

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 7:13-14 | Decision Time
May 14, 2023

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 7.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

We have spent the last nine and a half months listening to Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount so far.

The Sermon on the Mount began in Matthew 5.

And last week we saw Jesus begin His conclusion by teaching us how to ask, seek and knock.

KEYPOINT #1:

Asking + Action = Seeking

We're good at asking, but we also need to do our part.

God is not going to do what is our responsibility.

Now please know this is not like that phrase, "God helps those who help themselves."—especially when it comes to salvation.

KEYPOINT #2:

Asking + Action + Persevering = Knocking

So as we studied this *ask, seek, and knock* passage last Sunday, we learned that we should not ask for stuff.

We are to seek first the Kingdom of God, and all our stuff will be added to us!
(Matt 6:33).

We are to ask, seek and knock for more of God.

God is to increase, we are to decrease |

A paraphrase of last week's text in Matthew 7:7—

We are continuing asking for God, and He will be given to you. Continue seeking for God and you will find Him. Continue knocking for God, and He will open the door for you.

In the original language—Greek—verse seven is called a “divine passive,” which means, “Continue asking and God will give you what He deems best.”

We closed last week by reading a perfect example of how God answers prayer when we come to Him through humility—King Solomon.

King Solomon asked for humility and Godly judgment to rule the nation—God not only answered his prayer and also gave him things he didn't ask for—wealth and fame.

He didn't ask for stuff

but

INTRODUCTION:

As Jesus begins to close His sermon today, we will see Jesus ask for a decision. *focus,*

Jesus has been giving God's standards throughout His Sermon on the Mount.

God's standards are holy, perfect, and impossible for anyone to achieve.

His
The standards completely level our pride and self-sufficiency.

Jesus has taught what His kingdom is like and how His people are to act.

So for the rest of Matthew chapter seven, the Lord focuses on the inevitable decision that every person must make.

Contrary to what the world thinks, there are only two religions.

The first is of *divine accomplishment*.

This very simply is the Gospel.

The Gospel reveals that every person is a sinner and desperately needs Jesus as their savior.

The Gospel is a religion of grace.

If a person doesn't choose Jesus as their savior, then we have the second religion.

It's called *human achievement*.

Human achievement is exactly how it sounds—a salvation of human works (good deeds) trying to prove to God that you are good enough to be your own savior.

One is the religion of faith, the other the religion of the flesh.

From the beginning of time, man saw that God's standard of perfection was not only difficult but impossible to achieve.

So, what's man to do?

He takes the easy way out.

He disregards or ignores God's law and creates his own standards of morality.

Standards that make accommodations for his sin.

Therefore, the religion of *human achievement* is achievable by mankind.

And by achieving and even excelling at his own man-made and sin-stained standards, man considered himself righteous before God.

So, Jesus addresses this lowering of the bar.

As Jesus concludes His Sermon, He reveals the consequences of our actions by providing several illustrations to get our attention.

Each illustration comes with a decision that everyone will make—or has already made.

For example, Jesus illustrates two gates/roads today—the narrow and the wide—you can choose which one to enter.

These two gates/roads lead to two destinations—one that leads to eternal life and the other to eternal death.

Jesus goes on to illustrate two kinds of trees that produce two very different types of fruit.

There are also two kinds of people who profess faith in Jesus Christ—one person is sincere, and the other is fake.

Lastly, Jesus shows how there are two kinds of builders—who use two different types of foundations—rock and sand.

As we spend the next several weeks with Jesus' conclusion, we'll begin to hear a certain underlying theme—

Essentially, Jesus is ^{asking} saying, *You've heard my sermon, now what are you going to do with it?*

In other words, it's decision time.

Jesus demands a verdict.

His sermon and his conclusion are not words to ignore this morning.

It is a matter of life and death.

The Sermon on the Mount is not a sermonette for Christianettes.

But out of God's grace, it's not only one decision we must make, but many.

What is that decision for you today? Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 7:13— "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it.

Matthew 7:14— How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

Matthew 7:15— "Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves.

Matthew 7:16— You'll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

Matthew 7:17— In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit.

Matthew 7:18— A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Matthew 7:19— Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Matthew 7:20— So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

Matthew 7:21— "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 7:22— On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?'

Matthew 7:23— Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!'

And dear friends, these are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

*Open the gates of righteousness for me;
I will enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.*

*This is the Lord's gate;
the righteous will enter through it.*

*I will give thanks to you
because you have answered me
and have become my salvation.*

(Psalm 118:19-21)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 7:13— "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it.

