

Two Gates and Two Ways

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[0 : 00] Our reading of Scripture tonight is from the Gospels from Matthew chapter 7 verses 13-23. This is the text upon which the sermon will be based.

! And these are the words of Jesus. Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide, and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

And those who enter by it are many, for the gate is narrow, and the way is hard that leads to life. And those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thorn bushes? So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

[1 : 06] Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name.

And then will I declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. This is God's word. It's great to be with you guys tonight.

All right, so I grew up in Alabama in the U.S., and I actually went through a bluegrass phase, bluegrass music, which is actually not very typical even in Alabama to go through a bluegrass phase.

But I encountered a very unknown at that time young artist named Allison Krauss and her band Union Station. And there was a specific song that she did that to this day I still love.

And this started me on a bluegrass kick, and it was called Two Highways. And the lyric goes, Two highways lay before us. Which one will I choose? Down one lane I find happiness.

[2 : 17] Down the other I would lose. There is no one that I can trust. I must decide alone. The decision is an awful one. Which one will lead me home?

Down the other I think. That's actually a metaphor of something that we find very often in our culture, whether it's a poem by Robert Frost called The Road Not Taken, or The Matrix, where it's like take either the red pill or the blue pill.

This idea that we're coming to a crossroads or maybe a fork in the road, and you've got to make a decision. And this decision has lasting implications, but you must make a decision.

Which one will you choose? Even that song I mentioned by Alison Krauss, like this is an awful decision. Because if I make the wrong decision, like what are the implications going to be?

But there are times in our lives where we must actually make a decision like that. It becomes a crossroad or fork in the road. And that is actually the metaphor that Jesus gives us in the first invitation here for the Sermon on the Mount.

[3 : 28] So we've come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 7. We're going to focus tonight specifically on verses 13 and 14, those first two verses that Corey read.

And Jesus is actually going to give us three different metaphors that both kind of, they all have the same idea. And that is, you have two choices to make. You have to make a choice of which one.

And he tells us in this passage in verse 13, which one is the right choice.

He tells us, choose this one in his kind graciousness. And it's one of those things that we're at a point, it's like you've heard this sermon, what is your response going to be?

Which road will you choose? For those that like to talk about Jesus as a good teacher or a prophet or whatever, and they're like, we like his teachings.

Jesus says, you can't just hear my teaching. You have to make a choice. Which road will you choose? In our culture today, you might actually hear something that says, you know, well, all roads lead to God.

[4 : 37] And Jesus says, no, there are two roads. One leads to God. One leads to destruction. And he tells us which one to choose.

Enter by the narrow gate, he says. Enter by the narrow gate. Jesus is pretty straightforward about this. He tells us, enter by the narrow gate.

Life in the kingdom that he's been telling us about, he's been laying out for what it looks like for human flourishing, because this is the way life is meant to be lived according to God's way.

He says, this is how it is. Now here's the invitation. Enter the narrow gate. To enter this life in the kingdom, you must enter his way into the narrow gate.

He goes on to say, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction. So we're going to talk about two gates in two ways.

[5 : 35] Two gates, two ways. The first gate is what he calls the wide gate here. There is one gate that is wide that has many people going through it.

Now, when I think about or hear about a wide gate, we just went on a train trip to a lot of different places. We were on a lot of trains and went through a lot of gates. And we kind of were dragging our bags and we encountered that one gate.

Maybe this was user error and not the gate's fault. But I get to it and it's like, this thing does not want me and my bag to go through. So I'm kind of stuck in this place where I have to kind of lift up the gate, lift up the bag over the gate and put it in front of me.

And there were probably better ways to do that. But I was like, I've got to get through this and this is what I have to do. And I look over and there's this wide gate over there that it's like, sometimes when they see it's a group or a family, they will open it for you and let you go through it.

And it's so nice when you're carrying baggage to go through a wide gate. And when we talk about here that the gate is wide, there are many who want to go through it because they want to bring their bags with them.

[6 : 47] What are we talking about when we're talking about bags? What are some of the things that people have a hard time letting go of because they want to take it through the gate that they want to choose?

And it's things like my demands of, I will follow Jesus if. I will follow him if he allows me to also do this.

If he gives me the life that I think I deserve, I'm all on board with that. Or, I could never believe in a God who fill in the blank.

I'll believe in him if he fits into what I want him to be like. How could a loving God allow this to happen? On my terms, I like this God.

People think that they can go in that way because the wide gate lets in all kinds of things. All kinds of beliefs. Not many demands, if any demands.

