

The Narrow Way to Heaven

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We come this morning to a verse, to a theme, that is really the culmination of Christian salvation because we come to a theme that takes us right into the throne room of heaven and I'm delighted to be able to share it with you here this morning.

Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Matthew 7:13 and 14. This will be the fourth and final message that we spend here. There is a sense of reluctance that I have to move on from it after this but we have to move on at some point, I guess. Part of my reluctance is that this passage stands out in Scripture in terms of its urgent call and its statement of the consequences of how we respond to Christ. Pilate asked, "What shall I do then with this man?" before he handed him over to crucifixion. The Jews cried out, "Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!" And this is a passage which cries out to each one of you: what will you do with this Christ, will you crucify him afresh and walk away, continuing on the broad way that leads to destruction? Or will you enter through the narrow gate? Do you find yourself on that narrow way that leads to life? Well, if you do, what we find here and what we're going to see today is the cause for the brightest, the most radiant, the most glorious hope to animate your heart throughout all the days of your life. So this passage in some ways uniquely brings into crystal-clear focus and brings to our closest attention the consequences of life and death and the outcome of what you do with Christ.

Today we're going to see the glorious hope that belongs to us that are in Christ. For those of you that are here that are not in Christ, I would ask God to help you listen to this as though it were your last invitation to blessedness, that it would come to you with that level of urgency, because the blessedness is so great and the refusal and the destruction, by contrast, is so horrific that we wouldn't have any of you walk down the path that leads to destruction.

Matthew 7:13 and 14 says,

13 Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

We are at the end of the Sermon on the Mount in many ways. We have gone through everything that Jesus has to say about Christian character, about the law of God, about trusting God, about interpersonal relationships in light of coming judgment, and Jesus says, "This is what my kingdom is like," and as we've said multiple times over the past month, he says, "Enter in. Leave behind your life. Come through me and enter into this kingdom." Because many won't. Billions upon billions will not and they will end in destruction. They will end in eternal judgment of hell. He says by contrast as he speaks to each heart that would hear these words, he says, "Come." We said it's an invitation of love. It's an invitation of concern that is mingled with warning, "There is destruction just ahead so enter through me and enter into life." And here this morning we get to see what that life is and what the fullness of it is. He has completed his description of his kingdom and life and character in his kingdom, and he invites you to come and he calls his hearers to respond.

As we've said, in these two verses we see a command, "Enter through the narrow gate." In the next section, verses 15 through 21, he gives a caution. He warns about false teachers and he warns about false faith. Then in verses 24 through 29, you see the consequences. Either your house will stand when judgment comes, indicating your life and soul, and because you have put your faith in Christ, or it will collapse as though a house built on sand falls in a flood. What will it be for you? That's the concern. That's the content of what Jesus is saying.

Now today, we focus primarily on verse 14, "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." There is a sense of exclamation, there is a sense of surprise that animates what Jesus says in this verse. You could read it in this sense from the original language, "How narrow the gate." And it has a surprising sense to it, it's like this in something that we can all relate to. You're walking along and you are deep in thought. You are preoccupied with whatever it is that you have on your mind at that point, and then all of a sudden you almost bump into someone that you didn't see. You didn't realize that it was there. You didn't realize they were there and you almost bump into them and you have that sense of it startles you. Well, that is the sense, that startling sense is what Jesus has in mind and what the point of this passage is to press that down upon you. "Whoa! I wasn't expecting that!" It wakes us up to the reality that life leads to judgment and many many, the vast majority of people are going to experience a bad, negative, eternal judgment, and Jesus says many people are going that way. It's a narrow way. And so it wakes us up out of our spiritual lethargy. It wakes us up out of our spiritual indifference. It calls us to be alive and to be awake and to be alert to the realities of what judgment means and what the outcome is going to be and it's shocking compared to what you normally hear in the world, it is shocking to realize how narrow the way is into heaven.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones compares it very well, I would say, compares it to a turnstile that only admits one person at a time. Each person individually must come to Christ. You can't come on the wings of your family. You can't come on the wings of your church. You certainly can't come on the wings of any good deeds because there are none. You have to come alone. You have to come and you have to leave the world behind. You have

to leave false religion behind. You have to leave your sin behind and enter through Christ. This is a call for a radical repentance.

