

“The Narrow Road that Leads to Life”
(Matthew 7:13-14)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Jesus has been telling us
How the work He had come to do
Would forever change the hearts
Of all who would receive Him –
Not only before He came,
But in those living at that time,
As well as all who would trust Him
From that time forward,
Including us –

How His Spirit would work in us
To make us like Him –

How He would so change
The way we see God’s Law
That we would want to keep it
With every part of our being (Matt. 5);

How He would so humble us,
That what others think about us
Would no longer be a concern,
But what God thinks of us;

How He would open our eyes
To the fact that heaven is *real*,

So we would *know*
That what we do for Him *here*,
Will make things better for us *there*,
So we'll *commit ourselves more* to Him,
Knowing He'll take care of us;

And how He would give us
The ability to do this,
By giving us the desire to love others
In the same way He loved others.

B. Preview.

As Jesus now draws His sermon to its conclusion,
We need to remember
That He was speaking to a mixed crowd:

He was teaching His disciples –
They needed to hear this –

But He was also speaking
To the many others there
Who *hadn't believed* in Him.

And so Jesus ends with four challenges/tests
That were meant to get them to step back
And take a good look at themselves
To see who they really are –
Four tests that can help us do the same:

1. He points out that there are two paths, but only one of them leads to heaven –
Are we on the right one?
2. That there are many who claim to teach us the truth about this path –
Are we listening to the right teachers?
3. That there are many who believe they're on this path –
Are we on it?
4. That we may build our lives either on truth or lies –
Are we building ours on a foundation that will last?

This morning, let's consider Jesus' first test:

Are we walking on the right path?

We will only enter into life,

If we take the path that leads us there.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let's look at the images He uses.

He tells us

There are two doors –

One that is narrow

And one that is broad –

That lead to two ways or paths –

A narrow path and a broad path.

Think *Pilgrim's Progress*:

Pilgrim entered the narrow (Wicket) gate

Before he walked on the narrow path.

Jesus draws His illustration

From the two kinds of roads

That existed in His day:

The public roads were broad –

Up to about nine yards, or 27 feet, wide –

Because they were built for the community as a whole:

They were widely used –

The private roads were narrow –

Only about 2.25 yards or 6.75 feet wide –

Because they were built for only a few,

And only a few used them.

Jesus' customary way of teaching

Was to draw analogies

From what people see everyday

To what they couldn't see except by faith.

That's what He appears to be doing here.

He tells us second,

That these two different paths lead

To two very different destinations:

“The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads *to destruction.*”

“The gate is small and the way is narrow that leads *to life.*”

He points out

That there are many more traveling

On the broad path than on the narrow:

“For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, *and there are many who enter through it*” (v. 13).

“For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, *and there are few who find it*” (v. 14).

And finally,

Seeing that only the narrow road leads to life,

He calls us to, “Enter through the narrow gate” (v. 13).

B. What does Jesus mean?

He’s reminding us:

1. First, that there are only two ultimate destinations –

Two places we can go

When we leave this world –

Two states we can end up in:

Life or destruction.

He says the same thing

In what He tells us He will say

At the conclusion of the final judgment:

“These [i.e., the goats] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous [i.e., the sheep] into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46).

There are no other possibilities –

There is no third option –

We will either enter into life –

Inherit God’s eternal kingdom,

And live with Him forever –

Or we will go away into eternal punishment –

We will go into hell,

And suffer for the sins we've committed –

For all of our crimes against Him –

For all eternity.

2. Second, He's reminding us

That the way we'll arrive

At either of these destinations

Is by one of these two roads:

a. There is the broad road that leads to destruction.

This is the path we were all born on –

We went through the broad gate

That put us on this broad road

When we were conceived.

David writes, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5).

He wrote this to explain

Why he committed adultery with Uriah's wife,

And then covered up his crime

By having Uriah executed.

This is where sin begins.

This wasn't true only of him –

This is the way we all came into the world:

That's one reason it's called the broad gate.

Paul writes, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

We all sinned in Adam,

When he represented us in the garden

And chose to disobey God:

When he sinned, we all sinned,

And when we all sinned,

We were all condemned.

Paul writes, “So then as through one transgression [i.e., Adam’s] there resulted condemnation to all men [i.e., to all of us]” (Rom. 5:18).

Being conceived and born in this condition –

Having entered through the broad gate –

We also walked on the broad road –

We lived in rebellion against God,

And so were on our way to destruction.

