

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

From east and west they will come to take their place in the kingdom of God.

Through towns and villages Jesus went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem. Someone said to him, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them, 'Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed.'

'Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself knocking on the door, saying, "Lord, open to us" but he will answer, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will find yourself saying, "We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets," but he will reply, "I do not know where you come from. Away from me, all you wicked men!"'

'Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves turned outside. And men from east and west, from north and south, will come to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.'

'Yes, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflections on the Gospel

THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / C

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THE NARROW GATE

Someone questions Jesus about the number who will be saved. He will not respond in quantitative terms ('How many ...?'). Rather, he turns the question back into a warning. Don't miss the opportunity while it is still available.

To make the point Jesus takes images from everyday life (without necessarily commending the behaviour involved!).

When an entrance or gateway is narrow and many are trying to get through, it pays to struggle and get to the front right away. We cannot just 'coast' into salvation; effort is required.

Travelers arriving late at a large household might hope for special consideration on the grounds of being known to the owner. But the lodging is full up with others who have got in before them. Imagine how they would then feel—out on the street for the night in a strange city, the door barred against them.

In the preaching of Jesus, we are all invited to the banquet of the Kingdom. But we can exclude ourselves from the banquet by not being prepared to accept that divine hospitality at the time—and in the company—of God's choosing.

The Gospel summons us to go in by 'the narrow gate', the gate that strips us of the various kinds of 'baggage' that selfishness loads upon us.

Those who daily take the message to heart can leave the question of salvation safely in the hands of the all-generous God, whose only desire in our regard is to have us as honoured guests at the banquet of eternal life.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

FIRST READING

Isa 66:18-21

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

They will gather all of your people from all nations.

The Lord says this: I am coming to gather the nations of every language. They shall come to witness my glory. I will give them a sign and send some of their survivors to the nations: to Tarshish, Put, Lud, Moshech, Rosh, Tubal, and Javan, to the distant islands that have never heard of me or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory to the nations. As an offering to the Lord they will bring all your brothers, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, on dromedaries, from all the nations to my holy mountain in Jerusalem, says the Lord, like Israelites bringing oblations in clean vessels to the Temple of the Lord. And of some of them I will make priests and Levites, says the Lord.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 116. R. Mk 16:15

R. Go out to all the world; and tell the Good News (or Alleluia!)

1. O praise the Lord, all you nations, / acclaim him all you peoples! **R.**

2. Strong is his love for us; / he is faithful for ever. **R.**

SECOND READING

Heb 12:5-7, 11-13

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

The Lord disciplines those he loves.

Have you forgotten that encouraging text in which you are addressed as sons? My son, when the Lord corrects you, do not treat it lightly; but do not get discouraged when he reprimands you. For the Lord trains the ones that he loves and he punishes all those that he acknowledges as his sons. Suffering is part of your training; God is treating you as his sons. Has there ever been any son whose father did not train him? Of course, any punishment is most painful at the time, and far from pleasant; but later, in those on whom it has been used,



it bears fruit in peace and goodness. So hold up your limp arms and steady your trembling knees and smooth out the path you tread; then the injured limb will not be wrenched, it will grow strong again.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 14:6

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the way, the truth, and the life, says the Lord; no one comes to the Father, except through me. Alleluia!

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