

# Fan or Follower

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Date: 24 September 2017

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, as has been said already, my name is Alistair. It's great to see you here this morning. Now, as we were reading that passage, maybe you thought there was quite a bit of weird stuff in there. There's a bit about narrow door, a bit about city, striving. There's quite a lot of strange language.

So before we look into this passage in detail, let's pray together for God's help. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have given us your word.

And Lord, we pray that you would help us now as we look at it, that we would be touched, and you would help us understand the difficulties of it. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

Have you ever thought about the distinction between being a fan or a follower? So when I was growing up, you can say, well, think about me for example.

You can say that I'm a fan of football, but I'm not a follower. So growing up, my grandpa and my uncle were huge football supporters of the team Glasgow Rangers. Maybe you've heard of them.

[ 1 : 04 ] Now, as a child, that really rubbed off on me. So if you come to me even today after the service, you say, which football team do you support? I will proudly say Glasgow Rangers. But if you dig around a little bit, you'll realize that I know absolutely nothing about the team.

Never been to a live game. Don't even watch them on TV. Don't know anything about the players. Don't know the manager. I know absolutely nothing about the team. So I'm a fan, but I'm not a follower. Now, a follower of Glasgow Rangers would be someone who goes to the live games, who watches them on TV, who knows about the players, knows the manager, could tell you about the fixtures that are coming in the next season.

They could talk to you for hours on end about their team. But that's not me. That is a follower, not a fan. Or when you think about social media, how many of you have liked or followed famous people? Movies, TV shows, singers, the list goes on and on of people that we like. But are you a fan or are you a follower? Now, I'm a follower of a few good guys on social media.

If you're taking notes, these are guys to keep your eyes on. So Tim Keller, John Piper, Don Carson, Matt Chandler, Kevin DeYoung, all really good guys. But do I really know them?

[ 2 : 16 ] Sadly, no, I don't. I read their blogs. I read their books. Yes, I listen to their sermons and I like to get involved with the stuff they put out there, but I don't know them personally.

I'm not on a first name basis with them. Yes, I'm definitely a fan, but I'm not a follower. And the question that this passage is asking you this morning is, are you a fan or are you a follower of Jesus?

Now, there is a distinction there and we'll see that this morning, but I want you to have that question in the back of your mind as we look at Luke chapter 13. Are you a fan of Jesus? Are you someone who sits and listens to the things of God?

You hear the stories about Jesus. You might even shake the preacher's hand at the door and say, good job. But the minute you walk through that door, it has no bearing on your life. Are you a fan of Jesus?

Or are you a follower of Jesus? Are you someone who goes to church? You hear the things of God. You hear the stories about Jesus and you believe them. Are you worshipping God with everything you are?

[ 3 : 22 ] With your heart, your soul, your mind? Are you striving to live a life of obedience? Are you a follower of Jesus? So keep that question in the back of your minds.

Are you a fan or a follower? And open your Bibles and let's look at Luke 13. But before we dive into that passage, I want to put it in some context. So the Gospel of Luke, surprisingly, was written by a man called Luke.

Luke, and he was a doctor, and he wrote this book with a specific purpose in mind. And that was that Theophilus, the person who commissioned him to write his Gospel, would have certainty concerning the things that he had been taught.

And we see that in Luke chapter 1, verse 4. Luke has written his Gospel so that people can have certainty about Jesus, about his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection.

And as it says on the tin, the Gospel of Luke is an orderly account. It's got quite a clear structure. So in the first nine chapters, we're introduced to the person of Jesus.

[ 4 : 26 ] And Luke tells us that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. And then from Luke chapter 9, verse 51, the book kind of changes.

And we see Jesus traveling towards Jerusalem. Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem. And from this moment on, in Luke's Gospel, the focus is that Jesus is journeying towards Jerusalem.

He is journeying towards the cross. The place where he will pay for the sins and wrongdoings of mankind. Luke chapter 9, verse 51, right through to 13, verse 21, is one section of Luke's orderly account.

And we see that because it's bookended with the phrase that Jesus was, or something along the lines of that Jesus was going to Jerusalem. And in this section, which Graham concluded for us two weeks ago, there has been one big teaching point, one big takeaway thing, one big question that Luke has been asking.

And that is, what does it mean to follow this king? If Jesus is the king of God's kingdom, if Jesus is the king of heaven, which Luke says he is, then what would it look like for us to follow him today?

[ 5 : 39 ] And that is what Luke has taught us in the previous section. But then Luke chapter 13, verse 22, marks the beginning of a new section that runs through to 1710.

