

MATTHEW 7 13-14 "A FORK IN THE ROAD"

THE POPULARITY OF JESUS HAS GONE VIRAL! News has spread fast. Hope for the hopeless, cures for the incurable... oh they were coming... chapter 4 of Matthew ends with verse 25... *Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. from 100s of miles away*

Matthew chapters 5-7 contain what we call the "sermon on the mount". 17 minutes that changed the world.

It is the **sermon of all sermons**

If it were a **diamond** it would be the **The Great Star of Africa** @ 530.20 Carats.

If it was a **car** it would be the **Bugatti (Vi Ron) at \$1,700,000**

If it was food it would be chocolate...

If it was a woman it would be my wife Hannah.

If it was a **football team** it wouldn't be the "Cowboys or Chargers"

This sermon is the **Litmus test** for every believer... are you **truly** a follower of Christ? If you are it will be revealed by the authenticity of your life. *This great message tells us how we will live when Jesus is our Lord.*

Jesus begin this sermon extraordinaire with **The Beatitudes** also entitled "**Beautiful Attitudes**" "*Character of the Kingdom*" "**Manifesto of the Kingdom**"

"To be is to do"-Socrates; "To do is to be"- Sartre; "**DO BE DO BE DO**"- **SINATRA;** "**Scooby Dooby Do**"-Scooby Do; "**Yaba Daba Doo!**"-**Fred Flintstone** The Pharisees said, "do-do-do", while Jesus says, "be-be-be".

Not just about what you do, **but what you be**. The Pharisees did all the right things, *but evil lurked in their hearts*. Jesus said, "*white washed tombs on the outside but full of dead men's bones*". Jesus teaches righteousness comes from the inside out. Paul was a Pharisee before he became a Christian, yet after His conversion he said of the self-righteous life he'd manufactured, "**I count it but rubbish.**" Literally, dung or manure. "**DO - DO**"!!! God knows if you'll **BE** the right person, you'll **DO** the right things!

From the “be” attitudes Jesus taught that we are **SALT AND LIGHT**, we bring **healing**, **PRESERVING INFLUENCE** on our own society and world. He believes that we can bring **flavor to life** – that we can make the **world thirsty** for him.

It is possible to go **WOMB TO TOMB** in a hermetically sealed container decorated with fish stickers. It is possible to **abandon our culture** to the devil. We can't do it Church... we need to be **salt and light**. **We all need to get out of the saltshaker and into the world**

The righteousness of the Pharisees was only an outward performance... Jesus calls His kids to a greater standard, one that is motivated by love of God and love of fellow man.

Jesus exposes the essence of the scribes' heresy. To them, the law was really only a matter of **EXTERNAL PERFORMANCE**, never the heart. Jesus says what is in your heart matters... and what matters to God matters and “**matters of the heart**”... **MATTER!** For it is there in your heart murder and adultery occur...

Jesus then gives all those who would be His followers instructions about **Radical purity**, **divorce**, **OATHS**, *going the extra mile*, **LOVING OUR ENEMIES**, **PRAYING**... **Fasting**... **Giving**... **Materialism**... **WORRY**... **Wrongly judging others**... *More on prayer*...

He last left us off with the **THE GOLDEN RULE** Matthew 7:12 “whatever you want men to do to you, **DO** also to them...” It's been called “**The Mount Everest of Ethics**”. Larry Hagman passed away on Friday. He portrayed the famous villain JR Ewing from the TV show Dallas who said, “Do unto others **before** they do unto you.”

But Jesus was not the first person to utter this ideal for human relationships. **The Talmud stated**, “What is hateful to you, **do not** to your fellow man.” **Buddha said**, “**Hurt not** others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” **Confucius put it**, “What you **do not** want done to yourself **do not** do to others.” **Even Socrates phrased it**, “What stirs your anger when done to you, that **do not** to others.”

YET HERE'S THE DIFFERENCE – Jesus gave new life to an old saying by giving it a new twist. Everyone else phrased it in the **negative**, but Jesus put it in the **positive**. It's not enough to avoid doing harm – *look for ways to do good*. Jesus took the golden rule, and made it genuinely golden. **PRAY**

Matthew 7¹³ “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.

Enter by the narrow gate **is a command!** King James uses the word “straight”. Straight is the only way! AMEN

Such words have never been welcome! *Jesus you are so narrow minded!* To Jesus, there is no doubt that there is a right road and a wrong road. If Christians are accused of being “narrow minded” they should be following Jesus’ example of telling the hard **TRUTH**,

Tolerance over truth... our generation in particular—is more interested in tolerance than in truth. We are more afraid of being thought prejudiced or bigoted than of being wrong. We are scared to death of being labeled narrow-minded. Oh it's ok to compare and contrast philosophies, but to say one is better than the other is anathema. The mentality of today is “the relative is absolutized, and the absolute is relativized.

