

The Road Less Traveled **Matthew 7 vs 13-14**

Intro

Picture Perfect. Thanks for doodling. Started with the door. This dynamic relationship with a father who invited us to keep asking, seeking and knocking. Today we move from the door to the path.

Robert Frost wrote a poem entitled "The Road Not Taken." He writes of walking down a road through a wood that suddenly branches out to become two. He stands at the fork, wondering which way he should take. He would like to travel both and tells himself that whichever he chooses he will come back another time to explore the other way. But then he writes:

Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back. I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.

Jesus also presents two roads to us and invites us to take the one less travelled. It will make all the difference today and in eternity.

Matthew 7 vs 13-14 (slide)

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

You will notice towards the end of the SoM that Jesus is continually points to two different options and invites us to make a choice.

Two ways, two trees, two claims, two builders. There is always the choice of which way we want to go. One is the way of the world and the other is the way of the kingdom. Today's passage is pretty clear about where the road you choose will lead you.

Nissan Commercial: "Life's a journey, enjoy the ride." (picture) For me the destination has everything to do with how I feel about the journey. Airport: First furlough, trip to the army, trip to wedding, holiday, home from holiday. The destination determines how I feel about the ride. The destination is what gives

meaning to the journey. Do you know where the road of life you are on is leading you?

The importance of choice (slide)

Someone has said that we are the sum of our choices. It certainly true that our choices determine very much how we experience life and how life plays out for us. Choice is also proof that we are made in the image of God. We don't just operate on instinct. We can choose to love, to hate, to hurt, to eat, to marry, to work, to serve, to forgive.

The average adult makes 35000 decisions every day. Cornell University study over 200 decisions a day just on food. You are making choices all the time every day. You are His image bearer.

In the big picture, life concentrates on every person standing at a crossroad (**picture of two roads**). This is not only true of the most important decision, that eternal decision, but it's just a way of life lived out every day. We are confronted through all of our lives with decisions from the trivial ones about what we might wear today or what we might eat, to the more important ones about who we might marry or where we might live, or significant purchases we might make, to the greatest of all decisions, the spiritual decisions that affect our eternity far beyond this life. The choice we face in this passage today is not new, it's always been there.

Jesus presents us with two roads, two options...something you will see consistently throughout Scripture:

Deuteronomy 30 vs 19 (slide)

“See, I have set before you this day life and death, good and evil. Choose life, that you and your seed may live.”

Joshua 24 vs 14-15 (slide)

“Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Jeremiah 21 vs 8 (slide)

“Thus says the Lord: Behold, I have set before you the way of life and the way of death.”

1 Kings 18 vs 21 (slide)

“How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. If Baal, then follow him,”

Psalm 1 vs 1-3 (slide)

Blessed is the one

**who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take**

or sit in the company of mockers,

**²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.**

**³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season**

and whose leaf does not wither—

whatever they do prospers.

Clearly there are two ways to live and we must choose carefully because there are consequences that go with choice. One of the hardest things in life is watching those we love make bad choices and the consequential pain when there are such better options (pizza, Toyota, Buble). How does God feel? God has set clear boundaries in place for our good and wellbeing and for us to thrive. We constantly rebel and then face consequence and go to Him to bail us out.

So here again, we are faced with two options.

The broad road – Self is King (slide)

“Wide is the gate and broad the road”

The way that is broad is the easy, attractive, inclusive, indulgent, permissive, and self-oriented way of the world. There are few rules, few restrictions, and few requirements. This way requires no spiritual maturity, no moral character, no commitment, and no sacrifice. You live how you please, doing whatever feels good and satisfies the flesh. How does that sound? It certainly seems the most obvious and most attractive road to be on.

What does religion look like on this road? Remember, Self is King, so:

A religion of man trying to reach God. It is the religion of self-achievement, the religion of works, the religion of the flesh; the religion that says you can be good enough, holy enough, religious enough, spiritual enough.

The scribes and the Pharisees were the architects of a religion of self-achievement. Their salvation and acceptance with God, their hope of eternal life in heaven depended upon what they did – what they did morally and what they did religiously and ceremonially.

Most of humanity is committed to the religion of self-achievement, that men can be good enough, religious enough to gain heaven, if they just have a measure of goodness, think good thoughts occasionally, do good deeds; better yet, if they believe in God, attend some religious services, go through some religious acts or rites or ceremonies. This religion comes in many names and many forms, but it is all the same, man believing he is good enough to reach God.

It is the easy way of floating downstream, in “the course of this world, it is the tragic way “which seems right to a man,” but whose “end is the way of death according to Proverbs 14 vs 12. The destination of this broad road is clear: death and destruction.

The narrow road- Jesus is King (slide)

“Small is the gate and narrow the road”

“Enter through the narrow gate.” We see immediately that there’s an action that must be taken – we must actually enter through the narrow gate to get onto the narrow road. No one is automatically on this road. You have to choose to enter through the narrow gate. Don’t just admire the principles of the Sermon on the Mount as a great moral teaching – Make a choice to live in the kingdom. This means that it’s not automatic; it doesn’t just happen by osmosis because you were born an American or because you’ve gone to church your whole life. I don’t get in on someone else’s faith. I get in on my choice of what road I wanted to be on (Stef and Becks).

