

Matthew 7:13-14

Walking the Narrow Way

Introduction: If you're joining us for the first time - Welcome. We're currently teaching through Jesus' most famous teaching known as the Sermon on the mount.

Contrary to what some may think the Sermon on the Mount is not teaching us how to get into the kingdom of God- the Bible makes it clear that entrance to God's kingdom is only through grace - by the sacrificial work of Jesus.

The sermon is also not teaching us how we stay in the kingdom. Rather it is a description of the character and conduct of those who already belong to God's kingdom.

The Sermon is not a call to repentance, though that may be involved at times, it is a description of the expression and evidences of true repentance.

Though anyone can listen and learn from this sermon, and respond to it's offer of the fulness of life, it's primary audience and focus is the disciple of Jesus. It describes the life that necessarily results from genuine salvation; it describes what God is doing in us and wants to do in us. What he is making us into by the work of his spirit and grace upon us.

This sermon of Jesus has been used for centuries to shape and form God's people into the way of Jesus and we are believing that this is what God will do with us as well.

I want to come back to verse 12 this morning because it is worthy of more thought and attention than we were able to give it in our last study.

As we've been saying throughout these teachings - Jesus' sermon is not so much about doing as it is about being. Jesus is transforming his people into a people who do righteousness, and the right thing, because that's the kind of people they are, or have become.

We're coming into the last section of Jesus' sermon where Jesus gives four different exhortations to his listeners to enter into his way of life that he has described - he says, listen and do. He presents two paths, two trees, two kinds of people, and two kinds of builders. He exhorts us to the

arduous path that leads to life; to be healthy trees that bear good fruit; to be doers of his word and not just hearers, and to be wise builders that build our lives on his person and his teaching.

Let's look at the first of these exhortations.

1. Two ways of living or being

1. **“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.”**

2. Two ways of living or being are contrasted:

1. One that appears to be better because of its ease and breadth but turns out to lead to destruction, decay or death

2. The other that is difficult, compressed and uncomfortable but actually leads to life, flourishing and fullness.

1. Jesus exhorts his listeners to the more difficult path that leads to life.

3. What path or way are you currently walking? What path will you choose?

1. The path that is easy and wide is not what we might think (maybe you picture Jesus taking up a fire and brimstone preacher persona at this point. I picture a scene from the Pilgrims progress) - denouncing of idolatry, perversity, abuse and addiction, it's the path that looks peaceful and light but it is actually dark and sinister. The path that is easy and wide is rather the way that a person who applies Jesus words only to their outward life is walking. They play the christian religious game, of talking the talk, showing up to services and meetings, going through the program, or going through the motions, doing acts of charity and piety but not having applied Jesus teaching to the inner person, to the heart.

2. The path that is difficult and narrow may actually from the outside looks the same as the other path but it is filled with arduous work, it is a path of deep introspection about one's heart motives and inner character. It is a life that is not satisfied with checking the boxes of spirituality, holiness and piety as ends in themselves, but is concerned more with wholeness of person and purity of heart - A single-minded devotion to God that is rooted in the heart but expresses itself in everything we do”.

1. It's a life of continual repentance, correcting our way of thinking, speaking and acting - at the heart level - until we find that our first responses and thoughts are loving and living in the way of Jesus as described in this great sermon.
2. This is the difficult way - but it is the way that leads to life - to flourishing and fullness.

