

Two Ways

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[0 : 0 0] let's turn together to the chapter that we read Matthew 7 and let we'll look together at verse 13 to 14 and then if there's time we'll read together we'll look together at verses 24 down to 27 two illustrations that both illustrate the same thing Matthew chapter 7 verse 13 enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter by it are many for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few and then turning to verse 24 everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock and the rain came and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it i remember very clearly when i was training for the ministry in the free church college we were given various classes and pieces of advice as to how to preach a sermon and we were told that the two most crucial points in a sermon it's not saying that other points aren't true but we were told that the two most crucial points were the beginning and the end well matthew chapter 5 and verse and chapter chapter 7 is a sermon and notice the the sermon the sermon on the mount the most famous sermon the most well-known sermon of all time preached by the perfect flawless preacher and it has all the hallmarks of a perfectly planned and preached sermon it's full of interesting fascinating and exciting themes challenging themes and it's difficult to think of anyone listening to jesus that day who would have been distracted from it because he employs the technique of jumping from one theme to another and yet driving home the same message and he uses all kinds of illustrations and challenges them with all kinds of questions and makes clear and plain to them the kingdom of heaven that's the theme that was always on jesus lips because he came into the world to bring people into his kingdom that was his aim and his objective to draw people and to face them with the realities of life and death and to so that they will come into the kingdom it's got full of illustrations and it's got a perfect beginning and a perfect end i want us to focus on this sermon just as he's drawing things to a conclusion and he's going to leave them with the challenge as to where they are in respect to the kingdom of god are they there or are they not are they believers in jesus or are they not are they followers of jesus are they have they come to faith or have they not and he does this by a number of paired alternatives in chapter 7 first of all in uh from verse 13 onwards he describes two paths enter by the narrow gate that's one path for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to

destruction uh for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life that's the other path then there's the illustration of two trees every healthy tree that's the first tree it bears good fruit but the unhealthy diseased tree bears bad fruit and it's by the fruit that you know them that's the second paired alternative and then there are the two claims there was a kind of person that came to jesus and said have we not done this and that have we not preached in your name have we not cast out demons have we not prophesied in your name and on that day jesus will say that's not good enough that's not what's going to qualify you to enter into the kingdom of heaven it is the person who hears my words and does it and that's what brings us on to the last paired alternative which is the two men who built houses the one was the wise man who built his house on the foundation of the rock and the other was the foolish man who built his house on a completely different foundation on sand and it was only when the storm came that the difference between these two houses became apparent but by then it was too late i want us to let look then not at the middle two but the first and the last of these if we've got time and to look together first of all at the two paths beginning at verse 13 where jesus says enter he says by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter by it are many for the gate is narrow and the

