21st Sunday Ordinary Time Year C Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

Lord, will only a few be saved?  
That’s a good question, isn’t it? And one we all want, and need, an answer to.  
Even Jesus thought it was a good question,   
because He answered it with a message that we struggle to decode,   
so we may as well call it a parable.  
In essence the answer Jesus gave was,   
‘It’s up to you, how much do you want to enter the kingdom of heaven?’  
Perhaps this seems strange to us, because we are so accustomed to thinking,   
‘Doesn’t everyone get to heaven?’  
Let’s look at the criteria for getting in, and the examples Jesus gave of those who were already in.

The first criteria is that it will take some considerable effort on our part.  
The second criteria is that it will be through a narrow door, which indicates that it has to be traversed on foot since it isn’t wide enough for a horse or a car, and it will fit only one person at a time.  
The third criteria is that we have to be recognisably kin to the master of the house, God the Father.   
We need to look, dress, sound, and act, like members of the kingdom of heaven.  
I’m sure you have had the experience of saying about someone, ‘they’ve got a strange accent,   
there’s something European in it, and yet there’s something North American in it as well.   
I wonder where on earth they come from?’  
We can’t have an accent tinged by the world; or be ‘half of the kingdom’ and ‘half of the world’.  
Getting rid of the vestiges of the world from our lives is going to take effort, isn’t it?

Jesus gives us a few more tips.  
The first tip is that we don’t know when God the Father is going to decide to bolt the door,   
so we shouldn’t delay any of our efforts.  
The second tip is that staying at the acquaintance level of relationship with Jesus is not enough.   
It is very easy to eat and drink a meal with someone, and yet not become committed to them.   
It is very easy to listen to good teaching, and yet not commit to putting it in to practice.  
Where can we easily eat and drink with Jesus, and listen to His teaching?  
We are doing that right now, here at Mass.  
But are we taking these opportunities of being with Jesus,   
and letting these encounters with Jesus change us?

So, who has already arrived?  
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets.  
Did any of these people have easy lives? No, far from it.  
Did God put them all through a testing process before adjudging them His friends? Yes, He did.  
Some had heart-wrenching decisions, some had long years waiting for God’s promises to be fulfilled, many were scorned and laughed at, many were persecuted, many had great sorrows.  
All of them prayed, remained faithful through trials, and were obedient to all God’s requests.  
None of them were perfect, far from it;   
but whenever they fell, they got up and began again.

There it is, what Jesus Himself says is necessary to be saved.  
How much do you want to enter the kingdom of heaven?  
Are you ready and willing to begin the struggle, with the help of the Holy Spirit?  
May God in His mercy help us all.