

Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

We now enter our next portion of the sermon on the mount.

Essentially at this point the sermon **changes direction**. It moves from the **body** to its **conclusion**. From here on in Jesus is not presenting new material as much as He is emphasizing the need to **apply what He has said**.

Jesus is basically now telling the crowd the kind of life they must lead as a result of being the people He described earlier.

Christ has come down to **call people** to enter a **Kingdom of His**. That means they are coming out of another Kingdom. This new kingdom has distinctions. Jesus has spent a great deal of time showing what His kingdom **consists of** as contrasted with the **Pharisees teaching**.

If you want to understand what Christ says in His conclusion, just think of the **broad way** consisting of **the way of the Pharisees**. There are certainly other flavors of the **wide** path. But the Pharisees are a **clear example** of it.

Think of the Beatitudes people on the **narrow path**. Think of all of the unusual, supernatural traits of those people as you imagine it.

Remember how Jesus started with the traits of the **Beatitude** people.

And we saw that because these people **are** what they **are**, the world around them will respond. And much of the time that response isn't **positive**. They are likely to be **disliked** and **persecuted**. But even when **that** happens, they are to remain in the world **looking** and **smelling** different to a lost world.

Then Jesus shows how the Beatitudes people's righteousness is to **exceed** that of the Pharisees. He teaches us how to **give**, how to **regard marriage** and **divorce**, how to **pray**, how to **fast**. Then He talks about how our **whole attitude** of life should be different. He shows how we must live in **constant trust** of God. He shows that we must view everyone from the viewpoint of how **God** views them rather than our **selfish pride** getting into the equation. He laid down all these principles.

He taught us how to think as Beatitude people. He went step by step and taught us how to **see life**, how to **think about life**.

That brings us to today.

We can almost picture Christ at this point saying, "Well, now you have heard the absolute truth from the Son of God. I am not wanting you to tell me **how great my sermon was**. I am not looking for you to compliment some of the spiritual insights. I don't want to hear about some interesting observations

about the topic. I want to know one thing. **What are you going to do about it?**

I think if we see it from that perspective we are getting where Christ is in the sermon.

It is at this point Jesus is saying, Just do it.

After this passage Jesus will give us a **test of fruit** and **test of circumstances** to see if these followers are genuine. In this passage Jesus points to the proof of the **path** they pick.

It is here that Christ says this:

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

I was trying to put this into some **imagery** we are familiar with. I think of it as travelling down a four lane highway and there is a small **pull off** for a trail head for some **hiking trail** that has not been well maintained. The **highway** goes to a polluted, overcrowded city about to have a nuke go off in it. The trail goes to a **gorgeous overlook** of miles of unmolested forest.

We see thousands of people rushing to and from the city, doing what everyone else is doing. But only a few value the beauty at the end of the hiking trail as being worth the trouble.

What we are looking at here are **two gates, two destinations** and **two groups**.

The first thing we must notice is that Jesus says **ENTER**. This is not an option for **super** Christians. He is not saying, if you like, you can live on the broad way as long as you want however you would like, as long as you asked Jesus into your heart at some point. No. He says nothing of the kind. He says **ENTER**.

This is at the same time a command and an invitation.

It is a **command** in that it is absolutely essential for a person's salvation that they enter the right gate. They cannot choose another gate and find the right path. You do not **stumble** into the kingdom of God. You don't **default** into the Kingdom of God. No one will be in heaven **unknowingly** or **unwillingly** or by mistake. This is a gate we must choose.

It is an **invitation** in that there is no one that God will prohibit to **come to Him** by the blood of Christ. Anyone who is **willing** to come by that gate is **able** to come by that gate. We must always be careful in our application of God's sovereignty that we do not eliminate those scriptures that tell us that

God is willing to receive all that come to Him. Choice is essential to salvation. And God is willing that no one should perish. It is **like God** to invite everyone.

Now there is **more** to that story. But there is not **less**. So God **demands** that we enter that Gate and God **allows** all that will to come through that gate.

Now back to our illustration, what happens as we are driving down the highway and we see the trailhead?

Aren't we forced to choose at that point?

Well obviously this choice Christ talks about is more important than going hiking. God is calling us to choose between **heaven and hell**. We are choosing between **Christ** as Lord and **anything else** as Lord.