And the big teaching point, the big question that Luke wants us to wrestle with is who will be in this kingdom? If Jesus is the king of God's kingdom, then who will be in his kingdom?

The kingdom of God refers to what we call heaven. And the question is, who are these kingdom citizens? Who are the people that can call the kingdom of God home?

And we see that right in the passage which Joanna helpfully read to us in verse 23, where it says, someone asked him, that's someone asked Jesus, Lord, are only a few people going to be saved? So in our passage this morning, Jesus asked that question. And Luke, in his orderly account, shows us two things in what Jesus says. First of all, Luke tells us about the kingdom people.

[ 6 : 43 ] He tells us this in verses 22 to 30. He tells us that these people are distinct and that these people are diverse. And then secondly, Luke tells us in verses 31 to 35, he tells us about the king.

The king who is both tough and tender. So we're going to look at Luke chapter 13. But as we do, remember, keep that question in the back of your mind.

Are you a fan or are you a follower of Jesus? So let's look first of all at the kingdom people in verses 22 to 30. Now Jesus has been traveling around Galilee.

It's a place in Israel. And he's been making his way towards Jerusalem. And as he goes, he has been teaching the crowds. And now remember, all the time as Jesus is traveling towards Jerusalem, you see the cross on the horizon.

And as Jesus sees the cross, there's no excitement. Now when we go on holiday, for example, you're in the plane and you're sitting there, you look out the window and you see Spain or you see Australia, you see whatever your holiday destination is on the horizon, you get excited.

[ 7 : 52 ] You're thinking, yes, that's where I'm going to be for a week or two. That's where I'm going to be sitting in the sun, relaxing. You get excited at the prospect of where you're going. There is no excitement here. Jesus is not excited as he travels towards Jerusalem because he knows that that's where the cross is.

He knows what needs to happen and where he must go and what he must do. So Jesus is traveling around. He is teaching. And it would appear that out of the blue, this man asks a question.

Lord, are only a few people going to be saved? But this question isn't out of the blue. Up until now, Jesus has been teaching the crowds and he's mentioned judgment, division.

He's mentioned the dangers of living a religious life without having a devotion to God. And all of these comments seem to have struck a nerve with someone in the crowds. And so this man asks his question.

Now Jesus, being the amazing storyteller that he is, if you ever wanted someone to tell goodnight stories to your children, someone who could come up with a story on the spot, it was Jesus. And he

uses this as an opportunity to teach the whole crowd about the kingdom people.

[ 9 : 02 ] And he uses objects that are around people or that people would have known to get his point across. And so instead of answering this question directly, Jesus uses an illustration.

The illustration of a narrow door. So Jesus says to the crowd that are around him that everyone should strive to enter through this narrow door.

So this is not just a door that you can walk across accidentally. It's not a door that you can stumble across and walk through. But the kingdom people are distinct.

Because they've walked through this narrow door. The word that Jesus uses there, your Bibles will say, make every effort, or as other translations put it, strive. The idea is that it is a struggle.

It is an ongoing fight to enter through this door. The word is usually used in terms of athletes. And people who are in sports who struggle and contend to win the race.

[ 10 : 02 ] It's the dedication that a person requires to win the Olympic gold medal. It's the dedication and passion that a person requires to finish the marathon, even though there are physical walls and mental walls.

So I've been told. I mean, doesn't it make sense that Jesus says that many will try to enter through this door but will not be able to if it's a struggle? Just because I can struggle my way through a 5K, barely, doesn't mean that I can run a marathon or that I can rock up to the Olympics and win a gold medal just by trying my best.

The idea is a constant struggle, constantly making an effort to get through this narrow door. But there's two questions that this raises. First of all, what is this narrow door?

And second of all, what does it mean to be saved? So when thought in light of the question asked, it's quite clear that this narrow door that Jesus is talking about is referring to entrance into the kingdom of God, entrance into heaven.

And the only way into this kingdom is through this narrow door. What about being saved? What does it mean for someone to be saved? Well, every Jew, and Jesus is speaking to Jews here, every Jew would have understood that people are eternal, that there is a life after death, and that there are only two options to spend an eternity, and that is the option to spend eternity with God or an option to spend eternity without God.

[ 11 : 36 ] So there are two places. We often refer to them today as heaven or as hell. Heaven is the kingdom of God. That is where God is. It is an eternity with God. And then hell is the place without God, an eternity without God.

Now hell is a difficult reality. It really is. But it is something that the Bible teaches. And we can't fully understand God and his world unless we grapple with the topic of hell.

And the man asking the question knows that an eternity without God is not an eternity that he wants. And he knows it is an eternity that no one should desire, an eternity without God.

