

The Straight and Narrow

Luke 13:22–30 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION:

CONTEXT:

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²²“He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?”

Keep in mind, Jesus has just spoken to them comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to a little mustard seed, almost imperceptible, at least at the beginning... then it grows to be the one of the largest trees of the garden. Secondly, he compared the Kingdom to leaven or yeast, which can't even be detected in flour until it rises.

So if the Kingdom starts out so tiny, it seems to indicate that only a very small number will be saved, at least at the beginning. Jesus answers...

23b. “And he said to them, ²⁴ ‘Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.’”

Now, the NARROW DOOR, was a common theme in Jesus' teaching...they would have recognized it. It was the concluding illustration for the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus said,

Matthew 7:13–14 (ESV)

¹³“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

We will return to that passage in a moment. Jesus continues in **Luke 13:25**...

²⁵“**When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door**, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷ But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’ ²⁸ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. ²⁹ And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

Throughout the scriptures, you see this concept of **TWO OPTIONS**:

- In **Eden**, There were 2 trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- **Moses** set before the people of Israel two futures - **Deuteronomy 30:19 (ESV)**
19 “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,”
- **Joshua** said to the people - **Joshua 24:15 (ESV)**
15 “...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.”
- **Elijah** said to the people in **1 Kings 18:21 (ESV)** ... “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”
- In the **Sermon on the Mount**, Jesus tells us there are TWO foundations on which to build.

And in Luke, Jesus refers to one of those two ways... the narrow door. We are to STRIVE to enter it. Now wait a minute, I thought salvation was by grace through faith... it is; Jesus does all the work... but there is something in human nature that makes that VERY DIFFICULT for us to accept... therefore we must strive to enter.

THE NARROW DOOR -

Matthew 7:13–14 (ESV)

¹³“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

According to Jesus there are:

1. **Two Gates** - The *narrow* gate and the *broad* gate
2. **Two Paths** - The *narrow way* and the *broad way*
3. **Two Crowds** - The *few* and the *many*
4. **Two Destinations** - Life and destruction

The most important decision is the first one - the two entrances. For see you cannot mix and match. You may not choose the narrow gate and the broad path, nor many you choose the broad gate and end up with the favorable destination.

It is the choice of the GATE that determines the DESTINATION. Therefore Jesus says, STRIVE, go to great lengths, take time off of work, settle this issue, make it your number one priority in life to be certain you have entered through the NARROW GATE.

Paul said it this way - **2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV)**

5 “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

1. There are Two Gates

The **narrow gate** and the **wide gate**...

Gates are entrances. If you travel to the city of Jerusalem, or any ancient city for that matter, you find that the city is surrounded by very large, thick walls. At points along the wall, you will find a number of gates. The more wealth a city had, the more narrow the gate would be. Narrow gates slow down the traffic and ensure that only those things that are supposed to get through get through. Broad gates aren't so concerned about it, they want big crowds coming through them.

ILLUSTRATION: It's the same in our day—if you go to Walmart, you will find a big door at the front that you don't even have to open—they will open it for you! But when you go to check out, there is a small aisle that only one cart at a time can fit through. Why? Because when you are coming in, you are bringing money... when you are going out, they want you to leave some of that money and not steal any product.

Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven has a very narrow gate that one must **STRIVE** to enter.

You say, “Pastor, I thought you told us that salvation is by grace through faith, then why all this talk about STRIVING”?

Strive means to make great effort, struggle vigorously, even fight. Jesus says, you ought to strive to enter the narrow gate. What does that mean?

- Well first of all it means, it is **possible** to enter the narrow gate. Later he will tell us the day is coming when people would do anything to enter, but will not be able to.
- But secondly, it indicates that if you are going to enter you must do so **intentionally**. No one accidentally entered the narrow gate. Have you ever heard someone say, “I've always been a Christian”? If a person says that, you can be almost certain they have never been saved. Why? Because a person must intentionally enter.
- Third, it means that **it will not be easy** to enter the narrow gate. The difficulty doesn't lie in the fact that God is trying to make it hard to negotiate the turns or sets obstacles in your way. The difficulty lies in the fact that your flesh will not want to enter the narrow gate. Nothing in you wants to turn the reigns over to another, especially the Lord. We want to do things our way. It also means that the enemy has a myriad of well-crafted lies designed to keep you off the narrow gate.