Jesus here, look at verse 14 with me here, he's kind of giving a very condensed compact view of the totality of conversion in the life that follows. He says in verse 14, "the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." He's using the gate, a gate of course being something that you enter through to go from one place into another, he uses the gate to picture the initial moment of conversion to come to Christ. The way illustrates the life that follows after conversion but before you actually enter into heaven. We are walking as Christians now on the narrow path and the question is this: why is the gate so narrow? Why is the path narrow? Why is it accurately described that way? We know it's an accurate description because it comes from the lips of our Lord Jesus himself. Why is the gate so narrow? That's an urgent question. It's a startling question. Why is the path so narrow?

And just to remind briefly, even though Dane did it at the start so well, we said that 6.5 billion out of 7.6 billion people don't even identify with biblical Christianity at all; 85% of the world population is not even on a path that has anything to do with the biblical Christ. And we are shocked by that. We are shocked by the incalculable enormous loss of souls that that represents. Then we think about the remaining 15% and realize that Jesus taught that there are wheat and tares, there are true converts and false converts in the church, and we just see it is narrowed down so much. What that should do in your heart, beloved, is to cause one of two things to happen. 1. If you are confident and assured that you are in Christ and you truly are, there should be such a sense of gratitude in your heart for that. "Lord," you say, "Lord, you have given me a gift, you have secured my well-being in a way that most people are passed over for. I am so grateful. I am so thankful that you showed this grace to me and that you led me to this narrow gate and you led me through it and now you have my hand safe on the narrow way." That's no small deal. Beloved, if you are a Christian today, the greatest eternal blessing, the most significant thing that could ever happen to you is already secured because of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you have that sense, most of us have had near misses of serious car accidents that could have been fatal, and you have that sense of, "That was close! That was a near miss!" And to be a Christian is to have that grateful sense, "There was this broad way to destruction that I was on and it was a near miss for me but now I'm safe and I can relax," and we are grateful to Christ for that.

But why is the gate so narrow? Well, let me give you three things just by way of kind of a sense of introduction and to kind of get our minds going in the right direction. We'll say what we've always said, what we always say and what Scripture makes very clear. Why is the gate so narrow? 1. Salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. Buddha cannot save anyone. Hinduism and all their multiplicity of God's cannot save anyone. Joseph Smith and Mormonism cannot save anyone. The Pope, Mary and the saints can't save anyone. Salvation is found only in Jesus Christ.

Look at John 3. The Gospel of John, chapter 3, for example. John 3:3. Jesus said in no uncertain terms with great clarity, speaking to the teacher of Israel when he said,

3 ... "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Unless you have been born again, you are not going to heaven. That is the clear meaning of what Jesus said. And in like language he says in verse 5,

5 ... "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Unless your sins have been cleansed, you cannot enter into heaven. And so you must be born again and to be born again is something outside of your power to do. You cannot make yourself be born again. You have to be born from above.

Scripture also says, you don't need to turn there but in 1 Timothy 2:5 it says,

5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Do you understand, my friend, that you must have a mediator if you are going to go to God? You cannot go on your own. You are not holy but you are sinful. You are not the Creator but you are a creature by nature and by character. You cannot get to God from where you are at. You must have a mediator. You must have someone that stands, as it were, between you and God and is able to bring the two of you together. Jesus Christ is the only mediator who can do that because he is fully God, because he is fully man. He stands, as it were speaking very metaphorically here, he stands, as it were, with one foot in the realm of deity and one foot in the realm of sinful humanity and only in that way is the chasm between you and God breached. You must have a mediator who is received only through faith in him.

