

## Two Roads

### *Matthew 7:13-14*

#### Introduction

We now find ourselves in the final section in the Sermon on the Mount. If there was any question whether or not Jesus' sermon is for the Christian... today, what Jesus says in conclusion to his sermon is unmistakable. If the Sermon on the Mount was a series of ethical statements to be lived out in a future kingdom, then there would be no need for Jesus to say what he says in verses 13-27.

There are four paragraphs that make up Jesus' conclusion to his sermon, and each paragraph describes a set of choices before the one who has listened to his sermon. Each choice is an appeal from our Lord to choose life over death. We will consider each of these paragraphs on a deeper level in the four weeks that remain for this sermon series, but I want to highlight each of the choices that are before us:

There are two roads we can travel (vv. 13-14). There is a wide road that is easy now, but leads to destruction, and there is a narrow road that is hard now, but leads to life. We must choose what road we will travel.

There are two teachers we can listen to (vv. 15-20). One teacher bears life-giving fruit while the other yields rotten fruit that will sicken or kill.

There are two ways to listen to Jesus (vv. 21-23). There are two types of people who call themselves a Christian, but only one type of person is known by Jesus.

There are types of people who listen to Jesus (vv. 24-27). One type of listener wisely applies what he/she hears from Jesus to their lives in a way that results in something lasting, while the other only listens. Only one has a relationship with Jesus that is able to withstand the storms of life.

At the end of his sermon, Jesus says that there are two ways to live your life, one is popular while the other is not so popular. There are two kinds of teachers, one is truthful while the other is not. There are two types of people who are associated with Jesus, one who follows Jesus, while the other pays lip service to Jesus. Finally, there are two foundations you can build on and live your life upon; one is dependable, while the other is shifting and dangerous.

What Jesus calls those of us who have listened to his sermon to do is nothing new. There is a way that leads to life, and there is a way that leads to death. It is a way that has existed since Adam and Eve walked in the Garden, and you can hear the appeal to choose in Psalm 1, and it's echo is heard throughout the Old and New Testaments: **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;**

**but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish” (Psalm 1:1–2).**

Towards the end of Deuteronomy, which is a series of three sermons preached by Moses, a similar appeal was made: **“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them”** (Deut. 30:19-20). After Moses died, God chose Joshua to take the people into the Land God had promised them; after Joshua fulfilled the mission given to him and shortly before he died, Joshua made a similar appeal to the Hebrew people:

**Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.** (Joshua 24:14–15)

On July 31, I preached on Matthew 5:10-12, the title of my sermon was, *Joy in the Fire*. In that sermon I introduced you to Sandemanianism, which is the theological posturing that essentially reduces faith in Jesus to a collection of facts about his life, death, and resurrection that if acknowledged as true, a person can have total and complete assurance that their sins are forgiven regardless of how that person feels about Jesus or how that belief affects the lifestyle of that person. Sandemanianism (aka Free Grace Theology) has crept into various streams of Evangelicalism that has reduced Christianity into two options that essentially make following Jesus optional. Permit me to give you an example of what the rationale of Sandermanianism sounds like through the words of a well-known evangelist who died in 1917, then tell me if this is what you hear in anything that Jesus said: “There is a difference between salvation and discipleship. A man or woman can be saved by God’s grace without becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

We have already seen in the Beatitudes that to come to Christ for salvation requires that a person come with the understanding that he has nothing to offer God in terms of works of righteousness (he is poor in spirit), that he grieves over his sin (he is one who mourns), and that he is willing to surrender his pride before the cross of Christ (he is meek). But to come to the cross of Christ means that a person must come on Jesus’ terms and not their own. He is the Lord, those who come to him are not. Only three chapters after the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said this about salvation: **“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”** (Matthew 10:37–39).

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<sup>1</sup> Chambers, Oswald. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount: God’s Character and the Believer’s Conduct* (2016), p. 77

## Two Ways to Live

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount we are faced with an ultimatum: Follow the way that is easy and most traveled but, in the end, will lead to destruction, or the way that is hard and least traveled but leads to life. There is a narrow gate and wide gate; the narrow gate opens to a narrow path that leads to life, while the wide gate opens to a road that is large enough for many to journey on it.