[7 : 48] But Jesus says, to follow him you must deny yourself. Take up his cross. Take up your cross and follow him. I've got to let go of my very self. I've got to let go of my agenda, my thoughts and dreams and plans for my life, in order to adopt his will for my life.

We must let go of even the idea that I can walk through this gate on my own initiative and my own performance and by my good works, I will be accepted before God.

That's the wide gate that allows anything to pass through. But that is not what Jesus tells us. So we have to be asking the question, what are we holding on to that Jesus would tell us we must let go of in order to follow him?

The gate is wide and most people are going through it. So for us to choose the narrow gate, we're going to have to do what's unpopular. We're going to have to make the uncomfortable decisions. As Martin Luther, Martin Luther, Martin Lloyd-Jones says that we can't go in the way that the crowd is going. That immediately Jesus is telling us that there must be a break with us and the world.

[9 : 07] Entering the narrow gate implies that we're going to stand out as different. The world and the flesh, they don't like this, right?

So enter in the narrow gate because the wide gate lets a lot of stuff through. And many are those who find it. Some might think that God would be more loving if he would just widen the gate.

But he truly knows what is for our good and calls us to trust him in that. To believe that he knows what is for our good. So that's one gate.

We've got the wide gate. But then Jesus says there's another gate. The narrow gate. The gate, this entrance itself is narrow.

And this is kind of important the way we think about evangelism. Telling others the good news.

There have been trends throughout history. Even still happens in the U.S.

[10:06] where it's like a just believe, check this box, say this prayer, of whatever, and you will be in the kingdom, in the family of God.

We must be honest about how we present following the Lord Jesus. It says it's a narrow gate and few are those who find it because it's got to be his way and no other way.

It's not narrow because it's some mystery or hard to understand. It's narrow because it's hard. The way is hard that we'll talk about in just a minute.

It's narrow because we have to count the cost in following Jesus. And the crowds, they're going through the broad gate. We must follow Jesus on the narrow way.

So let's look at the two ways. So we have two gates, the wide gate and the narrow gate. We have two ways. This idea of talking about a way or a path, that's pretty common in the Bible to talk about following God in paths of obedience and righteousness.

[11:14] It's not a coincidence that the early church, you see this in the book of Acts, that it was called, Christianity was called the way because there was a way to follow Jesus.

This idea of having two paths. We see all throughout the Old Testament, even the first Psalm, Psalm 1, verse 6, you see this contrast between the way of righteousness and the way of the wicked.

In Proverbs 4, verses 18 and 19 is a good illustration. It says, but the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

The way of the wicked, however, is like deep darkness. They do not know over what they stumble. So becoming a Christian can be described as entering into the kingdom of God evidenced by a life of following in His righteous ways.

You don't live a righteous life in hope of getting through the narrow gate. It is we enter the narrow gate through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He even says in John chapter 10 that He's the door for the sheep.

[12:23] We enter through Him and after we follow Him on the path of obedience and the path of righteousness. But the broad gate, the wide gate, also has a way that is easy.

It says here in the ESV. This is the path of least resistance. As I mentioned, you can kind of believe whatever you want and do whatever you want to do through this gate and on this path.

Scripture even tells us that it's a lot easier to just live according to the flesh. In Galatians chapter 5 and Romans chapter 7 we see this picture that the flesh is very strong against us wanting to follow the Spirit and there's an opposition going on.

The natural flesh, He says in 1 Corinthians, the natural man even sees the things of Christ and sees them as folly. It seems foolishness to our natural flesh to follow the ways of Christ.

I mean, just the natural man wants to do things on our own initiative. Surely it's not a gift. It's got to be earned, right? It's not just as easy as believing and following Jesus.

[13:32] I've got to work my way so that my good outweighs my bad. That's the way the natural man thinks. But the way of the wide gate, the way is easy.

Now that word easy literally means to be broad or spacious. It's only used one time here in the New Testament but used a lot in the Old Testament where you might have like Psalm 31 that says you have set my feet in a broad place.

Wide and spacious. Job 36.16 says He also allured you out of distress into a broad place where there's no cramping and what was set on your table was full of fatness.

So it's this idea in the Old Testament of broad and spacious gives this idea of freedom. It's this idea of plenty and abundance and thriving.

And so the way of the wide gate, the broad way promises freedom. It looks like, oh, this is what freedom looks like where I can pursue whatever I want to pursue but it leads to destruction.