Incidentally, this would have been scandalous to the Jews who were listening. They thought they were going to heaven because of their heritage as “God’s chosen people.

The gate is small...have to bend, crawl through, no baggage (like the eye of the needle) ...humility, giving up all I have, denying self, taking up cross (which reminds me of the day I died to self). You cannot enter the Kingdom of God with conditions or with self-alive because he travels on the other road. It’s on His terms. It’s trading my life for His where self is gone. Do you see why so few find this road? The message of the gospel is not popular. It’s “come and die”. BUT I am giving what I cannot keep to gain what I cannot lose.

Don Carson “the more hesitation there is about going Christ's way wholeheartedly, without reserve, the more confining his way seems. However, the more enthusiasm there is for following him regardless of personal opinion or peer pressure, regardless of cost, the more liberating his way appears". The worst place to be is half in.

Narrow implies tribulation, opposition, persecution (how does that work in a culture addicted to comfort, safety, and security? Which road would be more attractive?). The way of Discipleship is narrow because it is the way of persecution and opposition. Christians have always been counter cultural...it never has been the easy choice.

Acts 14 vs 22 (slide)

²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.

What does religion look like on this road?

The religion of divine accomplishment where salvation and acceptance and heaven depended on what God does, not what men does. It is a religion that speaks of God reaching out to man.

The Bible does not say that you enter the narrow gate by changing your life. It says your life is changed as a result of entering the narrow gate. Once you enter the narrow gate, you are on the narrow road. Do not misunderstand this point. You cannot get through the narrow gate by changing your life, although many religious people are trying to do that. Your life is transformed from within when you enter through the narrow gate, Jesus Christ, and believe in Him. Walking the narrow road, reflecting kingdom character is not what got you there. It's who you have become since letting go of self and embracing Christ at the gate. The Bible seems full of impossible commands and rules but to the one of the narrow road it is seen as a joyful way of life. I obey Jesus because I want to not because of a set of rules. I trust that everything He has asked me to be and do is for my best. I embrace the narrow road because it's the best road with the best destination. (Youth rebellion). The most freeing day of my life was the day I let go of self.

The Destination (slide)

The Broad Road – life without God - hell

The Narrow road - life with God - heaven

NB the roads are not ends in themselves...they lead us to the end...a destination
Scripture is clear about there being two destinations

We don't like the idea that there is a place of death and destruction called hell and that anyone will end up there.

According to the director of the Pew Forum, Americans “are very open. In terms of various paths to heaven, and even in interpreting the teachings of their own faith, the majority tell us that there’s not just one right way to do that.” The study found that 70% of Americans – even 57% of evangelicals – believe that many religions can lead to eternal life.

Dan Brown “Da Vinci code” Brownian view - There is this idea that all religions...have the potential to be wonderful, so long as we can get over the idea that any one of them might be particularly true. ...the polls...reveal the growth of do-it-yourself spirituality, with traditional religion’s dogmas and moral requirements shorn away.” His conclusion is spot on: “For millions of readers, Brown’s novels have helped smooth over the tension between ancient Christianity and modern American faith. But the tension endures. You can have Jesus or Dan Brown. But you can’t have both”

In the words of sociologist Christian Smith, civil religion in America is tolerant and unoffensive. He refers to our post-Christian future as “moralistic therapeutic deism.” He then lists some core elements of the new catechism. Here are three of them:

- * The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- * God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- * Good people go to heaven when they die.

If Jesus walked here today, His teaching would not go down very well. Jesus sets before every man the two ways, and ONLY one leads to eternal life, the other to eternal death.

Jesus speaks here of an ultimate destiny - "destruction" in a complete sense; a state of complete spiritual loss and eternal ruin. No one spoke more in the Bible about the horrors of hell than Jesus; and here, He lets us know that there is a "gate" one may choose to pass through that gets you onto the path that leads to life.

There is no "*wiggle room*" when it comes to entering the Kingdom of heaven for there is but One Door, the Lord Jesus Christ

John 14 vs 6 (slide)

I am the way the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me.

John 10 vs 9 (slide)

⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.

Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. There is no other plan but the person of Jesus. It was His death and resurrection that paid the price for sin and gave us the road that leads to eternal life..." Whoever believes in Him shall not die but have everlasting life." It is the Jesus way that is the narrow way that leads to heaven and eternity with Him.

Conclusion

Two roads, two crowds, two destinations,

You are always going to meet the others who are on the road you are on.

Jamie story- Who do you hang with? Mark and Gary spur each other on to good deeds.

So, which road are you really on? Have you chosen to enter the narrow gate?

Have you surrendered self and embraced Jesus? Jesus also stands at a door and he is knocking.

Rev 3 vs 20 (slide)

²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Come find us at the prayer room