

Mt 7:13~27

(Part 1, verses 13~14)

This morning I want to begin part one, of a series of messages from the passage we just read. So far, I'm anticipating about three messages total. (Vs 13~14) The Two ways... (Vs 15~20) The Two Trees and the Two kinds of Fruit... and (Vs 24~27) The Two houses... Now typically, when preaching any passage of scripture, you start at the beginning of the section, and work your way through it, coming to the conclusion or the point that passage is declaring. But with this one, it seems best to me, to start with the main truth of the passage, then look at the entire text in light of that truth. At the heart of this passage, is what Jesus says here in verses 21~23...

²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Those words haunt me, every time I read them... I don't know whether you realize it or not, but what we have here is a "glimpse" into the future... It's a "revelation" of the day, when men shall come before the Lord to be judged. That's what He's referring to here, when He says... *²²Many will say to me in that day...* He's referring to the day when men will come before Him in judgment, where they'll either be granted entrance into the kingdom, or turned away. And given what He says here, it's very, very troubling to me. It's a horrifying picture. Read that again with me...

²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

This is one of the most troubling passages to me, in all of scripture... According to what Jesus Himself says here, on the day of judgment, there will be "**Many**"... (key word being MANY)... who will come before the Lord, in the full assurance that they will be granted entrance into the kingdom... only to be turned away. It's a heart wrenching scene here, these folks were convinced they were on their way to heaven. It's obvious, they are "Shocked!" They begin "Pleading" with Him, declaring the things they have done in "His Name." ... *have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* But it will be a mute point, their pleading will fall on deaf ears... He doesn't discuss or argue the matter, but just simply says... *I never knew you: depart from me...*

Can you imagine, standing before the Lord at judgment, with full confidence you'll be granted entrance into the glories of heaven... only to be turned away? Well... according to the Lord Himself, that's exactly what's going to happen to "**MANY**" in the Day of Judgment. And again, as a reminder, this IS what's going to happen. Jesus is "revealing" to us here, a "glimpse" into the future Day of Judgment.

When you start to grasp what Jesus is actually saying here in this passage, a very troubling and horrifying picture starts to evolve. It makes you begin to question and examine yourself. Because what He says here is, that a large majority of those who "Profess Him"... MANY of them will be turned away on that day... and that only a "Few" will be granted access into the kingdom. This coincides with what He says there in verses 13~14 about the two ways, and how that MANY will go the way of the broad way, that leads to destruction, and that only a FEW will go the narrow way, and find life. It is that "Many" there on the broad way, that He's referring to here, that He will turn away. That is the section, I want us to look at this morning...

¹³Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

I want to speak to you this morning on the subject... "The Road Less Traveled." I settled upon this title, after pondering what Jesus says here about the "narrow way" that leads to "Life," and how there be few that travel it. There's MANY on the "broad way" He says, but on the "narrow way," you'll find very FEW. It is "The Road Less Traveled."

The analogy He uses here of these two roads, these two ways...is much harder for us to understand, than it was for His original audience at the time He was speaking this. Simply for the fact, that these two ways He's describing here, were very common to them. There were no "roads" as we know them in our day, but rather there were these "*paths*". From village to village, city to city...there were these "*worn paths*" that the people would travel. Depending on where you were coming from, and where you were going, would determine the size of the path.

Picture if you will, for example, the city of Jerusalem, and then all the various "*roads or paths*" leading up to it, from the various little villages and towns throughout the nation of Israel. As you can imagine, some of these "paths" were wide, to accommodate the large numbers who traveled that way, while others would be these small, little foot paths, where only a few traveled. So these "paths" that Jesus is referring to here, was very easily understood by those listening...

They would have understood the "*broad way*" to represent one of the "*major roads*" leading into Jerusalem for example, maybe out of Egypt or some other surrounding nation. A path that was wide, and relatively smooth and straight, to accommodate the large masses who would travel that way to Jerusalem. Whereas, they would've understood the "*narrow way*" to refer to for example, the path that comes up out of the ancient city, Jericho, what is commonly referred to as "*The Jericho Road.*" It's famous, because of its treacherous conditions. "Jericho Road" was this small, little path that lead from Jericho up to Jerusalem, which if I remember correctly, was around 23 miles. It was a very narrow path, because it twisted and winded its way through treacherous mountainous terrain. The path was no more than 3~4 feet wide in its widest places, basically only room for a couple of people walking side by side as they traveled, and in some places, narrowed to extremely tight spots, that required the walk to have to "squeeze" through rocks and things. Jericho road became infamous, because it was an extremely hard and difficult road to travel to Jerusalem. Not to mention, dangerous, because it was common place for thieves, who would hide in the rocks, and mug travelers on their way to Jerusalem. (Most scholars attribute it is this road that Jesus was referring to when He told the parable of the "Good Samaritan")