We have got to understand that God has **always** offered us a choice and He has **always** demanded that we must make the right one to be right with Him. Look at these passages.

The first is in Deut 30:19-20

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him"

Once in the promised land Joshua challenged Israel with this choice between the Canaanite Gods and the true God.

[Josh. 24:13-15](#) **"Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve,"**

Elijah asked the people of Israel on Mt Carmel this,

[1 Kings 18:21](#) **"How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him"**

Jeremiah laid this choice to His people: [Jer. 21:8](#) **"Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death'"**

In [John 6:66-69](#), Jesus again called for a choice:

"As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. Jesus said therefore to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'"

We see that God is never shy about **demanding** people to make a choice and **offering** them a wonderful choice to make.

And the choice is always between life and death, between the worship of the one true God and the worship of anything else.

I liked MacArthur's quote here:

There have always been but two systems of religion in the world. One is God's system of divine accomplishment, and the other is man's system of human achievement. One is the religion of God's grace, the other the religion of men's works. One is the religion of faith, the other the religion of the flesh. One is the religion of the sincere heart and the internal, the other the religion of hypocrisy and the external. Within man's system are thousands of religious forms and names, but they are all built on the achievements of man and the inspiration of Satan. Christianity; on the other hand, is the religion of divine accomplishment, and it stands alone.

We must note that the gate is restricted to one way. Our world absolutely hates this but there is only one way to God. There is only one gate that gets there.

John 14:6 (NKJV)

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

So we are commanded and invited to enter the correct gate.

We are commanded and invited to decide.

Naturally this means we are to use our minds. The word "decide" demands this.

You and I are deciding all day every day. This is opportunity and it is also responsibility. We have the chance to decide for God and we are obligated to choose for God.

Now in our text we have two gates to enter. But we are commanded to enter the narrow gate.

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

There is something interesting to note here. Both the correct **gate** and the **way** are narrow. Notice that it is not a **wide gate** and then a **narrow path**, eventually.

I think we have some very well intended brothers who are so desperate to get people on the narrow way that they create a wide gate and then narrow the path as they follow along. So they do not emphasize the **problem of sin** and

the **fallen nature**. They focus on the **felt needs**. I need to **get rid** of an addiction. I need to have the **feeling of peace** in my life. I need something to help me **straighten up my family**. So the sermons are based on how Jesus will help you straighten out the messed up things in your life if you will do what He says. And you need to pray a prayer and ask Jesus into your heart so He will start **fixing stuff**. There is little mention of hell. There is little mention that we fully deserve hell in our selfish state outside of Christ. No we are **decent people** coming to Christ to be **made better**. Yeah we have some noticeable flaws, but we aren't sure this word "repentance" is really all that necessary. **Improvement** is more what we have in mind.

That is a **wide gate**. Lots of people have lots of needs. Lots of people want help making their lives better. But when does the invitation include that your sin is the big problem. Not just the sin that **makes your life miserable** but also the sin **you really like**. When is the **glory of God** emphasized to where we fall on our face with the recognition of how we have dishonored Him, we have failed Him, we have sinned against Him, we have offended Him. In fact even what **we are**, deep inside, is the problem. We cannot possibly please Him in our current state.

When do we beat our chest and cry out to God with our eyes on the dust that it is **I** that is the huge problem here. It is **I** that could never deserve God to even look at me in love. It is **I** that is the massive problem in my life.

Now the gate is getting narrower. Now we are looking at that **hard truth** that will take a miracle for a person to see about themselves.

The gate of **evangelism** needs to be every bit as **narrow** as the way of **discipleship**. We need to be accurate about both the **problem** and the **solution**. Jesus does not selectively offer self help services. He offers a kingdom you can join that is ruled by Him. Take it or leave it. His services cannot be parceled out.

Notice too that this gate is **intensely personal**. Couples do not enter that gate. Families do not enter that gate. It is you and you alone who must enter that gate. As much as you might wish you could, you can not bring another person through it with you. I read several authors that stressed the Greek word and the context carries the idea that there is only room for one person in this gate. Our brother Jones sees it as a turnstile where only one person can go through at a time.

for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

Remember where Solomon told us this:

Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

¹² **There is a way *that seems right to a man*, But its end *is the way of death*.**

Here lies the rub.