Paul writes to the Ephesians, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:1-3).

Jesus calls this path “broad,”

Not only because there are so many on it,

But also because it’s an *easy* path:

The word “broad” includes the idea

Of being pleasant or agreeable –

It was pleasant to us,

Because it’s easy to live this kind of life,

When this is the kind of life you want.

- b. But there is also the narrow road that leads to life.

Jesus tells us there are those

Who are walking on this road as well –

Who get off the broad road

By entering through the narrow gate or door.

This door is represented as narrow

Because it's the only way

We can get onto the narrow path:

Through faith in Jesus.

When the Philippian jailer

Asked Paul and Silas how he could be saved,

They didn't tell him,

“There are many ways;

They all lead to heaven;

Just take your pick.”

They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Peter said the same to the Jewish leaders, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Jesus Himself said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

It's only by turning from our sins

And trusting in Jesus

That we can get onto the narrow road.

Now like the broad road,
 The narrow road is so named –
 Not just because there are few walking on it –
 But because it's a difficult road.

The word includes the idea of being strict or exacting.
 This is reflected in the KJV by the word "strait" –
 Which doesn't mean "not curvy,"
 But "difficult."

It's difficult because it's a road of self-denial –
 We have to let go of our lives
 And lay them down to serve our Master –

It's difficult because it's a road of holiness –
 We have to let go of our sins,
 To walk in His ways.

Jesus represents it –
 As we saw earlier in the service –
 As a kind of violence we must do to ourselves
 In order to enter the kingdom:

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Matt. 11:12).

We have to fight against the world and the devil,
 But also against ourselves –
 Against our sinful desires:

Paul likens this to the Corinthians as an athletic competition: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize?"

Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. *Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified*' (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

This is the road we must walk on

If we are to enter into life –

And it's a difficult road.

But if we *know* Jesus –

If we have trusted Him to save us,

If we have received Him savingly –

It's the only road we'll want to travel on,

Because of the Spirit's work in our hearts.

C. So what does Jesus want us to do?

He wants us to *take a good look* at our lives

To *see* which path we're on:

Because we will end up

Where the road we're walking on leads.

Are you on the narrow road?

Are you denying yourself and putting Jesus first?

Are you following His example?

Are you obeying His Word?

Are you willing to follow Him

No matter what the cost?

Is this what you're doing because you love Him?

If it is,

Then it's strong evidence
That you have trusted Him,
That you have received Him,
That you know Him,
And that you will inherit eternal life.

If it is,
Then ask Him every day
For His Spirit to give you the strength
To continue on that path
No matter how difficult –
And He will give it to you.

But if these things aren't true of you –
If you're still on the broad road –
You need to listen to what Jesus says:
“Enter through the narrow gate” (v. 13).

The Gospel isn't so much an offer,
As it is a command:

This is what He commands,
Because it's for your good.

If you keep going the way you are,
You will be destroyed.

But if you listen to Him –
If you turn from your sins and trust Him –

He will save you

And bring you to heaven.

In closing, let me read what John Bunyan –

The author of *Pilgrim's Progress* –

Wrote about his own conversion

In his book *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*,

Because it's a great illustration of what Jesus just told us:

He writes, “About this time, the state and happiness of these poor people at Bedford was shown to me in this way, in a dream or vision. I saw, as if they were sitting on the sunny side of some high mountain, there refreshing themselves with the pleasant beams of the sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the cold, afflicted with frost, snow, and dark clouds. Between us, I saw a wall that surrounded this mountain. Now, I deeply wanted to pass through this wall, concluding, that if I could, I would go where they were, and there also comfort myself with the heat of their sun. I went around this wall again and again, looking to see if I could find some way or passage, through which to enter; but for some time I could find none. At last, I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I tried to enter; but the passage being very strait and narrow, I made many attempts, but all in vain, until I was exhausted. At last, with great effort, I first got my head in, and after that, by a sliding motion, my shoulders, and my whole body. Then I was very glad, and went and sat down with them, and was comforted with the light and heat of their sun. Now, this is how I understood these things – the mountain represented the church of the living God; the sun, the comfortable shining of His merciful face; the wall was the Word, that separates Christians from the world; and the gap which was in this wall, was Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father (John 14:6; Matt 7:14). But since the passage was very narrow, even so narrow, that I could not enter in, except with great difficulty, it showed me that none could enter into life, but those that were entirely committed, and only if they left this wicked world behind them; for here there was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul, and sin” (Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, edited).

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