So the people listening here, understood well, the two ways, the "narrow & the broad" ways that Jesus speaks of here. As well as they would have the "*gates*" He spoke of. Again, using Jerusalem as our example, it was surrounded by a great wall, with twelve entrances or "*gates.*" A gate merely spoke of an entrance way into a city. So given the overall analogy, rather than saying to enter through a certain gate, that leads to a certain path, it seem more likely that Jesus was referring to taking the narrow path, that leads to the small entrance, in comparison to the broad path, that leads to the large entrance. (Again, with Jerusalem portraying the Kingdom of God)

With that in mind, let's look at these two ways...¹³*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in theret: ¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Here we have: **Two gates**...the "*Strait gate*" and the "*Wide gate*"...**Two ways**...the "*Narrow way*" and the "*Broad way*"...**Two destinations**...one leads to "*Life*" and the other to "*Destruction*"...**Two groups**...the "*Few*" and the "*Many*"...

Right from the onset here, we need to clarify what these two roads, these two ways, represent...because more often than not, this passage is misinterpreted. I've heard this passage taught, in that the narrow way represents those who attend church and follow God, while the broad road is a reference to those out here living in debauchery, those living in sin, and are on a path that ends in hell. Listen, that is NOT what He's saying here, not at all. To view it that way is to miss the whole point of the passage! Matter of fact, the unbelieving world, those who don't want anything to do with God, those out here living in sin, are not even in view here. Jesus is only speaking to those who seek God, those who walk after God. Both of these "Paths" have a sign over them saying, "*This Way to the Kingdom of God.*"

These "*Two Ways*" represent the "*Two Ways*" that men strive to enter the kingdom of God... They will either walk the "*narrow path,*" that actually leads to the Kingdom, or they will travel the "*broad*" path, that they "*think*" leads to the kingdom...only to find out when it's too late, that it doesn't!

Let me try and put this, the simplest way I can...

The “*narrow way*,” is speaking of course, of a life of “*following Christ*” in this world... At the heart of this passage, is Christ calling men to Himself, to come follow Him. He IS the strait gate, and His ways lead to the kingdom. This is contrasted with this “*broad way*,” which refers to the way of “*Religion*”...which gives the allusion it leads to the kingdom, but it doesn’t, it leads to destruction.

Religion is a dangerous, dangerous thing... Mainly for the fact, that it leads men to think they are ok with God, when they’re not! (Point and case, the scene we see here in this passage with the MANY). Satan doesn’t mind if you’re “*Religious*”...just as long as you don’t bow down to Jesus Christ as Lord! Matter of fact, I believe he encourages it, again, because it leads men to believe they’re ok, when they’re not.

The best way to fully understand the contrasts of these two ways here, the narrow and the broad ways, is to understand “WHO” they are an overall reference too. Again, the strait gate, the narrow way is a reference to Christ, and His ways...which is contrasted with a wide gate, and a broad way, referring to the religious leaders of the day, the Scribes and Pharisees, and their ways. In the Jewish mind, a “*gate*” was merely a metaphor referring to “*an entrance*” to something. Here Jesus describes these men as a gate by which men enter onto the path, that they “*think*” leads to the kingdom of God. Here Jesus is warning his listeners concerning these men, and the doctrines they teach. That’s what verses 15~20 revolve around, these men. They are the false prophets, the false teachers with the bad fruit! “Fruit” speaks of their character, and here Jesus declares that’s how you will know who is and who isn’t of God! “*You shall know them by the fruits they bear*”... (That’s for next time)

But for this morning, it’s important that we understand these gates, and these ways, are a contrast between Himself, and these men. Christ the strait and narrow, and the Scribes and Pharisees, the wide and the broad. Matter of fact, that’s what the whole “Sermon on the Mount” (Mt 5~7) revolves around. Matthew 5~7 is a sermon that Jesus preached to a large multitude gathered at the Sea of Galilee, in which He exposes the vanity and hypocrisy of these men and their ways, and to proclaim the true worship of God!

Give a brief overview of chapter’s 5, 6 & 7...

(5:20) The heart of His message!²⁰ *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

No doubt, upon first hearing that “*their righteousness MUST EXCEED the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*”...the people thought there was no hope for them, for these men represented the elite of Israel, these were the religious leaders... But as we shall find out here in the verses that follow, this is no big feat, simply for the fact, these men were not righteous at all! Oh they “*appeared to be*”...given their obedience to God’s law given by Moses, these men, at least “*Outwardly*” appeared to be these righteous, godly men. But as Jesus goes on to reveal here, they’re not...

(Vs 21) Thou shall not kill (Anger/Hatred is murder)

(Vs 27) Thou shall not commit Adultery (Lust in his heart, commits adultery)

And others here...Point being, the Law is “*Spiritual*”...not merely “*External*”...(these men were guilty!)

