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Sermons
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LUKE 13:22-30 "RIGHT NOW"

The American rock band Van Halen wrote these words:

Don't wanna wait 'til tomorrow
Why put it off another day?
One by one, little problems
Build up, and stand in our way. Oh

One step ahead, one step behind it
Now ya gotta run to get even
Make future plans I'll dream about yesterday, hey!
Come on turn, turn this thing around

(Right now) Hey! It's your tomorrow
(Right now) Come on, it's everything
(Right now) Catch your magic moment
Do it right here and now
It means everything

Now I cannot claim any inside knowledge as to what Van Halen meant by these words (I didn't watch the VH1 Behind the Music special), but I can give you an approximation as a reader and listener. There is a great sense of urgency in these words. The song seeks to convince the hearer that tomorrow is not an option, that something must be done or dealt with today, right now. There is concern that if the needed thing is not done today, there will be problems that build up and build up making life problematic. The goal will be much harder to achieve, one will have to play catch up if something is not done today, if there is not a turn around. The goal, the urgent necessity, whatever the authors have in mind, is communicated as being everything. Right now!

Right now, right now is the time to believe in Jesus Christ and trust His Word. Right now is the time to repent, to turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel. Right now is moment to remember your baptism, now is the time to die and rise with Christ. Right now is the day of salvation, for the reign of God in Christ Jesus has come into your midst offering forgiveness, new life, and an eternal feast in the resurrection. Right Now!

The Gospel of Luke is full of right now moments. Old Simeon in Luke 2 had a right now moment with Jesus in the Temple. Jesus was only an infant, He had just

been circumcised on the eighth day and was presented at the Temple according to the Law of Moses. Simeon had been waiting to see God's Christ with his own eyes according to the Spirit's promise. And there in the Temple Simeon met Jesus, God's Christ, and he picked Jesus up in his arms and blessed God and said, *"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel"* (Luke 2:29-32). John the Baptist had a right now moment when Jesus came to be baptized by him and the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the bodily form as a dove and the Father's voice proclaimed of Jesus, "You are My beloved Son, with you I am well pleased." Peter and Andrew and James and John had a right now moment as they were out fishing; Jesus called them to follow Him and be fishers of men and they left all to follow Him. The widow of Nain and her dead son had a right now moment as Jesus touched the funeral brier and called the young man back to life and gave him back to his mother. Every encounter with Jesus was a right now moment, for God's reign and salvation were present in Jesus.

Our text Luke 13:22-30 presents yet another right now moment that people had in the presence of Jesus. 22 And He continued to journey through cities and villages teaching while making the journey into Jerusalem. 23 Now someone said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are being saved?" And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many, I say to you, will seek to enter and they will not be able. 25 From whenever the master of the house arises and closes the door and you will begin to stand outside and to knock on the door saying, 'Lord, open to us,' and replying He will say to you, 'I do not know you from where you are.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate before You and we drank and in our streets we heard You teach;' 27 and He will speak saying to you, 'I do not know you from where you are; depart from Me all workers of unrighteousness.' 28 There weeping and gnashing of teeth will be, when you will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the reign of God, but you being cast outside. 29 And they will arrive from the east and the west and from the north and the south and recline at the table in the reign of God. 30 And behold the last will be first and the first will be last."

This right now moment happened while Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem to die and was occasioned by a good Jewish question. "Lord, are there few being saved?" The question makes a lot of sense when one understands the history of the Jewish people and reflects upon the Prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Great numbers of Jewish people had been slaughtered and taken away in captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians as God's judgment against the people's repeated idolatry and wickedness. God poured out His wrath upon His chosen people who abandoned Him, but He promised to preserve a faithful remnant. God made good on that promise and returned the captives to the promised land. But sin still remained in God's people; idolatry and wickedness crept in again. John the Baptist had preached the coming of God's reign; God's judgment against sin and His salvation for those who trusted in the coming Christ. And now Jesus, God's Christ, His Chosen One, had come preaching and teaching much the same thing. It seemed that the faithful repentant remnant was ever getting smaller.

