

The person calling out to Christ today has the wrong idea

He asks how many will be saved

What he should be concerned with

As what should concern us

Is what must we do to be saved?

For the Israelites living at the time of Christ

This would have not seemed a weird question

They were taught that they were God's Chosen people

And they were

But over time, they were misdirected

They began to think they belonged to a kind of a club

One they didn't need to do anything to enter

Just by the luck of the draw

They were born into this particular ethnic family

And because of that

They were in

They would be saved

So, this man, confident that he was already in

Comes and asks Jesus

How many will be saved

What he was really asking was

How many, other than me, will be saved?

Probably didn't want it to be too crowded

But Sacred Scripture doesn't necessarily agree

We see that in our first reading from Isaiah

I come to gather the nations of every language

They shall come and see my glory

They shall bring all your brothers and sisters from all the nations

To Jerusalem, my holy mountain

Just as the Israelites bring their offerings to the house of the Lord

Some of these I will take as priests and Levites

Not only is Isaiah telling the Israelites they are not the only ones

God will save many others

He will even go outside of the family of Levi for priests

For the Israelites, this would be a shock to the system

The Levites were a special class among a special people

They were the priestly class

They were doubly blessed by God

Yet they have rested on their laurels

They have formed a club

Based on law and heredity and luck of the draw

Instead of doing as they were meant to do

Being an example to their brothers and sisters

Bringing all nations, all peoples to the Lord

We see the man in our Gospel doesn't get it

Will only a few be saved?

Jesus doesn't give a legalistic, concrete reply

Strive to enter through the narrow gate

For many will attempt to enter

But will not be strong enough

This reply is similar to when he was asked 'Who is my brother?'

In the parable of the Good Samaritan

Jesus takes the focus off others

And places it upon ourselves

Is my idea of salvation the correct one?

There are many that will come and knock

We ate and drank in your company

You taught in our streets

Jesus, I was at Mass every Sunday

I got all the sacraments

I went to Catholic school

I was faithful to my CCD classes

I'm your buddy

I'm a good person

Like the rich young man

I have obeyed all the commandments

But will he say

Depart from me, you evildoers

Here in one component of hell

Heaven will be so close

There will be many at the door

Seeing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Looking upon those from the north and south, east and west

And being locked out

Salvation is not an easy path

Yes, it is a gift and God desires it for all his children

But it isn't just about showing up

There is an analogy in sports

How many just show up for spring training

Summer football camp

And expect to be on the team

I want to have a good golf swing

I want to have low scores

So if I just go out and swing away

It'll happen, right? NO!

There is technique and discipline needed to be proficient

Some are more naturally disposed, sure

But it still takes training

It still takes dedication

It is both physical and mental

I can't lie around and think I would like to be in better shape

I have to desire it

And I have to do something about it

Or in business

Does a high school or college degree guarantee a job?

If that is the case, why bother with education?

Why bother training?

Our spiritual life is similar

If all we have to do is show up

Do a few external things

Guarantee our entrance to salvation

If salvation is cheap, why bother?

Why bother with morality?

Why bother studying?

In the spiritual life

There are two extremes we have to avoid

One is a high degree of scrupulosity

Where we are so concerned with the law

Here is a line never to be crossed

There is mortal sin, and God is a big policeman waiting to catch us

A life that is so consumed by the law

We forget love

On the other end is where we are consumed with the idea of love

And we forget the law

We forget that there is serious sin

We forget there is mortal sin

We think God loves us, and all will be saved

We forget the words of Christ today

Many will knock, but the door will be closed

The path is down the center

And the path is Jesus Christ

He is the door

And we have to strive to enter

Eternal life is there for all God's sons and daughters

But it takes dedication and devotion

We have to practice our faith, every day

Our Letter to the Hebrews today teaches:

Do not disdain the discipline of the Lord

Do not lose heart when reproved by him

Endure your trials as discipline

What son is there the father does not discipline?

Some of our brothers and sisters claim once saved always saved

How many high school or college athletes

Are lost in a pick-up game a few years out of school?

In another Gospel, Jesus teaches

Pick up your cross daily

And follow me

His cross shows there is mortal sin in our world

Not his sin, but ours

But it also shows us that there is love

And love is stronger than death

But it is not free

It is not easy to be conformed to Christ in this life

To be in a right relationship with him

Heaven is not about a quota

God is not waiting for all the rooms to be filled

So he can light up a No Vacancy sign

So instead of asking how many will be saved?

Let's ask if Jesus will recognize me at the door?

And strive to enter the narrow gate