That's why salvation is narrow. That's why the gate is narrow. It's only through Jesus Christ that anyone goes to heaven. You can only enter this kingdom through faith in him. Think about it this way, trying so desperately, realizing this is the last time we are going to be in this text and just trying so desperately to make it plain in so many different ways, talking about the kingdom of heaven, right? Well, the kingdom belongs to the King. The King is the one whose realm it is. You must belong to the King in order to be in his kingdom. If you reject the King, if you have never heard of the King, you can't enter into his kingdom and Jesus says, "The way into my kingdom is through a humble, submissive, repentant faith in me." You must come to Christ and come to him alone, abandoning any claim of self-righteousness; abandoning any claim of good works; coming humbly and saying, "I need you to save me because I can't save myself." That's the urgency of the message. There is no other way to salvation, even though so many people try to reach God through their own made up religion. That's why it's narrow. Salvation is found only in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, why is it narrow? Salvation requires repentance. Jesus has made this plain throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Go back to Matthew 5:3 and 4. He says, "

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, [which we've said is a declaration of spiritual bankruptcy] for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And maybe you weren't with us when we first started teaching on this a year and a half, two years ago, but the idea here when Jesus says "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," is that the kingdom of heaven is theirs and theirs alone. He's saying, "Them and them only. They and they only are the ones who are in the kingdom of heaven." So there is no one, part of the reason that the way to heaven is narrow is because there is no room in heaven for someone who is boastful, who is self-righteous, who asserts that his works somehow helped him get there, as if God owed something to him. No, the only people that are in heaven are those who have declared spiritual bankruptcy and asked for a salvation that they did not deserve. The question is has your soul been humbled to that point where you have cried out to Christ alone.

He goes on in verse 4 and says,

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

They and they alone. The mourning, the sense of agony over the fact that, "I am a sinner." True faith in Christ, true salvation leads you into that recognition that, "I have sinned. I have broken God's law. I have fallen short of the glory of God." Do you know what that is, among other things? What that is is a direct assault on human pride. The gate is narrow because you can't take your pride in with you. You leave it behind. You come as a beggar to a gracious Savior saying, "Give me a gift. Give me that which I don't deserve. Save me in my unworthiness."

It's narrow because of that. You leave behind the world, your self-righteousness, your sin. You even leave behind your own priorities as you come to Christ. Jesus himself said in Matthew 16:24,

24 ... "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

You know, there are a lot of people that want Jesus to help them with their stuff. There are a lot fewer that want Christ for his own sake, that want Christ above all else, that want him. That want to be found in him as the preeminent love, the preeminent priority, the preeminent glory of their heart. You see, there are many who will talk about faith and how they have faith in Jesus or they have faith in God, but when the Spirit of God searches them, when it comes time for faith to bring a cost, they stop following. They turn away, they walk away and thus show that they never belonged to him in the first place. Many talk, few will abandon all to follow Christ. That's why the way is narrow. Many walk as the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3, but truly their god is their appetite and they stop following when something better in their perception comes along. That is

why the gate is narrow. The gate is narrow because you can only go to heaven through faith in Christ and the way, the gate is one that is marked by self-abandonment and coming to Christ alone for salvation.

Thirdly, finally, why is the gate narrow? Well, the gate is narrow, the way is narrow because salvation often leads to affliction and sorrow and difficulty and hardship. Any cursory review of church history since the time of Christ would teach us that lesson as wave upon wave upon wave of men, especially in the first three centuries between Christ and Constantine, bloodshed as men gave their lives for Christ. Now seeing it repeated in other parts of the world even today. But this important point may clear up a lot of doubt for some of you. Some of you, especially those of you newer perhaps to our church, have known over time the shallow evangelism that invites people to come to Christ promising them that God will help them with their problems. You've got a really big struggle here? Well, come to Christ, he'll help you in your problems. And somehow never getting around to saying, "You know, the point of salvation is that you are a sinner and you need deliverance from the judgment of God. You need to be delivered from sin. You need to be delivered from hell." Well, if you've come to an awareness of Christ in that kind of environment, let me say this: there is a thread of truth to that because God does sustain his children in their problems and their trials and their sorrows, and praise God for that, but Christ tells us in his word that those who follow him will suffer in one way or another. It's not a broad, easy, comfortable path that after we come to Christ it's broad and easy and we just glide into heaven on the wings of a dove, a snow white dove. I don't know why that song is coming into my mind right now. I wish it wasn't.