To the natural man the wide gate **looks right** to him. There are a lot of people today who think Christians are evil when we warn them of the danger of their **sinful choices and lifestyles**. They honestly think that they are taking the **high moral ground**. It looks right to them. Many of those supporting the homosexual agenda or abortion do not regard themselves as supporting something **sinful**. If anything, they think that people like us who call the practice of homosexuality evil are truly the evil ones. They view **their** position as **morally superior**. They honestly **believe** tolerance of these unusual and blatantly unnatural practices is the highest good. And our lack of it is the highest evil.

Listen to this story.

A letter written to a Melbourne, Australia, daily newspaper expresses clearly the attitude of a person on the broad road to destruction.

After hearing Dr. Billy Graham on the air, viewing him on television and reading reports and letters concerning him and his mission, I am heartily sick of the type of religion that insists my soul (and everyone else's) needs saving—whatever that means. I have never felt that I was lost. Nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin, although repetitive preaching insists that I do.

Give me a practical religion that teaches gentleness and tolerance, that acknowledges no barriers of color or creed, that remembers the aged and teaches children of goodness and not sin.

If in order to save my soul, I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned.

We have got to understand that the wide gate **looks right** to them. And until God opens their eyes, they will not chose otherwise.

What this also means is that the narrow path choosers are going to have to develop a thick skin. There is a natural conflict here, and it cannot be avoided. We must be the kind of people who get **tone deaf** to the criticism of the **wide path** citizens. Whatever everyone else is doing has no bearing on me. I am responsible and will choose wisely.

We should also notice here that Christians are people who must **think for themselves**. The wide path allows for **group think**. You have a mass of humanity who are free to **conform** to their media, to the popular idols, be

they music performers or movie stars or pop philosophers or media influencers or whatever. It is not unusual that you would hear the wide path folks regurgitating the lies they have been fed. They **cannot help it**. They are tone deaf to spiritual music.

But Christians are taking a **narrow path** that requires **individual** decision. They will not get on this path as a **group member**. They must deal personally with the salvation that Christ is offering. **Narrow paths** require **individualistic** decision making. Each person must do business with what the Bible says and means. That is why the **Bereans** are the heroes of the narrow path. They individually took the teaching home and compared it to what the scriptures says. We are not allowed to say it just because MacArthur or Piper or Lawson or Jones says it. We must understand what God says and we must know it for ourselves. That is a narrow path requirement.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

This word for narrow means constricted. John MacArthur says this.

***Stenos* (narrow) comes from a root that means "to groan," as from being under pressure, and is used figuratively to represent a restriction or constriction. It is the word from which we get stenography, writing that is abbreviated or compressed.**

I read this in the John Nolland commentary.

When this Greek word is used to mean 'narrow', the word gives the idea of something being under pressure because it is too small for the purpose to which it is being put (much as we might say 'overstretched').¹

The whole thing conveys the idea that this path will be tough. It is we who will be overstretched. Think about it. How did Jesus tell us to treat enemies? What did He command about worry? What did He tell us about all of our interactions with fellow humans? Think even about the standard of treating them the way I want to be treated. If we think about that for 10 minutes, we think- **overstretched**. We look at that and we say I cannot do that. And we are right. Apart from Christ we cannot do that. Narrow doesn't even touch the surface of the life a Christian lives if they are taking it seriously.

Look at what Paul tells us about this path, this way.

Ephesians 4:20-24 (NKJV)

²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ,

¹ John Nolland, [*The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 333.

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Woah. You mean there is no room on this path for the **old me**? It is so narrow that the **new me** and the **old me** cannot travel it together? I even need to take **that** off to get through the turnstile?

C'mon now. There has got to be some room for the broad path attitudes and habits?

Well the analogy might go a bit too far because we are continually putting off the old man. We don't leave it at the turnstile. But we get the idea that **it is that restricted**. There is not room for the new self way of life and the old self way of life. It is like carrying a backpack that has a fishing rod sticking out of both sides. It is going to continually rubbing against stuff and snagging stuff.