Question: Do we go through the gate to get onto the road?

Or are we walking along the road and then passing through the gate?

Is the gate, conversion, or Heaven?

Let's not overthink it—

Jesus teaches the gate and the road are alike.

The gate and road are two illustrations of the same thing.

In other words, there are only two ways to eternal life— whether it's a gate to be entered or a road to be traveled.

The important point is that you will have to make a decision—or better yet, a series of decisions to reach your final destination.

Jesus' point ^{by offering two choices is not new.} in his illustration is not new.

It's the same choice that Moses preached before he died.

Deuteronomy 30:19 NLT—“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!

It's the same choice that Joshua preached while entering the Promised Land.

Speaking to the Israelites, Josh says...

Joshua 24:15 NLT— But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve....But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

This choice is offered in the very first Psalm...it's called the Gateway Psalm.

Psalm 1:1 NLT—Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.

Psalm 1:2 NLT— But they delight in the law of the Lord, *— make a choice* meditating on it day and night.

It's the same message the prophet Elijah challenged King Ahab with—the big showdown between him and the prophets of Baal.

1 Kings 18:21—Then Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions?, If the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him." ~~But the people didn't answer him a word.~~

It's the same choice that the OT prophets preached.

Jeremiah 21:8 NLT—"Tell all the people, 'This is what the Lord says: Take your choice of life or death!

In other words, we make a thousand little choices every day—with one that is the most important decision we'll ever make.

Matthew 7:13—"Enter through the narrow gate.

When Jesus says, "enter," it's not a suggestion.

It's a command. Jesus demands a specific action.

As disciples, we are not to admire the gate— but to walk through it.

In other words, Jesus refers to all the people who admire the principles of His Sermon on the Mount— but never apply them to their own lives.

These people applaud, praise, and even respect what Jesus said—but they refuse to believe and allow God to transform them.

Matthew 7:13—Enter through the narrow gate.

The picture that Jesus is painting is one where a person must enter alone.

He brings nothing with him.

Think of this gate as a turnstile. (Subway/Amusement Park)

A turnstile allows only one person through at a time.

You can't bring other people with you—a crowd can't get through a turnstile together.

The narrow gate points to the fact that you are responsible for your own choices before a holy God.

You also can't bring your stuff with you.

Your worldly stuff? Baggage won't fit through this narrow Turnstile
~~No baggage allowed~~

Ecclesiastes 5:15 NLT— We all come to the end of our lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day we were born. We can't take our riches with us.

God is the Creator—we are His creation.

God is self sufficient.

We are reliant on Him for our next breath.

We didn't choose the day of our birth? We were not choosing the day of our death.

Matthew 7:13— For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it.

Jesus describes the second gate—it's the second option.

He commands no one to go through the wide gate because many are happy to choose it without any prompting.

Jesus describes this gate as wide.

In other words, it's easy.

wide base
This gate/road is attractive and glamorous. *- At first*

You can bring all your friends and all your baggage—even accessories through this gate!

Why? Because it's inclusive and it's indulgent.

Think of Las Vegas Blvd.

It's the gate of self-indulgence.

There are few rules, few restrictions, and few requirements.

After all, what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas, right?

The wide road is where sin is not only tolerated but encouraged.

To stay on this wide road, all you have to do is follow your inclinations, likings, and base desires.

There is absolutely no effort required to ever change your way of thinking or your lifestyle.

There are no boundaries.

Personal views and opinions don't make any difference.

If you believe all roads lead to Heaven...

If you marry somebody of the same sex...

If your pronouns are 'they/them'...

If you believe that as a biological man, you are a little girl trapped in a man's body...

No worries.

You will be celebrated for being you—*You be You!*

The wide road is where truth is invented.

Humility is mocked.

The theme song is, "*I did it my way.*"

The wide road is a life of taking, taking, taking...

It's a road of demanding from others that you will live your best life now.

It's a life of ease and no sacrifice.

Most importantly, it's a road to where no one will ever tell you that what your thinking, what you're doing, or how your living is wrong.

Matthew 7:13—For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction,

But Jesus says that what you're thinking, what you're doing, and how you're living is wrong.

This lifestyle is the end in itself.

This road is all there is...until it isn't.

There is a reason the world loves the song, Highway to Hell.

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

The apostle Paul warns...