Christ says we will suffer. Look at chapter 5, verse 10, Matthew 5:10. He says,

10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs [again, it's exclusive, theirs and theirs alone] is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So Jesus points us and says, "There will be persecution on account of me. You will experience lies at the lips of men on account of me. You will be insulted." And for some it leads even into physical difficulty. Jesus says, "Rejoice." But the point here as we consider this in light of Matthew 7:14, what we're talking about is that that cramps the way. That comes with difficulty and sorrow and affliction of heart when people close to you lie about you; when people who know better say false things and misrepresent you in the realm of spiritual things. That's not comfortable. That's not broad. That's not easy. It's hard and the way is narrow, in that sense.

Elsewhere in the Bible, Acts 14:22 says this about the Apostle Paul, he was

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

Beloved, are you suffering as you follow Christ? Are you finding it a difficult path? Beloved, take heart. That's what Christ says it would be like, a narrow way, sometimes with rocks hurting your feet; sometimes scraping your shoulders along the way of rejection and external hardship and uncertainty and difficulties. You see, when you come to the truth, there is something immensely liberating about it as you understand your experiences in life to say, "Oh yes, I do know Christ and do you know what? I thought I had been told that this meant life was going to be easy but I'm finding it hard. This created a mental conflict for me. I wondered if I was in Christ. I wondered if maybe I didn't have enough faith because they told me so many times that if I just had enough faith, my problems would go away, my disease would be healed." Well, the truth sets you free and you realize that the way, the gate – let's put it this way, let's follow the sequence of Jesus' thought – the gate is narrow, the way is narrow. You enter through a narrow gate and it's a narrow gate that is often marked with tribulation, hardship and discouragement. And to the true Christian, that brings a great sense of relief and comfort, saying, "This is what my Lord really told me to expect. Those other people, they were selling me a bill of goods. They were telling me something that was not true, but I see that my Lord was saying the truth and telling me the truth all along and I find comfort in the fact that my way is narrow and sometimes constrained and difficult, because that's what Scripture told me to expect. This isn't a mark that I'm not saved, the difficulty of the way is an affirmation that I am and I rejoice in that."

But with all of these things in mind, beloved, here's what I see: you can see that you cannot simply drift into heaven. You don't just drift into heaven. You don't drift into the narrow gate, you have to find it and you have to exercise your thought and your mind and your faith to go in through Christ. That doesn't just happen without your awareness. You must find this gate to enter through it. Jesus said that is the only path to heaven and Christ purchased that open gate with his shed blood at the cross.

So what do we say about the narrow way? The narrow way is walked by new men who have been born again. New men on a new path, living not for this world but a life to come. Living not for their own pleasure but to the glory of the one who saved them. New men on a new path because God by his Spirit has caused them to be born again. And here's the thing that you've got to hear, my friends, you have to hear this. You have to hear it, you have to believe it, you have to embrace it: while this way is narrow to find, while this way – watch it – while this way is temporarily difficult and sometimes laden with tears, it ends well. It comes out good in the end and that is what we focus on. That is what we hope in.

Go back to Matthew 7:14 and now having entered through the narrow gate and explained the narrow way to some meager extent, now we get to the good part. Now we share in the joy. Now we share in the glory of what it all means and why it is that you will go through the narrow gate; why you would separate from the crowds; why you would go alone if

you have to. Look at verse 14, "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life." This leads to life. The outcome is superlative. It is stupendous. It is beyond description. Jesus talks about entering into life – notice this – in verse 13 he had talked about destruction and we saw that verse 13 was about eternal destruction, just last week. If you missed it, there will be CDs out in the lobby for you to take for free. Jesus is drawing a contrast here and when he speaks about life in contrast to eternal destruction, he's talking about eternal life in verse 14. The outcome is wonderful regardless of the affliction that you have endured in this life.