There are no more than two gates; that is all that exist before the person who has encountered Jesus. One gate leads to life and the other leads to destruction. The choice as to which gate to walk through is before us. What are you going to do with Jesus' sermon? What will you do with the beatitudes? What will you do with Jesus' statement on hungering and thirsting for righteousness (see Matt. 5:6, 20)? What will you do with what Jesus said about anger, lust, divorce, keeping oaths, and getting even with those who offend you? Do you intend to follow Jesus' teaching concerning how to love your enemies, giving to the needy, trusting God's will for your tomorrows, and how you are to use your stuff? Whose way do you think is better for your life? Your way, or God's way? Do you really believe that God is equally good as he is sovereign?

You call God "Father" but are you willing to live in this world as though you really belong to his family? You say you want his name to be hallowed throughout the earth and your life, but to what end? You say that you trust him, but are you willing to yield to his will? You seek his mercy, but are willing to extend the kind of mercy you have received, to others? You say you want to live for him, but where are you seeking your joy, your satisfaction, your worth, and your identity?

There are two gates, one is narrow and the other wide. The narrow gate is the cross of Christ. Entrance to life is free because he already paid the price. To believe in Jesus is to follow him, and to follow him is to take up your cross, which is a dying to one's self: **"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"** (Matthew 10:37-39).

The other gate is wide and it opens up to a road most traveled because it is easy. What makes this way easy? It is easy because there is a mirage always before those on this road that offers whatever you want. On this road, the mirage of joy, satisfaction, your worth, and your identity comes in whatever form your appetites crave, even though God has said such appetites will lead to death. This road is easy because it is the one with least resistance from most of those in your community, school, government, work, and family. The wide road is considered beautiful, it is hailed as the moral high ground and those who travel it are viewed as good, even though it is paved not by the wisdom of a holy God, but the wisdom of man. The epitaph of those who travel this road is simple: **"Everyone did what was right in his own eyes"** (Jud. 21:25).

## One Way to Life

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is a description of what it looks like to follow him, it is not a description of what you must do to get salvation. Maybe a helpful illustration is this: The narrow

gate is the cross, the narrow way is the journey of following Jesus, and what happens as you walk the narrow way is a life that will look more and more like what we read in the Sermon on the Mount with each step we take towards Jesus. What makes the narrow road (way) difficult is not so much the road, but is the fact that it is specific. What makes it hard is that you cannot enter on your own terms, with your self-perceived righteousness, with your unwillingness to see your sin for what it is, or the determination to let go of your pride. The only way to enter the narrow gate is naked, but what is provided is the righteousness of Christ, for that is all you will ever need.

At the narrow gate, there is no accommodation, there is only Christ. What makes the narrow gate hard is that it is hard to find. The world says that there are many ways to God, and it is right to say so, but every way except the narrow way will lead to him as judge. As one pastor said, Jesus' way, "...is not for people who want Jesus without any change in their lives. It is only for those who seek it with all their hearts.... The good news is that although the gate is narrow, it is wide enough to accommodate the chief of sinners (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15)."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus is the narrow gate, every other option outside of Jesus is the wide gate. Consider some of the things Jesus said about himself:

- Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35-51), so only he can satisfy those who hunger for righteousness.
- Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), so only he can light up the darkness of the world.
- Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7-9), so only he can lead to eternal life.
- Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11-14), so only he can provide safe passage to heaven...
- Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), so victory over death is only possible through Jesus.
- Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), so his way is better than any other way.

Jesus' way is hard because, "...**people love darkness rather than light**" (John 3:19). One pastor wrote of the two roads before us a sobering warning: "It is easy to fall in step with the crowd. You can even add Jesus to all your treasured sins and possessions so you can feel religious. You can go to church and be as active or as passive as you desire. You never have to deny yourself or take up your cross. The only problem is that the natural way ends in disaster."<sup>3</sup>

There is only one way to life, and that way is Jesus. Before you is a choice, and there is no room for error. You can embrace Jesus' call to discipleship, but understand that the decision is not popular, and the walk is not easy,<sup>4</sup> for the world will hate you for it, some will identify you as phobic, others will write you off for being foolish or too extreme. Our savior even warns us of what others will think as we walk his path: "**If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but**

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<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, John (2008). *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 205, 207.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> ESV Expository Commentary: Matthew–Luke (Volume, 8), p. 126. (2021)

**because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:18–19).**

My dear friends, we have been studying the Sermon on the Mount together since last May, Jesus’ appeal to enter the narrow gate is one of urgency (the verb tense used for “enter” is an imperative). His invitation to choose is a demand for action today; our savior did not leave any room for you to stand idle only to appreciate the gate, to hang images around your neck or on your wall to remind you of the gate, or to use language so that others might think that you have walked through the gate. Before you is the choice of life or death, and nothing more.