So that's what it means to be saved, to be in a right relationship with God, to be forgiven of our sins, of our rebellion, and to look forward to spending an eternity with God, in the kingdom of God.

But a person cannot, a person cannot work their way into the kingdom. A person cannot do enough good works which would get them into the kingdom of God.

[ 12 : 44 ] The idea of striving is not so that you can earn your salvation, but it is a striving to live a life of obedience to God out of a thankful heart for the salvation that Jesus has made possible.

So you cannot work to get into the kingdom of God. And the idea is that many will try to get into the kingdom of God through other ways, through other doors, but they will not be able.

Isn't this counter-cultural? Doesn't this go against everything our culture and our world believes?

You might have heard the saying before that all religions lead to God.

There are multiple ways, multiple doors to God, into the kingdom of God. If we were to go out into Edinburgh this morning and ask people who believe in a life after death how it is you get there, I'm sure we would hear countless times that, oh, but no, there are many ways to God.

There's not just one, there are many ways to God. But Jesus is teaching us this morning that there is only one way into salvation. The only way into the kingdom of God is through this narrow door, is through a proper response to him and his teaching.

[ 13 : 58 ] It is a narrow door which requires a distinct response to Jesus. But not only is this door narrow, in verse 25 we have a sobering truth, and that is that one day this door will be closed.

Jesus is warning people because one day this door will be closed and when it is closed it will not be reopened. Jesus is speaking with urgency because he doesn't want people to reject his salvation.

But instead he wants people to repent, to be made right with God. And Jesus says that once that way of salvation is closed, it will not be reopened.

Some will stand at the door and they will knock, but they will not be allowed in. People will say, but Jesus you have to let us into your kingdom.

We were there with you. We listened to your teaching. We saw you. We saw all you did. We heard you. But they will not be allowed into the kingdom.

[15:08] And the point that Jesus is making is that unless they responded to his message of repentance, they would not be allowed into the kingdom of God. And the striking thing is that this goes for the people who walked around with Jesus, who followed him at a distance.

They would have heard Jesus speaking and they would say, Jesus we were your fans for a long time. But he will say, be gone from me because you are not my followers. They didn't respond in their own hearts.

And notice the passive language that Luke is using in verse 25. They sat, they listened, they saw. It washed over them. But it didn't affect them. They didn't respond.

And Jesus is warning them, saying that they should respond. They should respond now because time is short. You see, the thing about the kingdom of God, or heaven as we call it, the thing about it that is so great is that God is there.

That is what makes heaven amazing. And the desire of kingdom people is to spend an eternity with God. But for those who have not made every effort to enter through this narrow door, they will be cast out and they will be in a different place, which is described in verse 28.

[16:30] A place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus is describing the place that we call hell. Now as I was preparing this message this morning, this week, I was reading a book.

This little book here, it's called *Is Hell For Real?* It's by Eric Raymond. And he said something in it that really resonated with me. And it really got me thinking about how I speak about hell with people.

This is what he says. Let me just read that again.

If we approach this subject of hell with seriousness and tears in our eyes, then we are following the example of our Lord. The point he's making is that Jesus wasn't using hell to scare people to believe in him.

But he was being honest. And he was telling the crowd the result of rejecting him. And as you read this passage, you can maybe kind of see that there are tears in Jesus' eyes.

[17:43] He's begging the people. He's urging them. He wants them to repent. He wants to save people. He does not want to see anybody knocking when the door is closed. And Jesus is speaking to Jews, as I mentioned.

That's why Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets were mentioned. See, many of the Jews based their confidence that they would be saved, their confidence that they would be in the kingdom of God, was based on the Old Testament patriarchs, the Old Testament forefathers of Judaism, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They said, they surely will be in the kingdom of God. He's my great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather. But Jesus says that they will be in heaven and those who have not responded to Jesus' message will be cast out.

Jesus is making the point that ancestry, who you're related to, doesn't matter. Who you know will not get you into the kingdom of God.

Knowing somebody will not make you a kingdom person. That can only be made possible through entering through this narrow door. Through responding to Jesus Christ, the only way to God.

[19:00] So even though these people were there, even though they were listening and seeing everything he did, they were fans, they were not followers. Now some of you might be thinking that it's cruel that hell even exists.

Or cruel that God will one day close this narrow door, that the window for people to be saved will be shut. But I would like to say this morning that it is an amazing truth that a door even exists.

See, God doesn't need to save people. Jesus didn't need to go to the cross. God's wrath is just, but in his love, he sent Jesus Christ, his son, to pay for our sins so that we can be made right with him again.

So I think it is an amazing truth that a door even exists in the first place, don't you? The second thing to notice about these people is that they are diverse.