You see, when we come to that inevitable point of death, I know some people get creeped out and don't like to talk about death. I'm not one of them. As I've told you so many times, let's deal with reality and the reality is the Bible says it is appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment, Hebrews 9:27. The question is what happens at death? Christian, and now we are speaking to the Christians alone in here because this is only true for them. The rest of you are on the outside looking in with your nose pressed against the window saying, "Man, that sounds really good. I wish it belonged to me." Well, come to Christ and it can, but as long as you push Christ away, this isn't yours. But oh Christian, let's talk together. Let's rejoice in what our Lord has done for us here today. Let's understand why we need not fear death at all. At death, here's what happens to us: at death your soul will be separated from your body and the body they will put in the ground or deal with in some other way, but what happens to the real you, the inner you, what happens to your soul at that moment at the end of the narrow way? Well, let's take a look at a couple of crucial passages.

Turn over to Philippians 1. Just after 2 Corinthians and Galatians and Ephesians, you'll come to Philippians 1. Oh, this is the only reason to live, what we are about to see in these next few minutes. This is the only thing that makes life worthwhile. Jesus himself said, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Gain it all, the whole kingdom of the world given to you and you enjoy it for 70 years, enjoy it for 700 years, I don't care, what's at the end of it? If it's destruction, what have you gained except the loss of everything? Not so for the true Christian, even if our life is brief and difficult and hampered along the way. The Apostle Paul lays it out for all of us when he says in Philippians 1:21. He says,

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions,

He's ministering as an apostle, he's ministering to the people of God and he says, "As I think about my future, I'm pressed. It's difficult to know because," he says, "on the one hand," and this is what's pertinent for our point here this morning,

having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

He says, "It seems that temporarily I need to remain in the flesh and I'm cool with that. I'm good with that because it will be profitable for you. It will mean fruitful labor for me and I'm really glad for that." He says, "But by contrast," he says, "but to die is gain. To depart and be with Christ is very very much better." Why would that be true? Why is that true? It is because of this. Here is what happens to you at the end of the narrow way, at the end of the affliction, at the end of the discouragement: at the end, you along with Paul and every other saint of all time, you will enter into the conscious, immediate, glorious presence of Christ.

The Bible doesn't give us many details about what this blessedness will be like but it's enough for us to know that it is going to be very much better than even the most fruitful labor here on earth. To be in the presence of Christ is the outcome of the Christian life and that is life indeed. This is the narrow way that leads to him who is the way, the truth and the life. We depart into his presence, no longer to be afflicted by the physical difficulties of this life; no longer to be falsely accused by men both unsaved and professing Christians; no longer to feel the affliction of body; no longer to feel the affliction of soul; but to be in the immediate presence of Christ, to be in the immediate presence of the one who loved us and gave himself up for us; to be in the immediate presence of the one who chose us before the foundation of the world; who yielded his life for the salvation of our souls; who is going to keep us throughout all of eternity ever seeing the deeper and deeper glories of his infinite greatness. That's going to be great. That's going to be eternal blessedness. That is going to be life indeed.

Beloved, do you realize as a Christian when you die and go into the presence of Christ, there is a sense in which, a sense in which for the first time you will be fulfilling the ultimate purpose for which you were created? God created you to ultimately be in his presence and we pass through this brief window of time to get there, but in the end that is what God has appointed. That is the goal. That is the ultimate outcome and it will be glorious. It will be blessed. Beloved, when you die, you will enter into something that is very much better than anything you have known here on earth. Paul said so. Look at verse 23 there, "the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better."

In 2 Corinthians 5:8, he spoke in a similar way. You can turn there. 2 Corinthians 5:8 and we'll actually start in verse 6. 2 Corinthians 5:6, Paul says,

6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-- 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight-- 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

The Apostle Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which guarantees the absolute truthfulness of everything that he said and affirmed, says it is better to be away from this body and to be present with the Lord.

