

The Narrow Gate

Call to Worship: Psalm 106:1-5

1st Scripture: John 2:23-3:21

2nd Scripture: Matthew 7:13-14

Hymn Insert- *10,000 Reasons*

Hymn Insert- *His Robes for Mine*

Hymn Insert- *Seek Ye First*

Introduction

This morning, we begin to trek though the last major section of the Sermon on the Mount. We've considered much about the nature of the Kingdom of God, and the virtues that are found in all who are truly part of it, especially in contrast to the kingdom presented by the teaching and actions of the religious leaders of our Lord's time. We've looked at those blessed God-wrought virtues, contained in what we call, the "beatitudes," and which serve as the critical preface to the entire sermon, ultimately laying the foundation for all that would follow. We've seen our Lord's explanation of the true intent of God's law, in the Old Covenant, as that which deals first with the heart, and not merely the outward actions. And to this end, we spent time looking at our Lord's unraveling of the erroneous teachings and actions of the religious leaders, while presenting a correct understanding of the make-up and heart of those who truly belong to the Kingdom of God. And all in all, if I could sum up much of what we have gone over, and which our Lord has illustrated so well in the non-exhaustive list of examples that He has given, it would be to recognize that God's kingdom has been, and always will be, a kingdom of the heart. God is interested not merely in redeeming us from the consequences and the judgments due our sins. He is interested in redeeming the whole man, from the power of sin, as well, such that, we ultimately bear the image of that which is most glorious and lovely, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. God doesn't simply want changed actions. He wants changed hearts, which produce changed actions. And in heaven, this work, in every single one of His true children, will be complete.

That said, in this last section of the Sermon on the Mount, which we will seek to wrap up in these next four sermons, our Lord then provides us with a short list of warnings, to serve as a capstone that would contain all that He has said thus far. And remember, while He is speaking

primarily to His disciples, He is also addressing a large multitude that is listening in to His address, as well.

And so, we will divide this final selection into the following four warnings, beginning with the first, this morning:

- 1) Beware of remaining on the broad path (vs. 13-14)
- 2) Beware of false prophets (vs. 15-20)
- 3) Beware of false conversion (vs. 21-23)
- 4) Beware of being merely a “hearer” and not a “doer” of Christ’s Words (vs. 24-27)

I. The Narrow Gate: The Analogy in Itself

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (7:13-14).

Having presented the kingdom of God, with respect to the evidences that accompany those who are truly part of His Kingdom; having described the virtues which must be exhibited by all who are part of God’s Kingdom, our Lord now highlights the narrow means, by which, this kingdom is entered, exhorting all to ensure that they do all to diligently enter it. And here, we find that this is no light matter; that this is nothing to brush aside or to be presumptuous about, because, in comparison to the whole of humanity, there are few who truly find the gate that leads to life eternal.

And our Lord presents us with another analogy here, represented by two gateways, both of which, contain contrasting realities that ought to drive His audience to seriously ponder which path they are presently on, and to ensure that if they are on the wrong path, that they will take pains to ensure that they are redirected onto the right one. Everything He has discussed in this sermon so far, ultimately comes down to whether or not one has entered into the proper gate, among the two here described. And note, there are only two options here. Everyone in this entire world that has ever existed and will ever exist, enters either the narrow gate or the wide gate, and each of these paths ultimately determines one’s eternal destination.

Notice then, there are four distinct areas of contrast, presented in our Lord's illustration, which are used to emphasize the differences between these two gateways. One gateway is wide, and the other is narrow. One gateway is broad and the other is difficult. One gateway is entered by few, and the other is entered by many. And finally, one gateway leads to destruction and the other leads to life. Let us then consider the analogy, as it stands, in the light of these contrasts, before getting into the overall meaning of the text.

1) We are exhorted to enter by the "narrow" gate, as opposed to the "wide" gate. And the implication here is that we are to look for the gate which is more obscure to the natural senses. It is not so obvious, and takes a certain level of intentional, conscious diligence to find it. The "wide" gate, on the other hand, stands out. All of the natural senses are drawn right to it, with hardly even a thought. It's obvious. It spans out far and wide leaving no need to search for it. You can close your eyes and walk through it with out any effort, whatsoever.

