can actually think here back to John the Baptist, he said the same thing: "Do not presume to state that we ourselves we are sons of Abraham. God could raise up sons of Abraham from these very stones." It's not enough to simply be in the blood line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You also have to do the will of the Lord. You have to do the will of the Father. Otherwise you too will be cast out.

And then Jesus gives us an image of many coming from East, West, North and South. And what he's drawing on there is this prophetic expectation that in the age of salvation, not only will Israel be gathered from the four winds into the world to come or into the New Jerusalem, but the gentiles also will turn to the one God of Israel and be brought into the New Jerusalem, be brought into the kingdom of God. So he's pressing it even further with the person who asked him the question saying, don't presume to say to yourself that you're a son of Abraham because in fact, actually, many are going to come from East, West, North and South. Not just the scattered tribes of Israel, but the gentiles as well. And you yourself might find yourself cast out so that some who are last, like the gentiles, are going to end up first and some who are first, like some of the Israelites, are going to end up last, outside of the kingdom of God.

Very sobering, very powerful response of Jesus to this image of salvation, and very Jewish too. I mean this is an inner-Jewish question, a kind of inner-Jewish debate about the number of the saved and Jesus at the end brings in the whole question, not just of Israel but the ingathering of the nations as well. It's not explicit but it's implicit and you'll see why in just a minute if we turn to the Old Testament. So, let's look there and go back to the Old Testament for today. Very excellent choice for the Old Testament for today, it's from Isaiah 66. So this is the last chapter of arguably the greatest of the prophets in the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah. And what does Isaiah describe? Exactly what Jesus was just talking about, the eschatological or the end time ingathering not just of Israel, the remnant of Israel, but also of the gentiles and of the nations. So you see, Israel and the nations are being gathered together into the New Jerusalem in Isaiah 66. So this is what it says:

“For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.

Ok. I did my whole dissertation on this topic, of the ingathering of Israel and the gentiles so I'll try to keep this brief. But notice two things here. First, Isaiah ends with a mission to the nations, the survivors of Israel. That's an image for the remnant. The righteous remnant of Israel isn't just going to stay in Israel, they're going to go out into the four corners of the earth and they're going to proclaim the glory of the Lord amongst the nations. And the Hebrew word there for nation is the *goyim*. Even to this day, the word *goy* can be used in modern day Hebrew to refer to a gentile (a non-Israelite, a non-Jewish person). So God himself, in the Old Testament (Notice this, this isn't Acts, this isn't Paul, this isn't the New Testament), in the book of Isaiah, describes a mission to the gentiles, a mission to the nations in which the remnant of Israel goes out to the nations. But they don't just gather the gentiles. Notice it also says that they shall bring some of your brethren, some of your brothers from all the nations. Well who are their brothers? That's the Israelites. Remember, I mentioned the lost ten tribes, there was this debate amongst the rabbis. Some rabbis said the lost ten tribes were lost forever, and the other ones said, "no, no, no. In the end, they're going to be saved. They're going to be brought into the world to come." Well that second opinion there reflects this prophetic tradition that when the mission to the nations (the gentiles) take place, guess who will also be brought back? The descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel, so that when you go and get the gentiles, you end up bringing all of the scattered Israelites as well who have been intermingled among the gentile nations. And elsewhere I've talked about this, how that I think that is really what's driving Paul for example. He's not just going to the nations to get the gentiles, he's also going to the nations to bring the good news of salvation to the *diaspora*, to his fellow Israelites throughout the *diaspora*. That's why he always goes to the synagogue first and only then does he go to the gentiles. So to the Jews first and also to the Greek, because it's a universal salvation in the sense that it's not just for Israel, but it's also not just for the gentiles. It's for Israel and the nations. It's the ingathering of all peoples into the New Jerusalem of God.

That I actually think (this passage) is a wonderful background for Jesus' image in the gospel today. That many will come from East and West and North and South and they're going to be gathered into the banquet of the kingdom of God. That's Jesus' image and vision for salvation. And if you have any doubts about that, you can just look at the responsorial psalm for today, its Psalm 117. And the refrain there is "Praise the Lord, all you nations." And the Hebrew for nations is *goyim*, the Hebrew for Lord is *YHWH*, the sacred name, the Tetragrammaton. So that's a bizarre juxtaposition. If you're living in the 1st Century A.D., you look around,

what are all the *goyim* doing? What are all the gentiles doing? Well they're worshipping pagan gods and goddesses, deities all over the place. And yet the psalm describes a time when the nations will worship the one Lord, the one God of Israel. Well when did that ever really begin to happen in Ancient Israel? Well, it begins to happen in a profound and explosive way after the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. When his twelve disciples, this remnant of Israel (so to speak) goes out to the four corners of the earth and begins proclaiming the good news of his death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven and the gentiles begin to convert. They begin to worship the one God of Israel in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Messiah of God. So that's the image of salvation that Jesus is drawing on in today's very profound, very solemn (and it's difficult but clear) teaching about the salvation of Israel and the nations in the kingdom of God.