They will come from all over the world. You see that in verse 29 where it says, people will come from east and west, north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. [ 20 : 12 ] Jesus isn't concerned, isn't only concerned, about a small group of people in Israel in the first century. Jesus isn't only concerned about people from one country, but the kingdom people will come from all over.

They will come from north, east, south, west. So yes, the kingdom people are distinct in that they have responded and walked through this narrow door, but they are diverse because God's love is not bound to one people group.

And these people will gather together and they will celebrate the kingdom of God. There will be a feast, a banquet, a banquet of delight as people gather to celebrate God's goodness.

These will be the people who've made every effort to enter through the narrow door. These are the people who've lived a life of humility, as verse 30 suggests.

This is an upside-down kingdom. Those who elevate themselves will be brought low, but those who humble themselves will be elevated. These are the followers of Jesus.

[ 21 : 21 ] Now Jesus is speaking to the crowd and he's speaking with urgency. He's saying time is short. Strive to enter through the narrow door whilst it is still open. So are you a fan or a follower of Jesus?

If you're Christians here this morning, Jesus is encouraging you to strive. Continue to make every effort to live a life of obedience. Continue to make every effort to be found in Jesus.

Not because that will save you. Not because your works will save you, but because you have a desire to live a life that is pleasing to him. A life of thankfulness for what he has done for you in Jesus.

So the question this morning is, are you striving? And Jesus is encouraging you, keep striving.

Maybe you're here this morning and you've been putting Jesus off.

Maybe you've said, well, yeah, church, Jesus, that was my parents' deal. Now that I'm at uni, I'm going to relax on that a little bit. It's not really my thing. Or maybe you've said, I'm just too busy right now.

[ 22 : 32 ] I've got a lot going on in my life. Yeah, I'll think about Jesus, but maybe when I'm retired. Maybe in the future when there's more time on my hands. Maybe you've been sitting on the fence, thinking that somebody else's faith, someone else's response to Jesus will get you into the kingdom of heaven.

Maybe you haven't heard this before, or maybe you just think it's irrelevant. Well, let me urge you, just as Jesus is urging people to consider his message of salvation, there is no other way into the kingdom of God.

You cannot get in by good works. You cannot get in by being the son or daughter of a Christian. I beg you, please do not leave this morning thinking that this has no bearing on your life.

Do not wait. Don't put it off because the kingdom of God, the door into the kingdom of God will one day be closed. Please, do not be left knocking. As Charles Spurgeon once said, if sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies.

If they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped around their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertion.

[ 23 : 54 ] Let no one go unwarned and let no one go unprayed for. Time is short. Are you a fan? Or are you a follower of Jesus?

There is no middle ground. It is black or white. Are you a fan? Or are you a follower of Jesus? Jesus? The next portion of our passage this morning tells us two amazing and two essential truths about the king in verses 31 to 35.

The king Jesus. Now what do you think people usually think of when they hear the name Jesus? Now I've heard friends of mine over the years say that, yeah, Jesus was a good guy, did a lot of good stuff, he was a good communicator, a good moral teacher.

When you go to museums or you see art depicting the person of Jesus, you usually see someone who's quite calm, quite sweet, would never really hurt a fly. Now whilst all of that is true, to some extent, the king that we meet in verses 31 to 35 is tough and he is tender.

Now he is tough. We wouldn't usually think of Jesus as being tough or strong but as Jesus was traveling around Galilee making his way towards Jerusalem, some Pharisees came to him, Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day and they said, quick, you've got to get out of here.

[ 25 : 24 ] Herod wants to come and kill you. We've met Herod before in the Gospel of Luke, haven't we? In chapter 3, Herod arrests John the Baptist who he would later kill.

In Luke chapter 9, it states that Herod was perplexed by what he heard Jesus was teaching and what he was doing. But now Herod has one thing on his mind and that is that he wants Jesus dead. He wants Jesus gone. But Jesus does not cower in the face of death. Jesus is tough. Jesus is determined to finish the task that he has been given.

He is determined to continue his journey to Jerusalem. As Jesus has been continuing and going to Jerusalem, he's been casting out demons, healing the sick, he's been teaching his disciples and crowds and Jesus is saying that none of that is going to change just because one man wants him dead.

In fact, Jesus knows that the very path that he is walking on is leading to the cross. It's leading to the place where he would give up his life for the people of this world so that they can be saved and be in the kingdom of God.

[ 26 : 36 ] So we see that Jesus is tough as he sets his face to Jerusalem and to the cross. He's determined to get there. But then we also see the tenderness of Jesus and specifically the tenderness of Jesus towards those who have rejected him.