2. The Crossroads

1. Jesus' words are an exhortation to me, and to you, to enter the way of life, to his way of flourishing taught in the Sermon on the Mount.
2. Jesus' ominous "how few there are that find it" saying is not meant to get us to speculate how many people are actually "saved," or are "going to Heaven", but are words that are meant to go inward and search our own hearts - **Is that me, Lord; Am I following the way of Jesus??**
 1. This word is meant to exhort all hearers, including especially disciples, to make the most important decision of their lives and to make it daily. - to follow Jesus, and specifically his teaching here in the sermon on the Mount.
 3. Jesus in his sermon has laid out for us the kingdom life and vision for how we are to live and its as if he then looks us in the eye and says - Will you follow me?
 4. So it begs the question - Are you entering the narrow way? Are you following Jesus? Are you taking his word, promises and warnings, with the seriousness they deserve? Are you taking Jesus' words and examining your life with them? or are you give mere mental ascent to the things that he is teaching?
 1. If I do not apply Jesus' words and teachings at the heart level I will not experience the flourishing life that he promises here in this sermon, not only that but I will find that I am not following the way of Jesus at all; but in fact following a path of self righteous morality that in the end leads not to life but destruction.
 2. The application of this section is probably varied for this group - What does it look like for you to apply Jesus sermon at the heart level? In what area are you resistant to his teaching? Jesus call to Fidelity and truthfulness; forgiveness and mercy, peacemaking and reconciliation; Prayer for and blessing of one's enemies; humility; doing righteousness and justice.
 3. Many in our culture might find many of Jesus' teachings on Anger or forgiveness to be agreeable maybe even life changing but would mock and disdain Jesus teachings on fidelity, purity,

and meekness. But for Jesus followers he doesn't give us the option to cherry pick and only apply the ones we agree with, or that we think will be good for us - when we do this we are treating Jesus as a consultant on our life rather than our king, savior and Lord.

4. "Contemporary people tend to examine the Bible, looking for things they can't accept; but Christians should reverse that, allowing the Bible to examine us, looking for things God can't accept. Then the sweet grace offered, the beauty of his love, will mean something to you." - Tim Keller
5. Please don't make this mistake of standing in Judgement over the bible but bring yourself under the rule of our king Jesus. Let him give you his good counsel, and care as your king and shepherd.

3. The Need for the Gospel

1. True application of Jesus teaching requires a posture like David's in Psalm 139 - **"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"** or Psalm 51:10, **"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."**
2. When I begin to apply the Sermon on the Mount to my life at the heart level it is arduous and narrow. It reveals how far I am from the wholistic righteousness that God requires - it's painful, and discouraging to see how selfish, self righteous, covetous, greedy, and proud we really are - to see ourselves for who we really are - this brings fear, guilt, and condemnation - which is where the Power of the Gospel comes in. The Gospel tells us, "You are dearly loved, not because you are lovely, but because I have loved you. You are not a child of God because you earned it or deserve it but because of God's kindness and grace." Jesus Christ came to rescue us and redeem us - through his life giving sacrifice on the cross - to save us from what we are, to make us into what we could never be on our own, to make us into something new, something beautiful, something glorious.
3. If he showed this kindness to you when you were an enemy and a rebel do you think now as a child and friend of God he will cut you off from His kindness, that he will give up on you? Do you think that he who began a good work in you will not complete it?? Or do you think that God is shocked by how deeply rooted and ugly your sin is and that when he sees it - he'll cast you off, or forsake you?

4. Tim Keller reminds us that - Through the Gospel we see that we are more flawed than we ever dared believe, yet more loved and accepted than we ever dared hope.
 1. As Jesus calls us to this rigorous road of self examination, confession and repentance, he promises that it leads to life, the true flourishing, the very life of God the Father promised in this sermon.
 2. C.S. Lewis said, *“Our faith is not a matter of hearing what Christ said so long ago and “trying to carry it out” rather, “The real son of God is at your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself. He is beginning, so to speak, to inject his kind of life and thought, his ZOE, into you; beginning to turn the tin soldier into a live man; the part of you that doesn’t like it is the part that is still tin.”* C.S Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
 3. Jesus is calling each of his followers to this rigorous and narrow road, but not to walk it alone - he calls us to follow him, he promises to be our companion all along the way, to never forsake us, and to complete the good work he began in us.

Conclusion: As we close can we just meditate on these two Psalms from David -asking the Lord to do his deep work in our hearts -

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” or Psalm 51:10, **“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”**

As we close in worship let’s be thinking through our lives in Light of Jesus’ sermon - where do we need to apply his teaching to our hearts - let us confess, repent and call on the Lord for his grace and unfailing love to do it and to live it.