Colossians 3:5 NLT— So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshipping the things of this world.

Colossians 3:6 NLT— Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming.

Today, in our culture, many of us become offended when we mention God's anger, wrath, or justice.

One of the biggest lies a Christian can believe is that God is only a God of love.

If we think we only need love, we believe a lie sold by the world. A God who is only love is not a god at all—

That is a god who you've created in your own mind—it's an idol.

And that idol needs to be confessed as sin.

And we'll see why in a moment.

Matthew 7:13— For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction,

Apōleia (destruction) refers to total ruin and loss.

Ah-pole-E-Ah

The picture here is that your life cannot be repaired because there is so much destruction that it no longer exists.

Jesus is referring to a very real place called hell.

Matthew 10:28— Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Hebrews 10:31— It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The Bible speaks of the reality of hell in the same terms as the reality of heaven.

We see this comparison at the end of Revelation chapter twenty and the beginning of Revelation twenty-one.

Chapter

The apostle John first describes hell.

Revelation 20:11 NLT— And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide.

Revelation 20:12 NLT— I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.

Revelation 20:13 NLT— The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds.

Revelation 20:14 NLT— Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. = Hell

Revelation 20:15 NLT— And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Now John describes heaven...

Revelation 21:1 NLT— Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.

Revelation 21:2 NLT— And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

That's just one example of the reality of hell in Scripture.

Jesus actually spends more time in the Gospels warning people about the dangers of hell than He does comforting people with the hope of heaven.

In fact, As Jesus closes His sermon, He mentions hell 4 times.

Trying to separate heaven and hell, or ignoring hell altogether is not possible from a biblical standpoint.

One of the many problems we have with understanding what hell is comes from the world. — in their opinion — hell is a joke

Hell is pictured as a dungeon full of demons with pitchforks.

Or some thriving underground city filled with ghosts and goblins have a Halloween party.

One thing is for sure—these versions of hell do not exist.

So what does the Bible actually say about hell?

Not much—Jesus talks about hell a lot.

However, He doesn't give many particulars.

Here's what we do know from Scripture.

We know that hell was originally intended for demonic spiritual beings, not people (Matthew 25:41).

The experience of being in hell is compared to burning within a fire that is always raging. (Mark 9:43; 9:48; Matthew 18:9; Luke 16:24).

At the same time, hell is compared to darkness (Matthew 22:13).

Hell is also associated with intense grief (Matthew 8:12) and horror (Mark 9:44).

In other words, the Bible tells us only what being in hell is “like.”

It doesn't give any details about what hell is or how it functions.

So evidently, we don't need to know those things—those things are too awful to comprehend.

However, the Bible clarifies that hell is real, eternal, and to be avoided at all costs (Matthew 5:29–30).

Regardless of the warning, Jesus goes on to say...

Matthew 7:13— and there are many who go through it.

Many—a great number, a multitude, a large number of people choose this gate.

In other words, most people are choosing hell.

KEYPOINT 1:

Every person decides for himself which gate to walk through.

It's an unavoidable decision.

~~And there is only one gate/road—one choice that leads to eternal life.~~

~~We don't come to God on our own terms.~~

God offers eternal life or eternal death.

Now many of us at this point are choosing life.

But Jesus says, not so fast.

Matthew 7:14— How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

Narrow is *Stenos* in Greek.

We get stenography from it— writing that is abbreviated or compressed.

It means “to groan.”

Narrow is not only restrictive and limiting.

It's also constrictive—the more you walk, the narrower the path gets.

And it's constrictive because of the pressures placed upon us as we walk this narrow and difficult road.

~~The narrow gate is narrow.~~

Has anyone ever called you narrow-minded?

It's true...if you're a disciple of Jesus.

Don't apologize for it—say thank you!

They just gave you a Biblical compliment!

The narrow road is exclusive from the very beginning.

It's important to understand that.

Following the narrow road means you're an insider.

The world are outsiders.

This is not your home—you are simply traveling through.

And because you're traveling through, not only does this mean that you leave the world behind—it means you leave the world's ways behind as well.

And because it is so difficult to leave everything we've ever known, everything we can see, everything we've ever done behind...Jesus says...

+ **Matthew 7:14**— ... and few find it.

Jesus brings up an interesting theological point: few —not many.

Worldly numbers do not prove what is right or wrong.

The majority opinion make no difference to the Kingdom of God.

Jesus doesn't need the latest Gallup poll.

God is not running for God!