Look at verse 34 with me. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often have I longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were not willing.

Can you hear the tenderness of Jesus? Can you sense the deep love and compassion that he has for the people of Israel? And this is amazing because in the not so distant future, these are the people who nail him to the cross and he knew that yet he showed love.

Jesus is lamenting over Jerusalem which is used to represent the whole nation of Israel and Jesus laments over Israel's track record of killing the prophets. The Old Testament is full of stories of people who were sent by God to Jerusalem, to Israel, to warn them of judgment, to warn them of their wandering from God, their rejection of God's law.

But they killed them. They didn't listen to them. They didn't repent. They killed them. And even now as Jesus stands there and speaks to Jerusalem in a not so short while he will be nailed to a cross and killed though innocent.

[ 28 : 12 ] And so Jesus says that their house is forsaken. The very nation where God was meant to dwell, the very nation to whom God said I will be your God and you will be my people, they have rejected him and therefore they have been rejected.

They have been left empty. Now this is devastating news. Because of their rejection of God, because of their rejection of Jesus, they too will be rejected.

And the content and timing of Jesus' message calls for a response. Jerusalem. Will you listen to God once more? Will you let me gather you as a hen does its chicks?

Will you listen and repent because the kingdom of God is at hand? Or will you reject God again? If you reject God, Jesus says you are forsaken.

And you will not see him again until the day where he comes back into the city on the back of a donkey. But Jesus is not screaming this message at the people in anger.

[ 29 : 24 ] That's what I want us to notice. But Jesus is hurt. He is pleading with them. These are the people who should have been awaiting Jesus' arrival.

These are the people who should have welcomed him with open arms. But instead they will meet him with a cross. And Jesus is warning them that they are in danger. He is warning them that they need to turn from their ways and repent.

They need to return to God. They need to repent and enter through this narrow door. So do you see why it is amazing news that Jesus is both tough and tender?

Without the toughness of Jesus, the penalty for our wrongdoings wouldn't have been paid for. And we would have to pay for the punishment of our sins by ourselves.

So we need the toughness of Jesus. But in his amazing grace and his amazing love, he became nothing for you and me so that we can be saved and be reconciled to God.

[ 30 : 25 ] And without the tenderness of Jesus, we wouldn't fully understand the love and compassion that God has for his people. And this is directed at a nation who were the chosen people of God.

And it's directed specifically at people within that nation who thought that they would be saved if they obeyed the laws, if they obeyed rules.

They thought if they did that, then they would surely be in the kingdom of God. Isn't this a trap that we fall into today? That our world falls into so many times? Okay, yeah, if I go to church, if I live a good life, if I don't kill anyone, if I don't cheat, if I don't steal, if I don't lie, yeah, God will let me in, I'm a good guy.

The idea that we can earn our own salvation, that we can earn our way into heaven is completely wrong. And that is what Jesus is saying. Don't be deceived.

The only way into heaven, the only way to be saved is through entrance through this narrow door.

The only way into God's kingdom is to respond to his message of repentance.

[ 31 : 38 ] So the question that Jesus is asking and the question that he is asking you this morning is, are you willing? Are you willing for God to gather you to himself, to nurture you, to care for you, to protect you?

Are you willing to accept this king? Are you willing to be a follower and not just a fan of Jesus? And so in answering the question, will only a few be saved, Jesus explains who the kingdom people are. Jesus explains that they are the ones who strive, who go all out to get into the kingdom, to go through this narrow door. They are distinct because they live a life of obedience, but they are diverse because they are from north, east, south, and west.

They are from everywhere. And God will gather them to himself and they will celebrate in an eternity the goodness and greatness of our God. And so the question is this morning, are you striving to enter through this narrow door?

Are you striving? And Luke gives us an insight into the king of this kingdom. Jesus, the one who is both tough and tender.

[ 32 : 55 ] The one who resolutely went to the cross, denying himself absolutely everything so that we can gain the thing of utmost importance, forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

And the question to ask yourself this morning is, are you willing to accept this king? Are you willing? This passage has a great truth of God's kingdom, but it also has a sobering truth of life without God. And it is not something that should be skipped over lightly. And so again, I want to ask you this question just as we close. Are you a fan?

Or are you a follower of Jesus? Let's pray together. Lord, we ask that this would be our cry this morning.

Let us be your followers, not just your fans. Let us be able to sing with confidence that it is well with our souls, not by any doing of our own, but because you have given us salvation.

[ 34 : 24 ] Lord, give us the strength to strive. Give us the willingness to call you king. We ask this in the strong and loving name of your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.