As followers of Jesus we don't want to be narrow and self-righteous like the list-carrying Pharisees. Narrow and inflexible is not our call when it comes to things that scripture is unclear on. **When it comes to Jesus being the only way there is no other way to be! NARROW it is!!!**

Jesus continues... **for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction**, Absolutely no effort is required to go through the gate that leads to destruction.

On the wide road it doesn't matter what you believe as long as it isn't in Jesus being God and dying for your sins.

If your thing is mediation... great... destruction. Satan doesn't care what you believe in as long as it's not the truth.

and there are many who go in by it. Though the wide road is the wrong road, Jesus says, **many travel it.** The road to destruction is heavily

traveled. **MOST PEOPLE PREFER IT!** You are never alone on the road to destruction.

Eventually the road comes to the edge of the abyss, and there it stops, but the traveler does not!

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

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. With Jesus' qualification of "NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME" we could read it, Jesus said, "I am the **ONLY** way, the **ONLY** truth and the **ONLY** life.

Acts chapter 4 verse 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is **NO OTHER NAME** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

John 10:9 I am the door. (other translations, I am the gate) If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved,

The narrow way is wonderful... for it brings freedom and joy! **John 17:3** and this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. We know our maker!

Because of Him we know our "**life is not futile**" our "**failures are not fatal**" and "**our death will not be final**"

I join in Hughes' celebration when he says, "There is no abyss at the end of the narrow road, but there is unspeakable glory!"

SINCERITY... It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. All paths lead to God. Courson says this well... "Do you believe those who followed the teachings of Jim Jones in Guyana were following a godly path as they drank Kool-Aid laced with cyanide? Do you believe if you followed Charles Manson sincerely, you would end up in the right spot eternally? Do you believe sincerely following Adolf Hitler, who used Scripture and quoted theologians, would lead to heaven?"

You see, if the Lord had fifteen legitimate paths to heaven, the Enemy would still counter with fifteen thousand illegitimate destructive paths, and it would still be confusing. There will always be Adolf Hitlers, Charlie Mansons, and Jim Joneses who will be deceptive and manipulative, weird and destructive. So our Father, in His wisdom, says, "Kids, I'm going to

keep it real simple. There are not fifteen paths or eighteen paths. No. **There's only one Way: Jesus, My Son.**"

FAITH... AS LONG AS YOU REALLY BELIEVE IN SOMETHING... THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS. Remember it's not how much faith you have but who or what your faith is in!

IF THERE ARE MANY WAYS THAN JESUS DID NOT HAVE TO DIE!

Matthew 26 verse 36... Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." ³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁸ Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

If, indeed, there are many paths to God and many routes to eternal life, then the sacrifice God made in becoming a Man—slaughtered before the foundation of the world, plunging into hell, suffering in ways we will never comprehend—was all unnecessary.

If you say, "Well, let's be open-minded about the way to heaven," you discount the provision of what God did on your behalf. Mohammed didn't die for you. Buddha wouldn't die for you.

Only Jesus gave everything to save you from your sins.

TWO OPTIONS IN AN EITHER/OR WORLD

People today like options. We live in an either/or world. There was a time when all Americans drove either a **Ford or a Chevy**, but today there are over 752 models of trucks and cars sold in America. **Remember when bread was white?** Checks were **green**? Telephones were **black**? No more. We like multiple options. *And this is true spiritually, as well.* People like to pick and choose from different religions, and put together their own belief system. Individual freedom is the ticket. There's only one problem – this multiple-option orientation flies in the face of Jesus' words in verses 13-14. Jesus cuts our choices to **2** - **2** gates, **2** ways, **2** crowds, **2** DESTINATIONS... It's either ETERNITY IN HEAVEN or ETERNITY IN HELL. When you enter eternity there's just **2** sections - **smoking or non-smoking.**

It is not enough to listen to the teaching about the gate... YOU must enter through it!

Deuteronomy 30:19 call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

Joshua 24:15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of 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."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all have sin in our hearts. We all were born with sin. We were born under the power of sin's control. - *Admit that you are a sinner.*

Romans 6:23a "...The wages of sin is death..."

Sin has an ending. It results in death. We all face physical death, which is a result of sin. But a worse death is spiritual death that alienates us from God, and will last for all eternity. - *Understand that you deserve death for your sin.*

Romans 6:23b "...But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Salvation is a free gift from God to you! You can't earn this gift, but you must reach out and receive it. - *Ask God to forgive you and save you.*

Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!"

When Jesus died on the cross He paid sin's penalty. He paid the price for all sin, and when He took all the sins of the world on Himself on the cross, He bought us out of slavery to sin and death! The only condition is that we believe in Him and what He has done for us, understanding that we are now joined with Him, and that He is our life. He did all this because He loved us and gave Himself for us! - *Give your life to God... His love poured out in Jesus on the cross is your only hope to have forgiveness and change. His love bought you out of being a slave to sin. His love is what saves you -- not religion, or church membership. God loves you!*

Romans 10:13 "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved!" - *Call out to God in the name of Jesus!*

Romans 10:9,10 "...If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus said, "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.