Jesus did not answer the man's question directly; He did not give us insight into God's hidden will; He did not give numbers or statistics. Instead Jesus addressed the salvation of people in relation to Himself and pointed out to all those who were around

Him that right now, while they are living, is the time to enter the narrow door. When you are dead it is too late. 23 Now someone said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are being saved?" And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many, I say to you, will seek to enter and they will not be able.

Faith, trust, in Jesus and His Word and promise, is the narrow door to salvation. Jesus said in *John 14:6*, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.*" God's deliverance from sin, death, the devil; God's restoration of creation, His making all things new in the Resurrection are found in Christ Jesus and in no other. Only one who believes that Jesus is the Christ in whom God's reign is present, only one who trusts Jesus' Word and promises in the present time, each and every day till the end, enters into eternal salvation.

Jesus instructs that right now, (the verb "strive to enter" is in the present tense) presently, today and each day that God gives us life, we are to strive or struggle to enter the narrow door to salvation. This does not mean that our good works or moral effort or the decision and acceptance of our human will in any way earns, merits, or achieves salvation for us! Rather Jesus points out to us that believing in Him and trusting in His Word and promises is an everyday, moment by moment, life long, struggle or striving.

Faith, trust in Christ Jesus and His Words and promises is always a struggle, a fight. A war is constantly going on in our bodies between our old sinful flesh and the new creation that the Spirit of Christ has called us to be in the Gospel. In the right now moment of Baptism God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, forgives and cleanses the guilt of sin; works faith in us and gives the Holy Spirit; kills us and makes us alive in Christ; and makes us disciples of Jesus and children of the Father! Right now, each and every day, the Spirit calls us to remember our Baptism trusting in Jesus and His Word and promises; thus the death and resurrection that God has given us with Christ in Baptism remains and continues.

Our sinful flesh doubts Jesus and His Words and promises. Our sinful flesh seeks its own gratification in the idolatry of self-service. Our sinful flesh is lazy, a glutton, a drunkard, sexually immoral, envious, greedy, violent, all together evil, and hates God and His ways. And this sinful flesh lives in each one of us, clinging yet to our mortal bodies. Perhaps you can see then why Jesus calls us to "strive, to struggle" to enter the narrow door. Our flesh and the devil do not want us to trust in Christ Jesus and His Words and promises to us; they work against us to draw us away from Christ.

But this is precisely why we need remember our Baptism each day and die and rise with Christ trusting in His promises. This is why we are in fact starving for Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Only Christ's Word and promises, only His body and blood, can sustain our faith, our trust for the constant right now moment!

Jesus warns us: 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door, because many, I say to you, will seek to enter and they will not be able. 25 From whenever the master of the house arises and closes the door and you will begin to stand outside and to knock on the door saying, 'Lord, open to us,' and replying He will say to you, 'I do not know you from where you are.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate before You and we drank and in our streets we heard You teach;' 27 and He will speak saying to you, 'I do not know you

from where you are; depart from Me all workers of unrighteousness.' 28 There weeping and gnashing of teeth will be, when you will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the reign of God, but you being cast outside. 29 And they will arrive from the east and the west and from the north and the south and recline at the table in the reign of God. 30 And behold the last will be first and the first will be last."

Right now is everything! When you are dead it will be too late. The time to believe in Christ Jesus and trust His Words and promises is now! The time to hear His Word and eat His body and blood is now! The time to struggle against sin is now! The time to live a life of repentance is now! Those who die in unbelief and sin will be forever shut outside of Christ and His eternal feast in the Resurrection; they will be forever tormented that they missed out on the countless opportunities God gave them to repent and believe in Christ and His Word.

Therefore do not despise the preaching of God's Word, but gladly hear it and trust in Christ's promises. Do not given in to the desires of your sinful flesh, but put them to death and live as a new creation in Christ. Strive, struggle to enter the narrow door to salvation, for right now is everything; life and death!

Right now look to Jesus the Author and Perfecter of our faith. For Jesus completed His journey to Jerusalem and died as a ransom for sin. At the right moment Jesus gave His life for all, for you! At the right moment Jesus rose from the dead opening the narrow door to eternal life for you and me! Right now, Jesus is your tomorrow! Right now, Jesus is everything! Amen.