So whatever the fullness of that is going to be like in our conscious experience, we're going to know this, Christian friend, Christian brother, Christian sister: when we die, we

are going to go into the immediate presence of Christ and it is going to be glorious. There is no time of purgatory to fear. Purgatory is the figment of a Catholic imagination. There is no time of intermediate suffering that has to purify you beforehand. How could that be true if Christ shed his perfect blood to cleanse us from all sin as Scripture says he did? No, our sin has already been canceled. At death we enter into that which he died for us for and we go there immediately, and whatever it is, it's going to be wonderful, it's going to be glorious. And as I've said to you many times and I'll probably say it many times again, somehow, somehow when that great moment comes and you take your last breath on earth and you take your first inhale in heaven, so to speak, you are going to know, "I'm home. I'm home. I'm where I belong. This is where I was meant to be." There is not going to be any time, any sense of adjustment or transition. It's going to be immediately instantly perfect in the presence of Christ. That's life. That's eternal life. We will know him even as we have been known. We will know him in greater fullness than we ever did in his life. Think about what Jesus said to the thief on the cross as that thief was drawing his last few breaths as he was being crucified. Luke 23:43 Jesus said blessed words, he said, "today you will be with Me in Paradise."

God says it's a narrow gate and a narrow way that leads there. It's narrow in this life but it opens up into broad places when we are in the presence of Christ. Later on, Scripture teaches us that we will receive a resurrected body. Look at 1 Corinthians 15. In verse 51 Paul says,

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. [speaking of a bodily resurrection] 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 17 it says,

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Somehow when we die, our soul goes into the immediate presence of Christ. At the end of the age, there will be a bodily resurrection and we will be given an immortal body fit to live throughout all of eternity with Christ, glorified, made perfect, no longer subject to sin. When that happens, there will be some manner of continuity with our present bodies. Somehow we will recognize each other. Peter recognized Elijah at the transfiguration, even though he had never seen him before. There will be some kind of continuity but all of this glory is yet ahead, yet to come, far surpassing the most grand, glorious event of earthly wealth that we could ever know in this life. Your adult body now today, your

adult body has some manner of continuity with the body of your infancy, even though there has been a transformation of it. There is a connection between your infant body to your adult body but it's different. Well, when we are resurrected, we will have a glorified body that somehow bears some connection to this one.

Beloved, when Christ comes to establish his kingdom, comes to establish his kingdom on earth, you will be there. You will belong there. In John 14, Jesus promises his return. John 14. He says in verse 1,

1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Do you see, beloved, that Christ has promised us the everlasting blessedness of his immediate presence after we depart from this life? We will be with him consciously at the moment of our death. We will be resurrected with a new body. We will be with him when he reigns. And the whole point of this, what makes this all so glorious is not how cool the circumstances are going to be, not the fact that we are going to see blessed things, we are going to see the blessed One. We are going to see Christ and be with him and he will own us and declare us to be his own. He will confess us in the presence of his Father. He will look on us, as it were, by name and say, "That one belongs to me. Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master."

I was talking not too long ago, I can't quite remember with whom, it was probably one of you, and we were talking about are we going to look back or are we going to look down on earth and see what people are doing. Is there going to be any sense of sorrow over things left undone in this life or sorrow – oh, this one is close and personal for me too – is there going to be a sense of sorrow that animates us in that life because people we love died without Christ and aren't there. Let me tell you emphatically: no, there is not going to be any sense of grief. There is not going to be any sense of anything missing. I don't know in this flesh, in this body with earthly affections, how that works out, but I can solve it in my mind this way for every true Christian: for every true Christian, your highest love, your highest affection is Christ himself. Everyone else is secondary by comparison and when you are in the immediate presence of Christ, that is going to be the consummation of heart desires, maybe some that you didn't even fully articulate or recognize or know. You are going to be where Christ is and that's what you were appointed for, and when that day comes and when you are in the fullness of infinite deity still clothed in human flesh in Christ, beloved, it is impossible to think that somehow in his perfect presence that there is going to be a sense that something is missing. No, out with the thought.

Revelation 21:3 even makes this promise to us. It says,

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death [listen, get it, mark it if your soul is troubled over this particular point]; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

To enter into the presence of Christ is we will be with the one that we have loved the most, who died to make us his own. It will be the culmination of all of it, and by the exercise of his power, by the exercise of his love and his grace and his goodness, we will see the final culmination of his promise that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose. And beloved, we won't be disappointed. We won't say, "Oh, but he left out a couple of details. And what about so and so?" It's not going to be like that. It could not be like that. It won't be like that.

