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**PEOPLE WILL COME FROM EAST AND WEST AND FROM NORTH AND SOUTH,  
AND RECLINE AT TABLE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD - Biblical Commentary by Father  
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**Luke 13,22-30**

*He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”*

To understand this passage of the evangelist Luke chapter 13, 22.30 it is necessary to know that in the time of Jesus the people of Israel thought they were the only ones to be saved, the gentiles no. Let's read what the evangelist writes for us. “*He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.*” Therefore Jesus goes to what will be the final stage of his journey, the city where he will meet death at the hands of religious authorities.

“*And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?”* He wants to know how many are those who will be saved. Why this? Because it was believed that salvation was a privilege reserved for the people of Israel. To the individual who asked him how many are those who are saved, Jesus responds by stating who are the ones who are saved.

“*And he said to them, “Strive (literally fight) to enter through the narrow door.”* We will see that it is not possible to enter this door, not because it is difficult, but because - as Jesus says “*For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*” Because the door will already be closed. Therefore Jesus is not inviting those who know what painful efforts or sacrifices are to enter this door, but to open their eyes because there is the risk that this door is closed. Why? “*When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside...*” so it is not difficult to enter, but it will be closed.

“*...knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’* So here the evangelist presents people who have a communion with Jesus, they call him Lord. “*..then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’*” He does not know them. Why does Jesus not know them? We hear the cry of those

who have remained outside. “ *Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, ...’* ” It is alluding to the Eucharist, therefore they have celebrated the Eucharist of the Lord.

“*..and you taught in our streets.*” So they have heard his words. Yet Jesus will say ‘*I tell you, I do not know where you come from.*’” Jesus repeats what he said earlier. And even then – it was a quotation from Psalm 6,8 – “*Depart from me, all you workers of evil!*,” Why this hardness on the part of Jesus? Because the relationship that the disciples can have with him or with the Father does not matter to Jesus.

Jesus is interested in the fruit that this relationship with him and the Father is towards his brothers, with actions of love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, generous sharing. This is what allows communion with God. God will not ask us if we believed in him, but that we love like him. This is why Jesus’ response is very harsh “*I do not know you*”. No matter what relationship they have with God, Jesus is interested in the relationship they have with others. They participated in the Eucharist, but then they were not able to make bread, to make their lives bread, food of life for others, they listened to his teaching, but this teaching did not transform their existence. And Jesus’ words are very harsh “*In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,..*” It is an image that indicates the failure of one's life. “*...when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets...*” the prophets are those who have denounced the worship of God and the lack of interest in the poor “*...in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.*”

The people of Israel, who believed that they had the right to be part of the kingdom of God, but for Jesus, if they do not transform this knowledge of God into love for others, they remain excluded. But not only! They are excluded and their place is taken by those very people who they considered to be the excluded, the gentiles. In fact Jesus concludes: “*And people will come from east and west, and from north and south,( therefore from all parts of the gentile world) and recline at table in the kingdom of God.*”

Jesus, when he has to present the kingdom of God, does not present it with religious liturgical symbols, but always convivial, like a refectory. Well at this table, which they believed they belonged to by right, they will be removed and those who thought themselves excluded will participate instead. And now here is the conclusion “*And behold, some are last...*” that is those you considered excluded “*..who will be first and some are first,..*” those who believed they had the right “*who will be last.*”

What Jesus gives us is a very severe and timely warning. There can be a presumption of belonging to a religious faith, for participation in acts of worship, there can be a presumption of having rights from which people can be excluded because they do not belong to our culture, to our faith, to our ethnicity, they believe in other deities, they behave in different ways, then Jesus invites them to pay close attention.

Attention! Because those whom you consider the excluded, those whom you reject will instead take your place in the kingdom of heaven. Naturally the ‘first’ will arise and soon afterwards – it is not in this passage of the Gospel - some Pharisees will approach with death threats

