

**Pentecost 14**  
**September 11 & 12, 2022**  
**Luke 13:22-30**

There are myths that people think that are true, but they are not true at all. Some examples:

- You'll get cramps if you go swimming right after you eat. Truth: Though it is a commonly held belief that your muscles will cramp should you swim right after eating, this just isn't true. Yes, the body requires extra blood in order to digest, but not nearly enough to prevent the muscles in your arms and legs from working as they should.
- A penny dropped from the top of the Empire State Building could kill someone. Truth: A penny is too small and flat for it to gain enough natural momentum to make any kind of fatal impact. At most, if you were hit, it might feel like being flicked in the forehead "but not even very hard."
- You swallow eight spiders a year while sleeping. Truth: It has no basis in reality. A sleeping person causes noise and vibrations, making spiders flee.
- You have to wait 24 hours before submitting a missing person's report. Truth: Countless police dramas and crime thrillers have helped spread the myth that you must wait 24 hours before you can file a missing person's report. In fact, acting within the first 48 hours is crucial to successfully locating a missing person.
- Touching a toad will give you warts. Truth: This rumor probably originated from the fact that toads themselves have wart-like bumps on their skin, but they're just glands that don't secrete anything that can cause warts. Actual warts are only caused by human viruses.
- Lightning never strikes twice. Truth: NASA debunked this myth in 2003, reporting that "lightning definitely strikes more than one place." In fact, it does so about a third of the time!

We could keep going on about myths that simply aren't true. However, there are also many people who buy into myths when it comes to religious beliefs as well. For example:

- In a poll from the Pew Research Center last year, about 40% of U.S. adults say people who do not believe in God can go to heaven.
- Among all Christians, 58% say that many religions can lead to eternal life in heaven, and within this group, the prevailing view is that members of some non-Christian religions are able to attain eternal life in heaven.<sup>1</sup>
- In a survey that was done earlier this year, at least a third of senior pastors in the United States believe one can earn a place in Heaven by simply being a good person, according to a nationwide survey.
- In the same survey, another 39% of Evangelical pastors surveyed said there is no absolute moral truth and that "each individual must determine their own truth."<sup>2</sup> It just sounds better to say that, doesn't it?

A man comes to Jesus and asks: **"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"** A very legitimate question. Then Jesus gives him an answer: **"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/11/23/views-on-the-afterlife/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/third-of-evangelical-pastors-say-people-can-get-heaven-just-by-being-good.html?fbclid=IwAR0MHfOxgdphr1445oqoD2eYjN5hP72-sLAyVOi6rng7266inZmk9Jc2mSE>

**you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' That doesn't sound so inclusive, does it? It sounds very much exclusive, doesn't it?**

So, what is Jesus' point with his answer? Many of the Jewish people believed that they were going to heaven simply because they were Jews and they tried to keep God's laws as best as they could. After all, they were God's chosen people. They were children of Abraham. Do people today sometimes think that simply being a member of a church gets you into heaven. It just sounds good. It just feels better to say that there all kinds of ways to heaven. So, what is Jesus trying to say here?

He is not saying that only a certain group of people are going to be in heaven. He is not saying that you have to go to a certain church, and if you don't, you are not going to be in heaven. He is not saying that you had better step up your game if you wish to get into heaven. He doesn't want us to focus on the WHO, but to focus on the HOW. Who does Jesus want in heaven? God **"wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."** (1 Timothy 2:4) HOW is that going to happen? Jesus says: **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."** There is only 1 way that a person gets to heaven. His name is Jesus.

Yet, this way is not going to be easy for the Christian. The word that Jesus uses here for **"Make every effort,"** was often used in an athletic competition – a competition that was tough. In other words, there is not going to be any coasting into heaven. It is going to be a struggle and a battle. There will be a battle with sin. There will be a struggle with Satan who first brought sin into the world. Satan is going to be that defensive basketball player who will be trying to block every shot. He does not want us in heaven. Our sinful nature tries to take us away from God. It rebels against God. It tells us that we are pretty good people who can make things right with God on our own. We can't. That's why Jesus says: **"many will try to enter and will not be able to."** You can't do this on your own. But Jesus wants you to know with absolute certainty that heaven is yours. He doesn't want you to "think" you are saved; to "hope" that you are saved; or "pretty sure you are saved."

He wants you to know that God's grace is available to all. Christianity is really the most inclusive religion in the world. **"People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God."** He will gather people from the corners of the earth. God has made you his by calling you to faith. He calls others to faith as well. God has made you his by his blood on the cross. He has made you righteous. He has guaranteed heaven to those who believe in him. He wants you to know that there is no sin that he can't forgive. There are no doubts that he can't help you to overcome. That is no myth. That is the truth in Jesus. May God grant it. Amen.