Jesus says, few find this gate.

Few people choose the narrow gate, pass through the narrow turnstile and walk this narrow road.

We see many examples of this in Scripture.

Let me give you a few:

After approximately 1,600 years since the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1, the earth's population exploded in number.

At the same time, it also exploded with evil.

God decided to do something about that evil.

Genesis 7:11 NLT—When Noah was 600 years old, ~~on the seventeenth day of the second month~~, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky.

Genesis 7:12 NLT—The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

Genesis 7:13 NLT—That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives.

That's only eight people who survived God's wrath on human sin.

It took Noah 120 years to build the ark, (Gen. 6:3).

And while building, Noah preached to the people who had questions. (2 Peter 2:5)

And yet, out of the estimated 750 million to 4 billion people living on the earth—the only ones who believed were Noah's family.

That population, btw, was probably closer to the 4 billion because people lived so long during that time.

Regardless, Noah and his family chose the narrow gate.

Everyone else chose the wide.

We see the same thing with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham is having this conversation with the LORD God—who is the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ.

Abraham is begging Him not to destroy Sodom.

The conversation turns into a negotiating process from 50 people to 10.

God Promises to ^{NOT} destroy the city if there are 10 people walking the narrow Rd. forsaving the city

Genesis 19:12 NLT— Meanwhile, the angels questioned Lot. “Do you have any other relatives here in the city?” they asked. “Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else.”

Genesis 19:13 NLT— For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it.” *—NOT 10*

Genesis 19:14 NLT— So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters’ fiancés, “Quick, get out of the city! The Lord is about to destroy it.” But the young men thought he was only joking.

Genesis 19:15 NLT— At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. “Hurry,” they said to Lot. “Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!”



Genesis 19:16 NLT— When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful.

That's only four people who survived Sodom and Gomorrah.

Actually 3 - Lot's wife didn't make it. = she chose wide gate
Lot and his ^{daughters} family chose the narrow gate (with some supernatural arm twisting).

Everyone else chose the ^{wide} side gate.

The fact that "everybody does/thinks it" is no proof that they are moral, sober, righteous people.

Quite the contrary is true: God's people have always been a remnant, a small minority in this world.

In fact, Jesus ~~tells us that~~ ^{provides two examples}.



Luke 12:32 NLT—"So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom."

The Greek term for little is *mikros*--where we get our English word, micro.
^{me-cros}



When Jesus was teaching the Parable of the Great Feast, he ends with



Matthew 22:14 NLT—"For many are called, but few are chosen."

The reason is not difficult to discover, which points us back to today's text.

The narrow road is lonely and costly. ^{temporarily painful}



PREACH:

Jesus says there are only two gates/roads—one leading to destruction and one to life. ^{hell} _{Heaven}

And there is no middle ground.

You will never go through the narrow gate by accident.

Entering through the narrow gate is a deliberate conscious choice.

The great thing about God's grace is that the wide road seems to have many off-ramps.

Every single one of us has story after story of traveling down the wide road.

By God's grace, He allowed us to do what we wanted.

He allowed us to engage in our sin.

He basically, said, 'You want money, you want power, you want sex, drugs...here you go—I'll give you so much of your little god, you'll throw up on it.'

Nobody will make you do anything you don't want to do—but please know that—

However
Jesus has laid out the consequences ahead of time.

So today is a day of decision for those of you who are traveling on the wide road.

You're not hear by accident—this is a divine appointment.

And this message is a divine disruption to your life.

<BLACK ICE STORY?>

Please know this...if you don't choose to repent of your sin...

If you refuse to believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior...

If you choose to NOT to exit the wide road...

Then please know where your final destination lands.

And please know that as you are in hell, you will consciously remember this conversation.

You will have no one to blame but yourself.

KEYPOINT 2:

The man who does not consider his final destination is a fool.

For those of you traveling the narrow road—today is a time to praise God for it.

It's a time to thank him for saving your wretched soul and giving you eternal life and not eternal death.

It's a time to praise God for your sufferings—because they are so very temporary.

It's a time to worship God—because it's through the sufferings where He's teaching you new things about Himself that, otherwise, you would never know.

Finally, please know this...

The narrow gate is more of a who than a what.

KEYPOINT 3:

The narrow gate is Jesus.

↳ A person, not a set of rules. —based on a relationship

John 10:9 NLT—Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved.

PRAYER

BENEDICTION

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

(Romans 11:33; 36)

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