

Following The Way Of The Kingdom: Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

**First Methodist Church of Tulsa
Fall 2025
Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson**

***Session 8: The Way of Fruitfulness (Matt. 7:13-23)
November 5, 2025***

MATTHEW 7:14

***For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it
are few.***

1. What is your current reality in the Christian life? Is it difficult to make the choices that lead to life or do you find yourself walking on easy street?

2. How would you evaluate the fruitfulness of your own life? Is there evidence that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are growing in you? Why or why not? What do you think God would ask you to do in order to see more of that fruit grow in you?

3. Is there anything in your life that you would point to in order to say to Jesus, "I did this for you?" Is that enough or are you aware that it is the mercy of God that opens the door for you to enter in?

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In Hannah Hurnard's book, *Hind's Feet on High Places*, the author envisions a high place, not like the high places of the pagans in the Old Testament, but place where God gives the main character, named Much Afraid, freedom from her fears and weaknesses, like a deer bounding around a mountain top. Most of the book is about her treacherous journey, facing difficulties and attacks from fear and, as best I can remember, the negative pulling down that often comes when someone wants something good and beautiful.

I thought of this story that I haven't read (actually heard, I listened to it a number of times at the end of college as I had it on cassette tape) in over twenty-five years as I read this passage in Matthew 7. We're continuing our own journey to the place of heart transformation as we enter in to the final verses of the Sermon on the Mount. As if the command to obey the commandments with our hearts, to not be anxious about food and clothing, and to seek first the Kingdom of God wasn't hard enough, Jesus gets really explicit about how difficult the journey of faithfulness really is.

I. vv.13-14 Enter by the narrow gate. It be treacherous

A. Two ways and Deuteronomy 30

1. Deuteronomy 30:15-20

a. Israel is preparing to enter into Canaan and God is restating the law so that when they get there, a people who are not like the people groups already there, they remember who God is and who they are.

- b. They have a choice to make: life and death. Good and evil.
- 2. There has always been this dichotomy among the people of God. There are only two ways to live. And so Jesus is presenting the same choice that all people have had when it comes to God. His way or another way (go back to the Garden for a starting place.)

B. The narrow gate – what is it?

- 1. Best I can discern, Jesus was using city imagery, particularly about Jerusalem.
- 2. There are wide gates and narrow gates to enter. Wide ones you typically get carried along with the crowd. Narrow ones you have to be looking for.
- 3. The choice, it seems, is to be carried along with the crowd, or to search for the right way.
- 4. There's something to be said about the journey, or the way, there, too.
 - a. Two ways – the easy path and the difficult path.
 - b. Doesn't mean we're looking at a choice and thinking, "which is the more difficult?" But rather, which one gets me closer to Jesus? Often that choice requires some difficult choices.

C. Why entering it is hard.

- 1. And that's why the gate and the way are so hard.
- 2. We've got our way and God's way. Oftentimes, God's way requires more of us than we want to give or give up.

II. vv.15–20 This is why the gate is narrow and the way is difficult.

A. A discussion of fruit.

- 1. One of the reasons the gate and way are so difficult is because we're bombarded with opinions and advice.
- 2. Not everyone is worth listening to (including me which is why you should always compare what I say against Scripture.)
- 3. There are false prophets or teachers. People who either are saying things that are wrong or trying to manipulate you or both.
- 4. How can we discern who's a righteous prophet or teacher and who isn't

B. Entering by the narrow gate is hard because we have to discern good fruit from bad, sometimes by looking in the mirror.

- 1. Fruit is what grows on trees and plants. A particular organism is going to bear particular fruit. If there's something wrong with the organism, is going to bear fruit that's not good. Also, you know an apple tree isn't going to grow strawberries. So you know a certain type of person won't grow the fruit they might be claiming to have.



2. But what about don't judge? Remember judgment is about condemnation, not discernment. We have to discern and the best way to do that is by the word and the Spirit.

3. Bank tellers and counterfeiters: they spend so much time looking at the real thing that they know when they get a fake. That's why we're in the word.

C. So, you'll know them by their fruit.

1. Gal 5:22-23.

2. Centered sets again - are they moving toward love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Or away from it?

III. vv.21-23 Bad fruit leads to bad outcomes.

A. Good deeds, miraculous deeds, don't always indicate good fruit.

1. I don't know how much more needs to be said about this. There are some people with spiritual gifts who have no spiritual fruit.

2. It's great that I can pray in tongues, but am I a gossip? So what if you can heal if I'm a jerk?

3. Remember what God told the prophet Samuel when he went to anoint the next King of Israel: Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

B. Good fruit starts with a healthy root.

1. Or as I heard the singer Steffany Gretzinger say once, the fruit always speaks of the root.

2. What are we rooted in? The way or the world? Flash or substance?

IV. Conclusion