[14:43] I mean, we think about the original temptation back in the garden where it says that she saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes.

It was desired to make one wise yet God said it leads to death. You see in Proverbs 14.12 that there's a way that seems right to man but its end leads to death. Paul talks about this in Philippians chapter 3 where he talks about those whose end is destruction. It says their God is their belly or their appetites and they glory in their shame. They're proud about things they should be ashamed for. Their minds are set on earthly things. That is a great description of the broad and easy way. Just follow your heart. You do you. Right? It's the false promises that if I can just live up to who I really am inside that's what true freedom and even life is is learning who I really am. [15 : 49] It's all about finding that inner journey. There's a way that seems right to man but the end of it leads to death. It seems like it would be great to just pursue and achieve success fame money whatever it might be.

There's a great quote from Jim Carrey the American actor for those of you who are younger than me you might know him from like Sonic the Hedgehog or something. But Jim Carrey said this he said I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so that they can see that it's not the answer.

It's emptiness. There was a professional athlete in I coach the American football team at the University of Edinburgh so I'm into American football a lot and athlete after athlete talk about getting these big contracts and they're winning Super Bowls which is the highest honor ultimate success and they're asking questions like surely there's more to life than this.

We think that by pursuing our dreams and all these having ultimate freedom that I can do whatever I want to success fame money fortune all those things that's going to lead to happiness.

The end of it leads to death. We choose this wide path by default because it's a lot easier that way the way is easy it promises great things but the end is destruction.

[17 : 21] But then Jesus says in verse 14 the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. This is by the way Jesus' way of giving an invitation.

Hey the way is hard the gate is narrow few are those who find it. He says in Luke 14 like look if you want to follow me like you don't build a tower without counting the cost.

A king doesn't go to war without first making sure he's going to have all the troops and logistics that he needs. You got to count the cost and make sure that you understand that I'm worth it.

you must count the cost to follow me. This way is the path of resistance. There's a lot going against you on the hard way.

So we have to ask the question what makes that way hard? What makes it hard to follow Jesus and to choose this path to go through the narrow gate?

[18 : 19] So this word hard it means to compress or to press like a grape? It's a word that's often used for suffering and affliction.

The way of following Christ is often found with suffering and tribulation and when you're squeezed like that your true self really comes out.

When someone is really squeezed and pressed what's on the inside starts coming on the outside. We see a good example of what it means to live on this path in the two different ways.

We see this in the parable of the sower actually in Matthew 13 and Mark chapter 4 where Jesus talks about that there are four kinds of soils when someone is sowing the word of God the gospel that the seed lands on four different soils.

This is the first one lands on the hard path and in this parable he said birds come and take it away. The second seed falls on rocky ground which is basically a thin layer of topsoil with rock underneath it and it says that it immediately springs up but then because it can't grow with its roots it can't go deep that it immediately dies.

[19 : 41] he said the third soil is the seed that falls among thorns where it starts growing but it's choked out by the thorns and then the fourth falls on good soil and when it falls on good soil it produces fruit thirty sixty hundred fold and then Jesus goes on to explain that parable and he says the seed that fell on the hard ground on the path and said the birds came and plucked it up that is Satan when he comes and he snatches the word off the hard ground before it has a chance to do anything so one reason why the way is hard is there's an enemy who does not want you to hear the good news that wants to snatch the word out of your life before it can take any root wants you to be distracted and to not hear the voice of the Lord the second one that falls on rocky soil the one that couldn't get depth

Jesus says this is when tribulation or persecution comes and people fall away so they start out well and then when things get hard they fall away one of the reasons that the way is hard is because there's a lot of persecution and things that come our way that come against us this would kind of be like when you're at work or at school and someone says something and you want to say something according to Jesus way but you kind of like oh I will be ridiculed maybe even ostracized if I say that so we kind of shrink back you know what I'm talking about that's what we're talking about where there's persecution or tribulation when things get hard falls away the third soil was one that came among thorns Jesus goes on to say that this is the cares of this world the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things that come and choke out the word and man in the west don't we feel that one that the way is hard because the cares of this world we're just thinking about other things we're thinking about what am I going to do this weekend what am I going to spend my money on am I going to have enough money to pay for the bills we get thinking about all the cares of this world that distracts us from other things or it could be the deceitfulness of riches if I just had more I would be happy more stuff stuff equals happiness now again I don't have to be rich as much as comfortable I want to be comfortable a desire for the riches that are deceitful and then he says the desire for other things that's a pretty broad category here but other things there are just things that are vying for our attention and it is really coming after us and really what Jesus is getting at is this is the things of the world we have an enemy who wants to take away the word so that you do not hear the news of Jesus Christ we're at war with Satan and the forces of darkness that is a reality now some of us are so distracted by the other things that maybe you know the enemy doesn't feel like he has to spend a lot of time on us because the other things are working better but we have an enemy that's actively working against us there's also just going to be tribulation

