



## ***THE NEW SHOFAR***

**I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.**

**August 21st**

***God alone is our judge – thank you Lord for that!***

Have we ever wondered about this kind of question the man presents to Jesus: *how many people are going to find their way into the End Time feast in heaven?* It was as tough a question then as it is today. So tough was the question that Jesus did not even answer it directly! Of course, many do not even ask the question in terms of their own souls because they presume, they are already among of the “select”.

But in the end Jesus did give a kind of an answer: the Son understands how the decision about entrance rests in his Father’s hands. No one, not even Jesus himself knows any of the details. That is something of a great relief to me, knowing that my final judgment is something our Heavenly Father will carry out. My eternal fate rests not with someone of this earth who in reality knows little about me.

***Discipleship is not about heaven, it is about collaborating with God here***

The truth is, Jesus had more important things to be worrying about. Disciples were to love and serve the Lord because the Lord our God is naturally worthy of such love and service. The possibility of an eternal place around the heavenly throne is secondary to our discipleship. Furthermore, I could imagine how Jesus might have been a little upset over this question, as his ministry to this point in the Gospel had all been about living and loving, forgiving and including others.

This is one of the points the image of the narrow door proclaims: there is a door “out there somewhere”. We know from **Revelation 4:1** how there is an open door into heaven. It is there. It is open – at least for a limited period. Now we can add further to this by noting how it is “narrow”. The next step is to then establish the “how” and “what” of entry. The answer to this is something Jesus does not offer to us in this specific text. There is an answer to this but is to be found across the entire Gospel. A short answer is to be found in the vocation to *be disciples of Christ*.

**The ultimate destination for Jesus is Jerusalem**

Every answer to questions about discipleship will involve Golgotha in its answer. We know this already, for discipleship has been described as *taking up your cross and following after me*. It is in this invitation we find the answer to the question of why so few manage to enter through that door. That door sits on Calvary, at the foot of the cross of Jesus. It was there, in his death, the “door” to life eternal was opened. The image we have for this is the tearing of the curtain in the Temple at the very moment of his death.

This is what Luke is inferring. It is only by imitating Jesus that we end up at the door. Only by dying to self that we can find a way in. Even then we cannot “enter” unless God himself leads us through. We are not gods. We have no right to enter. It is by invitation only and the invitation card we need to present at the gate is marked with the signs of our “crucifixion”, the marks of the cross imbedded in our souls.

### **I don't know you or where you come from!**

Here we have another challenging teaching of Jesus – the danger of presuming the level of our own righteousness. He was dealing with a presumption common at the time. We know from **Matthew 3:9** how the Pharisees and the Sadducees believed that being descendants of Abraham was something of a guarantee of salvation...*we have Abraham for our father!* John the Baptist offered them a succinct answer: *the axe is being laid to the roots of the tree* (ie. Jews rejecting Jesus) *so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.*

These are the ones who will hear God's frightening voice... *I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!* That is not only addressed to the Jews who will reject Jesus as their Messiah. It applies specifically to Christians who fail to live as Jesus commands. At our baptisms, renewed every Easter and each time we celebrate the Eucharist, we committed our lives to God, to live in the new covenant established in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It is in our committed striving for faithfulness we are filled with the graces we need to find and reach that door. This faithfulness is what God celebrates at the time of judgment.

Mere words are not enough. As Matthew's Jesus reminded the Apostles...*Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.* What God seeks is faithful striving, the living out of a Christ-centred existence. Such an existence will produce *good fruit* and it is by our fruit God will know us.

There is one more indication as to what Jesus was saying about the narrow door...*I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.* " (**John 10:9**). Now we have our answer about the door. It is all about Jesus.

To whom then will God be delivering those terrible words? To those who do not produce the fruit God expects of us; to those who promote division, who break down instead of building up; those who are unwilling to see Christ in all others; those filled with a judgmental spirit and want to shape the Kingdom in their own image. Sadly, most of the ones Jesus has in mind here are within the Church community itself and what a shock it will be to them when they fail to find that door, to find the door ajar and to hear those welcoming words... *Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.*