2) We are to enter the gate, which promises great difficulty on the path, into which, it opens; a winding path, full of many sorrows, discomfort and trials. It promises no ease of life, and in fact, much to the contrary, involves great sacrifice, sweat, tears and great difficulty. But the broad gate, on the other hand, promises independence, ease, pleasure, popularity, fun and the general approval of the great majority of all people.

3) We are to enter the gate, which few find. And if few find it, it means that few enter it. It is by far a very unpopular gate; it is a gate that takes you upstream, as it were, against a tremendous tide of down streamers. Many will mock you and look down upon you and taunt you, for taking the path that they consider to be wasteful and a killjoy. Entering the wide gate, however, will bring the most encouragement and approval from the world, at large. It is the way that "most have travelled, and which most continue to travel." It promises commonality with others, and the deceptive sense that all will be well, because this is the common way of our world and culture.

4) We are to enter the gate, which though narrow, and difficult, and passed through by few, will lead to eternal life. The narrow gate is a faith investment that promises a most glorious outcome. The wide gate, presents you with a "short-sighted," appeal to the senses, which fights to keep you living in the moment, with no thought of eternity or the ultimate consequences of

remaining on the broad path. It would have you think solely about the “hear and now,” putting off any thought of eternity, or even denying it altogether.

All in all, the analogy presents us with two gates, leading into two paths, with two very different outcomes. One involves taking up a cross and denying ones’ self in this life, with your eyes fixed on the next, while the other involves living the good life now, embracing what is popular, easier and most appealing to the senses, with little or no thought about where the path ends. One gate, fixes your eyes on the end of the path it contains, the whole way in and through it. The other, fixes your eyes on the path itself, and hides the end from you, as if it should not concern you in the present (or perhaps ever). And it may even tempt you with the thought of believing that you can always work those details out at a later time, but it is a trap, and even to the very end, it affords you no time to really consider the end. There is plenty of entertainment and busyness along the way, to busy and distract yourself the whole way through, and then it just drops you right into destruction, at the point of no return.

I. The Narrow Gate: The Analogy Unlocked

Having considered the analogy as it stands, let us then move on to unlock the true meaning of the analogy.

All in all, brethren, as we have seen, this entire Sermon on the Mount is centered upon God’s Kingdom, which has invaded this fallen world, and which has been opened to all of mankind, through the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having now arrived to remove the barrier, which has separated sinners from God, so that they could be brought into God’s Kingdom, the Lord then calls all to “enter it!” Not all will enter, in fact, most won’t, but the call and the invitation goes out to all, with the utmost of sincerity.

And so, when our Lord exhorts His listeners to “enter by the narrow gate,” He speaks of that gate that brings one into the glorious Kingdom of God, and which produces the kinds of fruits described throughout the entirety of this Sermon, which we have already considered. And so, here, He says, “Enter! Come in! But, know that the only way in, is through the narrow gate.”

1) We begin then by considering the fact that the way into God’s Kingdom is narrow. It is a gateway which is obscure to the natural senses. It is not so obvious and takes a certain level

of intentional, conscious diligence to find it. This narrowness of entry is due to the fact that we, as natural born sinners, who have inherited a fallen nature from our first parents, are spiritually dead. We have no natural inclination to pursue, or even desire to pursue our God and Creator. We just come into this world running, and take everything by the senses as that which defines life. We are overcome by fleshly lusts and desires, and a serious pursuit of eternal interests is just not a priority. This is why Jesus says that unless one is “born again,” he cannot even see the kingdom of God (let alone enter it). It is narrow to the senses.

In contrast, the gateway which leads to death is wide. Again, it takes no effort to enter it. We naturally enter it, and barring a profound work of the Holy Spirit, we remain on that path to the end.