Jesus promises it Paul says that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted but in the sermon on the mount Jesus said blessed are you when you're persecuted for the sake of righteousness blessed are you when others revile you on my account that's a blessed life that's a life of thriving when we're persecuted for Jesus sake the world is against us our own flesh is against us our own flesh wants to do the easy thing wants to go the way of the world and that's hard we will sometimes call this the evil trinity satan the world and our own flesh and when those things are against us it makes it really hard it just does so the way is hard that leads to life but Jesus says it's worth it to follow

Jesus is to follow him down the path of resistance and if you find it hard at times to follow Jesus that's a good thing it means you're probably going in the right way but if you find following Jesus pretty easy and comfortable there's a chance you're not following him because he says following me is the hard way the way the world is going the way our flesh wants to go that's the easy way but he says the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and few are those who find it so how will we respond to the sermon on the mount when Jesus says enter into the narrow gate there are some of us here maybe you are exploring Jesus maybe you're not sure where you stand with him there can be many misconceptions of how to properly respond to

[25 : 22] Jesus it's not just a mental ascent it is a giving your life to follow him it is a! repent and believe the gospel then follow me down this hard and narrow way Jesus is saying the king is here and a decision must be made in the passage that Corey read a few verses down Jesus also says there are many who will say to me that day Lord Lord who will not enter the kingdom of heaven he says there are many who will say to me on that day Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons and perform mighty works in your name and he said and I will say to them on that day depart from me you workers of lawlessness for I never knew you you mean there are some who are going to say I live my life for you Jesus who are not in the kingdom of heaven Jesus says yeah there will be many who do things saying it's in my name but you're not following me maybe it's because you're doing it for reputation to be seen by others which

Jesus talked about in Matthew chapter 6 maybe it's that you are doing things on the outside but the inside is not there like he talked about in chapter 5 but he says you must follow me on this narrow! path it is those who do the will of my father who is in heaven it's not just outward obedience it's inward heart as well and it's about being on this path we realize I'm blew it I can't live this way yes only Jesus can and so we by faith give our lives to him to follow him we follow him in faith and we repent of our sin repent of our good works that we are trying to do to earn his favor but there are many of us in here who are also followers of Christ that we would say stay the path he is with us it can be hard when you see the things that are happening in our culture that celebrate death instead

of life there are so many ways that the world is trying to lure you into its thinking to get you to follow the ways of the world the enemy is attacking in ways that we don't even see to try to discourage and accuse the brethren to deceive us don't give in to the flesh believe the gospel that Jesus lived the life that you couldn't live and he died the death that you deserve to die so that through faith in him we can have life the end of the hard way entering through the narrow gate leads to life so live that life of repentance whenever I hear about kind of a fork in the road or cross roads or you got to pick the path to choose Jim Elliott if you ever heard that name was a missionary from America went to the Akka Indians in South America and one of my favorite quotes he had a book kind of his biography written by his wife called The Shadow of the Almighty this quote stuck with me where he says father make of me a crisis man bring those I contact to a decision let me not be a mile post on a single road but make me a fork that men must turn one way or another on facing Christ in me in other words for those of you who are following Jesus let us live a life that is so bearing the image the image of Jesus that is so we're the hands and feet of Jesus that we are following him in such a way that people when they come in contact with us they've got to make a decision am I going to follow that way of Jesus or turn the other way let our lives be such that people even face a little bit of conviction followers let's pray father we thank you so much that Jesus gave us these words that he gave us really a hard saying after such an incredible sermon showing what life in the kingdom is like life of thriving in a way that lives for your glory and honors you both from the outside and the inside how to live from the heart how to pray there are so many incredible things that

[30 : 30] Jesus gave us thank you that he gave us this invitation to enter the narrow gate Lord Jesus thank you for giving us this way to follow you and Lord what you call us to you give us the strength to obey you gave us your spirit so that we could follow you on this path may we never think for a moment that we can earn our way that we can be good enough help us to fall into your arms and trust you again thank you for the spirit that empowers us to live this life that you've called us to may we live in full obedience day by day we pray this in the precious name of Jesus amen