Now what about the living tradition here? In closing, I would like to just point out two things. First, Jesus' answer to the question is not how most people today would answer the question. So at least in my experience, in the secular West, in popular imagination today, if you ask most people, "will the number of the saved be few or many?" Most people would say many. And in fact I've encountered some currents even within Christianity of a kind of universalism where pretty much people will tend to be inclined to the view that pretty much everyone is going to heaven, except maybe Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin, people who have committed seriously heinous acts of violence and bloodshed, maybe not them, but most of us are going to end up in Heaven. And you can see this today if you just go to funeral services. There's a very widespread tendency to canonize people and to talk about them as if they're in Heaven, no matter what they're life may have been like, what kind of life they may have lived, even in a secular context. If you would ask most people today I would say that in the popular imagination what people would say is "wide is the road that leads to Heaven and many are they who find it, and narrow and difficult is the the road that leads to Hell or Gehenna, and few are they who find it." Well that's the exact opposite of Jesus' teaching in the gospel for today. When he's asked (point-blank) the question, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" His answer is "Yes." At least it's implicitly a yes.

Now there was debate in the tradition and I don't want to go into this in a lot of depth. There was a minority view among some of the Church Fathers, like Origen of Alexandria for example, who were attributed with the view known as Universalism. Namely that in the end, everyone would be saved. And Origen has even said to have asserted that even the devils and his angels eventually will be saved and

will repent and enter the kingdom. That is an extreme minority view. The majority view of the early Church Fathers and of the mainstream of the tradition is that the number of the saved will be few in comparison to the number of those who don't enter into the kingdom. And sometimes I've heard people say, "well that was Augustine's opinion." Sometimes you'll hear people attribute it to Augustine, like he was the first person to make that up. It is true that Augustine took that view, but it's unfair to describe it as something novel, because if you actually look at the writings of Augustine and you ask, "where'd he get this idea that the number of those that are not saved will outweigh the number of those who are saved?" He gets it from the gospel. He actually gets it from today's gospel, which is Luke 13 (as well as The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7). So I'm just going to close with this quote from Augustine on how Jesus' words were interpreted by the tradition. In his sermon (number 111), St. Augustine interprets our gospel for today as follows:

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].³

So what do we make of that? Well, it's a very sobering teaching of the Lord. And I think for me personally I would say two things. First, that's the reason that that is the mainstream of the tradition. The reason the tradition, the majority of Church Fathers take that view is because Jesus is very explicit about it, not just in Luke 13 but in Matthew 7. The second point I would make is that this is one of the foundations for why the Church has always considered it her number one priority to evangelize, to share the gospel, to share the Good News of Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection with all the peoples of the world (east, south, north, west). Whatever it might be, to go to the four corners of the earth in the Great Commission and

³ Augustine, *Sermon III*; trans. *NPNF1* 6:445-46; cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea* on Luke 13:22-30

to bring that Good News. In other words, there's a real sense of urgency if what Jesus is saying here is true — and it's always a good idea to go with him. There's a real urgency to the mission to bring the Good News of evangelization to the four corners of the earth; to bring the Good News of the glory of God to every person in the world.

And I do think that in our day, because a more universalistic outlook has become the dominant mindset, it can become very easy to be lax about the obligation that we have as disciples of Jesus to go out and to spread the Good News, to share the Good News with those who don't know it, who haven't heard it, or to bring it to those who may have rejected it for whatever reason. So the mission of the Church has always been grounded in the urgency and the reality of the final judgment and the final age of salvation that Jesus speaks about here in this parable of the kingdom of God and the banquet (Luke 13). At the same time, we also want to remember the mercy of God as well, and so any proclamation of final judgment, the kingdom of God, the age of salvation, always wants to be accompanied by the message of God's mercy. And so, at least for me personally in the 20th Century, I've always found profound the prayer, the Fatima Prayer, that has become part of the rosary. Jesus' teaching here should not be taken in the direction of saying "well to hell with everyone." To the contrary, it's always been the ground for the mission of mercy being brought to the four corners of the earth. And so that prayer that is now part of the rosary for so many people, "Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls into Heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy." And as we're going to see in the weeks to come, Luke is going to talk about the gospel of judgment, he's going to talk about the reality of needing to enter into the kingdom of God, but he's also going to compliment that with the message of God's mercy and grace in going out to seek and to save the lost.