

## No Camping Out at Heaven's Door

**Intro.** After reading this gospel I thought about the people who camp out all night in front of the stores on Thanksgiving Day, trying to be first through the doors for the big Christmas sales. The atmosphere is like a festival. People are wrapped in blankets; they bring food; music is playing; and most are friendly. Until the doors open, then it is crazy. In the gospel, the Lord is getting closer to Jerusalem and the end of his mission. What he says may be hard for us to hear.

**I.** He tells the people how important it is to prepare to enter the kingdom of God. It will not be easy; do not wait until the last minute. He uses the image of doors to the kingdom of heaven. Most cities had two gates: a big gate for animals and wagons and a small

gate for people. The small door was narrow, difficult to pass through, only one person at a time. The image for people then and for us now, is we can't carry all our possessions – including the weight of our sins - through the narrow door. We will have to get rid of what is unnecessary for the kingdom. Not all of us will be strong enough to do that; or will decide it's too much work. The Lord doesn't mean *physically* strong. I think he refers to *spiritually and morally* strong. We must be strong to pass through the narrow door because it is difficult to live as disciples of the Lord. The other image is the locked door. The reality is the time comes when all of us die. Those who wait too long to prepare for the kingdom may be left outside. Others may think they are better than everyone and automatically will be first in line. The Lord says no.

**Concl.** The Lord didn't answer the question in today's gospel, "Are there few who will be saved?" Most people in that time believed only the rich and powerful could be saved. Sometimes we feel that way today. The Lord clearly invites *all* to the feast of heaven: from the south and north, west and east. The real question is not how few, or many will be saved. It is **how** we can get to the kingdom of God. The answer to that question is: not easily, but we know the way. It is by taking care of each other; being respectful, even of our enemies; and most of all, following the Lord when it is not easy. Just being in church doesn't mean we automatically get into heaven. The Lord will not be looking at our "attendance report," but how we take care of each other. [Mary McGlone, *NCR*] We must work hard before we get to that final door. **Maybe people who**

**do the work of the Lord will get a reserved seat, or call ahead seating, going to the head of the line without waiting – being first, while others are last. I am not sure that is a risk worth taking or a gamble worth making.**

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