Some people have the idea that the world is filled with religions, philosophies, and ideologies, but Jesus says there are, in fact, TWO. Jesus and everything else. Everything else the world offers is just the broad gate carefully disguised.

John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Acts 4:12 (ESV)

¹² “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

John 10:7–9 (ESV)

⁷ “So Jesus again said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture’.”

1 Timothy 2:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

There is a narrow gate that leads to life and a broad gate that leads to destruction.
There are two gates...

2. There are Two Paths

Narrow Path and Broad Path

Remember last week we said when you see the word *path* in scripture, it is typically referring to **a way of living**. So, if one has entered through the NARROW GATE, he or she will find themselves on the NARROW PATH.

If one finds himself on the BROAD PATH, then he can be certain he has not entered through the NARROW GATE. You see?

Here is what happens, specifically in our culture in the South. A person will hear that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins...they will respond to a Gospel invitation, they will hear that we are saved by grace through faith and that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. They will make a DECISION... then they will go on about their life with little or no change whatsoever.

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT PERSON - They didn't trust CHRIST, they trusted their DECISION.

If you TRUST JESUS at the GATE, you will trust JESUS ON THE PATH.

You might say, "But Pastor, I read in the Bible where it says, whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." It does say that! But the word CALL is in the present active indicative tense. In the Greek language that doesn't refer to a one-time event, but rather an ongoing lifestyle of calling on the Lord. In other words, if you become a GOD CALLER, you shall be saved.

If you sincerely cried out to God by faith, looking to the person and work of Jesus Christ to *enter* the Kingdom... you will look to him for life *within* the Kingdom, you see.

There are two gates, there are two paths,

3. There are Two Crowds

The FEW and the MANY.

Now, over the course of time, an untold myriad of people have entered the narrow gate and have walked the narrow path. But at any given point in time, there are relatively few.

If one has strived to enter the NARROW GATE, and is walking the NARROW PATH, then his companions will be very few.

If you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven you must be willing to stand alone.

Matthew 16:24–26 (ESV)

²⁴ "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?'"

The late Senator James A. Reed, of Missouri, in one of the most forceful speeches ever delivered before the Senate, observed with great truth, "The majority crucified Jesus Christ; the majority burned the Christians at the stake; the majority established slavery; the majority jeered when Columbus said the world was round; the majority threw him into a dungeon for having discovered a new world. Christ always calls us to follow the lifestyle of the "minority opinion."

Never be deceived by the loud voice of "majority morality."

There are two gates, there are two paths, there are two crowds, and

4. There are Two Destinations

LIFE and DESTRUCTION

This final set of twos is where we find the motivation for striving to enter the NARROW GATE, for not giving up although the NARROW PATH is difficult, and finishing our course though our companions may be few... it is the **DESTINATION**.

John 3:36 (ESV)

³⁶ “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Let me remind you of where we started... the narrow gate is open... strive to enter... the day is coming when it will not be.

²⁵ **“When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’”**

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: Noah preached year after year. No doubt when the day finally came with the Ark fully complete that Noah and his family boarded the ARK. Perhaps even then he preached... come, save yourself from the downpour of God’s wrath... enter the ARK. But they scoffed, they mocked, but can you imagine that dreadful moment when the heavens opened and the HAND OF GOD, reached down and shut the door to the ARK? Oh you could have heard a pin drop, because the gate was closed. No more invitation, no more opportunity... the day of grace had passed.

Oh as the rain fell... you can hear the knocking on the door, the scratching of nails against the timbers, then the screams as the water rose... but the door was closed, and no man could open it.

This is a day of grace; I can say with all my heart - whosoever will let him come... today is the day of salvation. But listen carefully... I can make no promises about tomorrow.

Only GOD opens the door, and only GOD knows when it will be closed. Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart.