

## Twenty first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings: Isaiah 66: 18 - 21; Hebrews 12: 5 - 7, 1 - 13; Luke 13: 22 - 30.

**Theme: Buy Easy Ticket to heaven???**

One day the emperor of devils came to the earth and opened a fancy shop. The shop was full of curious items , but the most attractive of all the items was the easy ticket to heaven. Reading the advertisement many rushed to buy the easy ticket to heaven before it is sold out. But the unrelenting devil had a condition to put before those customers, who rushed before the counter that **those who want to buy the easy ticket to heaven have to surrender all their virtues in his treasury and pick up some powerful weapons out of it.** Hearing the demand of the devil all the people surrendered their virtues in the treasury of the devil and picked up some lethal weapons such as pride, hatred, overwhelming patriotism, fanaticism and intolerance . There started a ceaseless fight between people and people, nations and nations, tribes and tribes and that turned the world into upside down and topsy- turvy. Then pointing to such a chaotic world of madness the devil said, “ This is heaven, the world of Gods and the place of eternal bliss. Fight vigorously not to be thrown out of this world of power, where might is right”.

Jesus says, “ Try to enter into the kingdom of heaven using the narrow door”. What does that mean?

When we think about doors, doors can be used for two purposes. First to give entrance to people into a house, where, they enter lawfully. Second, to deny entrance to people into the house where, they try to enter illegally. If a door is a large one with wide space it is very easy to pass through. On the contrary if the door is very narrow and the one who tries to enter through it is someone with a large body shape, it will be very difficult for him to enter into the house using that narrow door. So only those who with thin body shape can get into a house using a narrow door.

**The door to the kingdom is narrow, but only for those who are too “bundled up.”**

Emilie Griffin wrote a book called Turning. It describes how she graduated from college, doubting the existence of God and thinking that religion was a crutch that people turned to for support. But Emilie also graduated with a deep love of nature. And it was this love of nature that eventually got her to rethink her ideas on God and religion.

Emilie read everything she could find on the subject of God and religion. She read, especially, the writings of C. S. Lewis and Thomas Merton, who had struggled with questions similar to hers. To make a long story short, after much study and discussion, she eventually entered the Catholic Church.

Emilie is a living example of what Jesus means in today’s gospel when he says that the door to God’s kingdom is narrow.

**It is not narrow because God made it that way so that only a few people could pass through it. Rather, it is narrow because we make it that way by our own doubts and deeds.**

There's a Peanuts cartoon that shows Charlie Brown getting up one morning and looking out the window. It's a lovely winter day. Snow covers the ground. It's very cold, but perfect for skiing. So Charlie bundles up with several layers of clothes. Then he puts on his big gloves and his skis.

When he moves toward the door, he discovers that he's so bundled up that he can't get through the door. So he stands there screaming at the top of his lungs.

The image of Charlie Brown standing in front of the door too bundled up to pass through it is a good image of many of us today.

We want to follow Jesus. But we are so bundled up in material possessions and material concerns that we can't get through the door. So, like Charlie, we end up standing in front of the door and screaming.

And sometimes it's not just our material possessions and concerns that keep us from passing through the door. Sometimes it's the fear of what others may say or think.

**The door to the kingdom is narrow not because God deliberately made it so, but because we ourselves make it so.**

We tend to get so wrapped up in material possessions and concerns and in what others might think or say of us that we cannot pass through it. So, we stand in front of the door, frustrated and mad.

This is the message that challenges us to ask ourselves, how willing are we to shed whatever is necessary to pass through the door to Jesus? The door is open. It is wide enough to pass through but only for those who value Jesus more than anything else, including their possessions and what other people think.

**Let us conclude this reflection** asking God for the grace to put Jesus and his teaching first in our lives.

Lord, bless us as we sit before you. Bless our eyes with a vision of eternity that we may see the shortness of this life. Bless our minds with the light of your truth that we may know the depth of your wisdom. Bless our hearts with the fire of your word that we may appreciate it enough to give it top priority in our lives.

By Fr. Biju Chitteth ( P.S.: The stories, incidents and anecdotes used in the reflections have been collected from books and sources over the net especially from Mark link and Joseph Thoppil )