Brother Jones says this:

'Put off the old man', that is, leave him outside the gate. There is no room for two men to go through this gate together, so the old man must be left behind²

If any man will come after me'—what happens? 'Let him deny himself (the first thing always), and take up his cross, and follow me.' But self-denial, denial of self, does not mean refraining from various pleasures and things that we may like; it means we deny our very right to our self, we leave our self outside, and go in through the gate saying: 'Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'.³

That is the idea. It is narrow. It is constricted.

It is limited to doing what the **Word of God says**. I can't just pick **lots of options** on this path. There **aren't** lots of options. Those options are open on the broad path. But not on this narrow one.

We talked last week about the problem of self. So we are on the broad path. And God opens our eyes and we say, the narrow path is the one for me. Maybe

² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, [*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#), Second edition. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 540.

³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, [*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#), Second edition. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 541.

we even change environments, we change where we live, we change our friends. For an example, suppose we are going to a church that does not teach the Bible well and we have trouble **with lust**. Then we go to a church that **does** teach the Bible well. Does the **lust** just go away? Not likely. The unfortunate thing we find is that wherever we go, there we are. And the things that caused us to do the **wrong things** in **another** environment cause us to do the **wrong things** in this **new** environment. And we learn once again, the problem isn't with **where** we are so much as the fact that it is we **who** is there.

Charles Spurgeon said, "**You and your sins must separate or you and your God will never come together. No one sin may you keep; they must all be given up, they must be brought out like Canaanite kings from the cave and be hanged up in the sun.**"

John MacArthur says

To love God with everything we have is to jettison self—self-confidence, self-achievement, self-righteousness, and self-satisfaction.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Matthew 1-7.

We are always at a place at having to **apply again** those things that Master Teacher Christ told us **to do** and what **not to do**. The path is narrow. It does not allow for us to pull out our compass and **create** our **own** path. Our path is to conform to the Word of God that God **graciously provides us**. The light of the word provides just enough of the path for us to follow.

Psalms 119:105 (NKJV)

¹⁰⁵ **Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**

Our path is as narrow as the instruction of God.

But even though it is narrow, that does not mean it is **bad**. Yes it is restrictive. But it keeps us from the **destruction** that the world's path consists of.

Is it bad that it restricts us from **abandoning our families**? Is it bad that it tells we cannot destroy our health by **worrying**? Is it bad in that it demands we **love people in relationships**? Is it bad it keeps us from **lying and stealing** and being a bum when we are **able** to work.

All of that is good. But it is restrictive. It is like a family where the parents make demands of their kids. They must do their chores. They must show respect. They must have manners. They must be home before 10. What world of hurt those kids are saved from. What advantages they have over similar kids who do not have a narrow way.

Yes this path **restricts us to life** and **saves us from destruction**. Bring that restriction on.

To close we will look at this last part of the text- **difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it**.

Difficult is the way. Is not much of our **discontent** based on the fact that living the Christian life is **harder** than we expected? God does not take away the **temptations** of the sins that easily beset us. We have to **fight hard** to gain ground in our struggle to live new lives. We may have to memorize and recite scripture to ourselves over and over. We may have to call a friend for help in our distress. We may fail often and loath our own failures.

And we want to blame God because we have to work for our sanctification. Well that is exactly what Jesus promised us here. It is like parenting. If it is easy you probably aren't doing it right.

John MacArthur makes this point.

When someone asked Jesus, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" He replied, "Strive to enter the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able" ([Luke 13:23-24](#)). The term *agōnizomai* ("strive") indicates that entering the door to God's kingdom takes conscious, purposeful, and intense effort. That is the term from which we get agonize, and is the same word Paul uses to describe an athlete who agonizes ("competes") to win a race ([1 Cor. 9:25](#)) and the Christian who "fights the good fight of faith" (literally, "struggles the good struggle,"

I think we have seen **what we need to see** this morning. Are our lives **surrendered** to King Jesus so that we claim **no rights** to our lives? Do we see our lives at **His beck and call**? Have we committed to **turn** from our fleshly ways of thinking and viewing life? Do we see ourselves on this narrow restricted way that takes us **exactly** where our lives **should be** going? If so we really get what Jesus was talking about.

If not, this week would be a good time to recommit to Christ, **the only way**, and to His path, the **narrow** way.