(6:1) Giving... They do it to be seen of men, the praise of me... (True giving is in secret)

(Vs 5) Praying... They do it, to be heard of men...honored by men...

(Vs 16) Fasting... They do it, for men...

(Vs 19~24) God and Mammon...treasures in heaven, not on earth...

(7:1) They judge and condemn... “*Spiritually Blind*” to their own sin...

Over and over throughout this who message, Jesus seeks to “*expose*” these men for who they are. Given their obedience to God’s law, they may “*outwardly appear*” to be these righteous men, but they’re not. What they deem to be righteousness, is nothing more than the works of sinful flesh! What they think is earning them favor with God, and a home in heaven...will actually be there demise. That’s why religion is so dangerous! Men think by conforming to God’s law, that they are living lives that are pleasing to God, living in a way that will grant them entrance into the kingdom...But it won’t!

I need you to listen very closely here...

It's not obedience to His Law that God requires of men...but obedience to His Son...

It's only when you understand that statement, that you understand these "*Two Ways*" here... Listen, it's not conforming to God's law that God requires... This is where these men missed it, as well as so MANY do in our day! Like these men, MANY "*believe*" in God, they hold to the principles of God's word, and strive to live accordingly. They "*Stand*" for the "*Ten Commandments*," as well as all of God's Laws, and declare that they are the standard by which all men are to live their lives. Declaring that all who don't, will be judged, and cast into hell! But beloved, that's not true. I need you to listen closely to what I'm saying, or you'll misunderstand what I'm saying, and miss the truth here...

It is a life "*Lived to God's Law*" and to the principles of God's word that Jesus is eluding to here as the "*Broad way*." God's WILL is not that men straighten up their lives, by conforming to His Laws, His Commandments. Because by doing so, it gives me the "*false security*" that they're ok with God, when they're not. (Point and case, the MANY here in our passage.) You see, the Law wasn't given to "*Justify us*" before God, by our being obedient to it. But the contrary, the Law was given to "*Condemn us*," by revealing SIN in us!

And this is where SO MANY miss it! I'm deeply concerned that our churches are full of people who "*Think themselves*" just before God, based on their quote, "*Righteous living*" in conjunction with God's Law. They are sincere, good people, who are sincerely trying to live in a way that is pleasing to God. And like these men in view here, by all "*Outward accounts*," they are living righteous lives, and at the end of their life, will be granted entrance into the kingdom of heaven. But according to what Jesus says here, that will not be the case. Jesus will say unto them, "*Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.*" It's in understanding "*workers of iniquity*"...that we come to the full understanding of this passage. He's not referring to "*evil works*," but rather "*good works*." Even though there is an "*appearance of righteousness*" produced by man's obedience to God's Law, it's not righteousness at all, because the works produced by man's obedience to the Law, is a product of man's fallen, sinful nature...the FLESH!

Thus...the call of the gospel... The call of Christ is to turn from our efforts to please God in the FLESH, by obedience to the Law...to the one and only way, any man can please God...by obedience to His Son! The call here is from "*Religion*" to a "*Relationship*"... The "*strait and narrow way of Christ*," refers to a life of turning from the FLESH... A life no longer lived to our own wills, our own desires, our own ambitions...because they all stem from sinful FLESH! The "*Way of Christ*" is all about the Cross. It's taking up the cross of Christ, and dying to SELF daily... A life of putting the desires and lust of the FLESH, so that we might yield our bodies to Christ, to be used for His will and His purposes...

That is the "*strait and narrow way*"...a way that Jesus makes it clear, is not EASY... The call for men to live a life of "*Self-denial, and Self-Sacrifice*" goes against everything this sinful, self-centered world stands for! That's why Jesus says, there's so FEW that find it. Understood, the "*Way of Christ*" goes against everything we are! It goes against our very nature! But nevertheless, it's the only way to God, because before I can truly worship God, I have to get ME off the throne! I can't live this life to me, and God at the same time. (You can if you're simply religious...because all that's required is that you live a clean more life. You still get to keep your life, and live it to yourself...you just have to live morally clean). But the call of Christ, is for men to turn from living their lives to SELF, to their own wills, their own desires, their own ambitions...because all those things stem from fallen, sinful FLESH.

Again, this is why there's so FEW on this road...for very few are willing to "*give up their life, in this life*"...to follow Christ. It is "*The Road less Traveled*"...

Beloved, in conclusion... There's only one way that truly leads to the kingdom...It is those who hear the gospel, and believe it, manifested by a life of repentance, a turning from this world and its ways, turning from the FLESH and it's desires, to a life of humble submission to Jesus Christ, as Lord of your life. As Jesus says here, it won't be EASY, that's for sure, but...it does lead to the kingdom...this is the "*Way*" that leads to life. And I can't emphasize this enough, that there is no other way.