

Today's Readings (21C)

Who Will Be Saved?

In today's gospel, someone asks Jesus: "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" The question expects a positive answer: "Yes, only a few people will be saved." But Jesus does not answer the question this way. Instead, he encourages the questioner to enter through the narrow gate, taking nothing for granted, because many will try to enter the kingdom, but not all will be strong enough to do so. Jesus envisions a great crowd of people trying to enter the kingdom of heaven through the same wide gate, but because the throng is so large many will not be strong enough to make their way in. And so he advises the questioner to enter by the narrow gate.

Jesus then issues a warning to the crowd following him. There will come a moment when the gates of the kingdom will be locked, and the people outside will cry out: "Lord, open the door for us!" Although these people once knew the Lord very well, he no longer recognizes them as his disciples because they have not been faithful to the gospel, and so they are locked out. Inside the kingdom, however, there are all kinds of people from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and they will fill the Lord's banquet hall.

So what does the gospel mean? Will only a few be saved? Will many be saved? Will all be saved? Instead of answering these questions, Jesus gives us a picture of the kingdom of heaven. On the one hand the kingdom of heaven will be filled with all kinds of guests from every race and nation. On the other hand, some people who thought they were going to be inside find themselves outside. Perhaps the answer to the man's question is this. *It is not just a few who will be saved; the kingdom of heaven will be filled with people from every race and nation, but some who thought of themselves as insiders and took their salvation for granted will be excluded.*

Salvation is a gift from God, but it is not to be taken for granted. Salvation is the gift of God's own life that begins with life in Christ and continues into eternal life. Salvation is *resurrection from the dead*. For when God raises us from the dead, we will enjoy the same life Christ already enjoys. The powers of Death and Sin will no longer rule over us because, with risen Christ, we will enjoy the very life of God. To be in heaven is to enjoy the life of Christ, which is God's own life. What a gracious gift! But it is not to be taken for granted. Salvation is the gift of life that begins now and continues into eternal life with Christ.

Will only a few be saved? Will only a few receive this gracious gift? We trust and hope that the gift of salvation is for many. But we must not presume that the gift will be ours no matter what we do, as if God *owed* it to us. Salvation is God's free and gracious gift for which we pray each day as we strive to enter by the narrow gate. *Father Matera*