2) The gateway, which brings us into God’s kingdom brings us onto a path that is very difficult. It leads us to contend with the world, the flesh and the devil, three powerful forces, for which, we are no match. It is a path of self-denial, contending with sinful desires, going against the grain, furthering our sanctification with the aid of the Holy Spirit, walking through many dark caves of trial and sorrow. It is difficult, because you are called to let go of all that appeals to the senses, and to pursue the interests of a God, whom you cannot see, in the light of a resurrection and a glory that is yet to come.

In contrast, the broad way, though not without suffering of its own, provides the much easier path of not having to wrestle against sinful desires nor having to be concerned with fending off attacks from the world, flesh and the devil. Rather, you walk in concert with them.

3) There are few who find the narrow gateway. The narrow way is a very uncommon way. The pathway of all that is accepted in the world is the road of many (indeed, most). It is the place of acceptance, fun with friends, the entertaining of all lusts, independence, and not having to miss out on all of the action and experiences that everyone else enjoys. Few they are, who are willing to give up what they can see and feel in the present, with the hope of gaining a not-yet realized eternal glory. It is so much easier to go down with the multitude than to stand firm with a few.

4) The narrow gateway into the kingdom of God, provides the more difficult, far less travelled pathway, but its end brings all who have entered it, into eternal life. The Kingdom of

God, which is experienced with the accompaniment of much suffering and many trials and difficulties in this life, will consummate unto eternal glory. The sufferings and trials and hardships are only for a limited time. And likewise, the alleged freedom and enjoyment of all kinds of lusts and sinful desires on the wide path, will lead into a life of eternal misery and torment. It will lead into everlasting ruin and destruction...not annihilation, but a place of no return, where the ability to function as a glorious creature, created by and for God, is never to be experienced again. It is eternal brokenness, sorrow, condemnation and torment.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (7:13-14).

III. The Narrow Gate: What Is It?

If, as we have discussed, this matter is so serious; if eternal life and death are in the balance; we ought then to be compelled to ask, at least, three critical questions at this point. First, what exactly is the “narrow” gate, which we are called to enter, and which grants us access to all of the blessings promised in glory, and to the life changed now (in the present), as described throughout the entirety of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount? And secondly, how then do we enter this narrow gate, which is so difficult to find? And finally, thirdly, what is it that ultimately keeps so many from entering this gate, which promises such glorious, eternal blessings?

1) What exactly is the “Narrow Gate,” which brings individuals into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God? Consistent with all of Scripture, and beyond the shadow of any doubt, that narrow gate is the very One preaching this sermon, Himself. Jesus is the narrow gate, which alone can and will bring anyone into the Kingdom of God, producing the life virtues that have been described throughout the whole of this sermon, and leading to eternal life and glory.

In John 14:6, answering Thomas’s inquiry concerning how to get to the Father (where Jesus was going to prepare a place for His people through His atoning death), Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Jesus is the narrow gateway! And the reason why Jesus can say this with the most fervent sense of

exclusivity, ensuring all, that there is absolutely no other way to the Father (for any people, of any race, at anytime), is because Jesus alone, provides the means of removing the obstacle that keeps us from God (our sin), while providing us with all that we need to get to God (His righteousness) at the same time. To put it bluntly and matter of factly: Every single one of us is born with the infection of sin; we are born defiled and sinful, and this is soon evidenced by our thoughts, words and actions. We do not measure up to the Lord's standard of righteousness, as presented in His holy Law. And because God is a holy and righteous God; because He is pure and without even the possibility of receiving sinners, our condition is dire and warrants eternal condemnation. But, Jesus came, as the Lamb of God, offering Himself up for the sins of His people. He died as a substitute on behalf of sinners, so that, through Him, sinners might find complete forgiveness and reconciliation with God, leading to eternal life. He died for sinners, and He was raised from the dead three days later, guaranteeing eternal life for those for whom He died. He is the narrow gate; the uncommon and obscure gate, who offers life to all who enter by Him, which brings us to our second question.