So in a way that we can't understand it in this life, in a way that we don't have to understand in this life, we can trust our Lord that when we enter into his presence all of these earthly sorrows and sins will be vanished, never again to trouble our souls, never again to make us weep. And it says in verse 5 of Revelation 21,

5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son."

Beloved, I invite you, those of you that are Christians knowing that you have come in today with different sorrows and heaviness on your heart. Me too, right there with you. We come into this promise of eternal life, we come into this realm of revealed thought that God says awaits everyone who knows his Son and we realize that this is temporary; that even the worst of the sorrows, even the worst sword in your soul, yields itself up to glory. And that is the outcome. That is the life that awaits us.

The way is narrow but the outcome is glorious. We live not for what we get in this life, we don't set our hopes on outcomes in this life that may or may not happen. No. No. No. No. No. No. We set our hearts on that which is certain to occur. We set our affection on that which can never be disappointed. And when our hope is in Christ, Scripture says again and again and again, "He who believes in him will not be disappointed." You won't be disappointed. You won't be disappointed in Christ. It will not only meet your highest expectations that you can generate in this life, it will infinitely transcend them. Again, speaking figuratively, speaking metaphorically, contradicting what I just said just for the sake of an image, a picture that I want you to have in your mind: when we stand complete in glory with Christ, if there were such a thing, there is not but if there were such a thing and we glance back and saw the narrow way littered with all of its sorrows and

disappointments and heartaches and broken relationships, glance back and look into the grandeur of where we're at when we are there, we would look at this narrow way and flick it off our shoulder like so much laundry lint. Not worthy to be compared to this glory that I now enjoy.

Scripture even speaks of it that way. Look at 2 Corinthians 4. Beloved, this is the key to your Christian joy in this life ultimately. This is where it all comes together. This is how we thrive. The Bible says in verse 16 of 2 Corinthians 4,

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction [there is affliction but it's momentary, it's light] is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

Beloved, if you don't believe me, believe God's word. The difficulty, the narrowness of this way in this life is not worth comparing to the great glory of life that awaits you, and that's why you can rejoice. That's why we persevere gladly on this narrow way, because this narrow way leads to life.

J. C. Ryle, by the way, just to set up this quote. So we recognize we are on a narrow way. We recognize that most of the world isn't going with us. We realize that there is opposition that comes. We realize that there is some suffering along the way and yet based on these promises in God's word, we not only are delighted to move forward, we consider it a privilege to do so and we are undaunted by the fact that, comparatively speaking, we are walking the way alone. J. C. Ryle said and I quote, "We have no reason to be discouraged and cast down if the religion we profess is not popular and few agree with us. Repentance and faith in Christ and holiness of life have never been fashionable. Surely it is better to enter into life eternal with a few than to go to destruction with a great company."

Matthew 7:13 and 14. Let's look at it one last time. We'll look at it in the rearview mirror as we close. Matthew 7:13 and 14 in light of everything that we've said, especially over these past four weeks,

13 Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Friend, Jesus Christ is the crossroads of your destiny. He has given you the truth in his word. He died and rose again for sinners just like you. Not many people are on the narrow path. Are you, I ask you? If you're confused, if you are uncertain, cry out to the Lord for mercy. He answers those who call on him. Do you know that you're on the outside looking in? Friend, why would you perish when a perfect Christ is offered to you

freely today? He invites you to come. He says, "The one who comes to me, I will never cast out." Go to Christ, my friend, but you have to answer for yourself. For you which gate will it be? Will you go with the crowd through the broad gate to destruction? Will you come with us on the narrow gate, the narrow way that leads to eternal life?

My brothers and sisters in Christ, if you belong to Christ today, I call you to rejoice and to give thanks. You have blessings that most of the world does not, and for us the best is yet to come. Our Father, thank you for your word through which alone we can learn of these things; through which alone we can have our sinful hearts exposed; through which alone we can have our ways pointed to faith in Christ for our salvation. Father, within this room we would ask that you would put many on – no, nay Father, we would ask you to put all on that narrow way that leads to life. Work in each heart. Strengthen your people and encourage and bless them. Convict and bring to salvation those who do not know him at this moment. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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