2) How do we enter the "Narrow Gate," which brings individuals into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God? It is one thing to say that Jesus is the gate, who brings us into the Kingdom of God, and that, He contains all that we need to receive every benefit belonging to those who would be named the children of God. But, how then do we access this gate? How do we enter into the Kingdom *through Jesus*? Two simple words, with some explanation to follow...by faith.

Remember the last text that we had considered, just prior to this? Ask, and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. At the very basic level, we can utilize the principles given in this text, unto this same end, certain that God will answer. If you seek Christ in truth, repenting of your sins, trusting solely in Him to forgive and save you from your sins, you will be saved. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Whoever will call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.

Friend, if you are not a Christian here this morning, believe! Believe the good news of what God has done for sinners in Christ, and take it...take it by faith for yourself. Pray and ask

God to forgive you for your sins and offenses against him, and ask that He would grant His Son, Jesus Christ, to be your Savior. And believe that God, faithful to His promise, will save you, and then, walk with Christ, by serving Him as your Lord. The narrow gate is Christ, and the way into that gate is by faith. And God will grant you His Spirit, so that, you will begin to look and live like all that our Lord has described in this entire sermon. You will have a greater righteousness than the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's time, because you will have a righteousness that proceeds out of a heart that has been changed by the Holy Spirit, who will actually take up residence in you!

3) What keeps most from entering the "Narrow Gate," which brings individuals into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God? We have seen that many, indeed most, remain on the wide and broad path, and few find the narrow gate. Why is this the case? Well, certainly there are some who never hear the Gospel, and therefore, remain in their sin. But, even among those who hear this glorious Gospel, what is it that keeps them back from so great a glory? Let me provide you with a non-exhaustive list of hindrances which keep people from entering into the narrow gate:

- a- Potential rejection and/or persecution
- b- The cost of bearing a cross and self-sacrifice
- c- Guilt of sin and incapable of thinking forgiveness is possible
- d- Self-righteousness, pride
- e- A failure to be willing to trust in Christ and in Christ alone
- f- Easy believism; unrepentant mere profession alone
- g- The trap of seeking fulfillment in the world, materialism, wrong motives
- h- The inability to reign in a dependence upon feelings
- i- An opposing non-Christian/anti-Christian culture
- j- Uncontrollable and powerful lusts
- k- The fear of being uncool and unaccepted to peers
- l- Sins and shortcomings of Christian parents, loved ones, or just in general
- m- A multitude of different denominations and religions
- n- Liberal compromises

- o- The desire for immediate gratification and a lack of patience
- p- Apostates
- q- Busyness of life
- r- Media distractions and obsessions with technology/sports/hobbies/idols...etc
- s- The pull of the world and its appeal to the flesh
- t- The real and powerful, deceptive activity of the devil and his minions
- u- The imperfect nature of the church, inner rifts, schisms...etc
- v- Brilliant sounding, well-trained college professors, who wrap half-truths around unproven theories and call it “Science”
- w- The need for repentance
- x- The exclusive nature of the Gospel
- y- Suffering and hardship
- z- The necessity of the new birth

So much more could be added to this list, but suffice it to say, that there is so much that hinders individuals from entering the narrow gate. And ultimately, one cannot conjure up the desire or the strength to enter in. There is just far too much against you. [Humanly impossible]

However, God can do what you cannot do. He can change your heart and He can enable you to overcome all opposition. You can be more than a conqueror in Christ. Just seek Him! Call upon Him! Be like the blind man, who as Jesus was passing by, ignoring all who tried to tell him to shut up, yelled louder and louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” Be like the leper, who cried out to Jesus, pleading, “If You are willing, You can make me clean!” And you will find Him more than willing. All in all, friend, if you are not in Christ, seek Him diligently. Call upon Him, and you will find Him. And He will bring you into His glorious Kingdom, through His glorious finished work on the cross. And He will give you His Spirit. Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and He will open the door to you. And you will never regret it!

[If God is speaking to you today, then come!]

Amen!!!