way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few now if there's one word that describes the world in which you and i live tonight it's the word choice we live in a world where i guess our forefathers had nothing like the kind of choice that we had in fact i we know that they didn't but today in a prosperous technologically advanced world it means that that as long as we are as long as we are rich enough or have enough resources we can exercise choice and that's particularly in what we buy it doesn't seem to matter what you want and what you buy you have a choice you have an endless seemingly variety of choice and alternative you go into a shop even that sells the most basic items like foodstuffs and it's not good enough which is one brand or another you're faced with three or four or five or even more different varieties of food and you go you do the shopping and you choose one day one thing and another day another thing and it extends to clothes it extends to shoes it extends to cars and houses and decorations and all the rest of it we are living in a world full of choice and that choice can really be inhibiting as much as anything else it hasn't given us the freedom that it has promised us it has locked us into a world somebody called it the tyranny of choice and it's true it hasn't given us the freedom and the liberty that we that we need and that we are looking for the world wants as much choice as it possibly can but i'm thankful tonight that when it comes to the most important issue in my life there is no choice there is one or the other there is one straight alternative or the other you either come into god's kingdom through the open door that jesus has opened for you or you stay where you are you either taste and see that god is good or you do not you either believe in the lord jesus christ or you do not now that might surprise you given the kind of world that we live and the kind of knowledge and exposure that this world has to the variety of religions in the world to choose from and you might even think that the best way to proceed in terms of being right with god is to have a little taster of all kinds of religions and some people do that they study different forms of religion and they take what they like out of each one of them so they'll study buddhism and they'll say well i like this about i don't like this but i like this about buddhism i'll take that and i study islam and they'll take a wee bit more out of islam and they'll study confucianism and they'll take a wee bit of christianity they'll take this and that the next day it'll be like how like that variety pack that you get of breakfast cereals in the shop and you wake up one morning and you want one of them another one another morning you wake up and some people that's the way some people are in relation to god they think that by having a taster of all different types of religion that that will put them on the best course and they'll be safe it's like a one of these one of these hedge funds that they tell me it's like a best guess and as and that's the way in which they treat coming into the kingdom of heaven well i'm glad that it's not as complicated as that i'm glad that being right with god does not involve me studying all kinds of other religions and going all over the world seeking after the truth and the problem of course is with that you think you have it and then you're not very sure but tonight i am sure i am absolutely sure i'm absolutely confident that this bible and this lord jesus christ is the way and he is the only way to heaven and i'm so thankful for that simplicity of the gospel i'm so thankful that i don't have to do anything to earn my own salvation i'm thankful that my salvation has been done for me it's been given to me it's a gift from god it's a free gift and we need to come tonight to ask god so many people have this idea that being right with god is reaching god by what we do and how we live in this life now of course how you live is important but when it comes to our standing before god it is all of god it is what god has done for me it is not what i can do for god it is what god has done for me and yet we have to be challenged in this and jesus had to challenge the people who were leading who were listening to him on this occasion and this is how he did it he first of all spoke of and i can't think of anything simpler than the challenge that he's placing before these people nobody could misunderstand what he was saying to them and nobody tonight can misunderstand the words of jesus in this little parable this little illustration in which he sets in front of everyone the two two separate ways two separate gates two separate paths two separate directions enter by the narrow gate he says for the gate is wide and the broad and it is easy and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter it are many in other words the first gate is the wide gate and the path is the wide path it's broad and it's spacious and it's easy there's plenty of room for all kinds of different opinions and beliefs and it's not really governed at all it's governed by what you want and what your dreams are and what your opinion is and what you want to make out of life and it's governed only the only thing you're not allowed to do is what hurts someone else but everything else is really up to you it's your choice on how to walk this path but the other path is narrow and the boundaries are clearly defined the lines of separation are clearly defined and it's governed by god's word his will his law and the law that even jesus spoke about that said blessed are the poor in spirit

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted
blessed

are the meek for they shall inherit the earth there aren't many people who naturally would choose that kind of lifestyle are there blessed are the poor in spirit i mean what's attractive about that when i can make when i can make what i want out of this life but that is what governs the path that god invites us to being poor in spirit it's a path in which you have to battle with temptation it's much easier to live giving in to temptation after all you only live once why not have a little bit of badness every so often but for the person on the narrow road he doesn't want that even a little bit of badness because he wants what filled what what pleases god and what glorifies god his desire is to glorify god and to live for god and to seek first the kingdom of god so it's not easy to be on the narrow road he has to battle with temptation and all kinds there are times when he wants to give up don carson though said this let me just quote this because i think it's so important he says this the more hesitation there is about going christ's way wholeheartedly without reserve the more confining the more confining the narrow road seems however the more enthusiasm there is for following him regardless of what other people say about us or personal opinion regardless of the cost the more liberating his way appears isn't that great isn't that so true that the way to approach the gospel is not to look at the narrow way in terms of what we see as being negative because there's that voice within us it says don't go there enjoy life make the most out of life you're only living once and one day you'll come to the end of your life and you'll regret not having made the most out of life you'll regret not having enjoyed life for what it is and you'll regret having surrendered to jesus christ and having lived his way but the fact is you won't regret it you won't regret it because when you hear these words at the end of time uh well done good and faithful servant these are the words that come from god himself well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of the lord is that not the words that you want to hear said to you instead of these awful alternative words depart from me you workers of iniquity keep your eye on the end of time and don't think for a moment that god wants you to be miserable in this world and to be so confined that there's nothing to enjoy in this world that's just a lie it's not true the happiest people i know in this world are christians people who live for the lord and who live who live wholeheartedly for the lord and the way to approach the christian life is not hesitantly but wholeheartedly go for it give them everything give them your whole life give them the best of your life don't hold back anything because those who hold back are those who show every who show every indication and there's every reason to wonder whether they are on the road in the first place wholeheartedly is the way that god wants us to live give them everything those who come after me must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me so there are two paths then there's the easy path and there's the narrow path the one which everyone else is on and the one which uh very few people are but there's also two gates jesus describes these gates also as easy and wide there's one gate which is easy and wide and you can take in as much

baggage and as much luggage as you possibly can i'm sure that that many of some of you anyway were just recently on holiday or even are on holiday and and some of us many of us travel by the budget airlines these days and you'll know that the prices are very attractive and it's made possible for us to go to all kinds of places we've never been before and many people take advantage of these fares but it's when you get to the airport that you discover that the fare that you've paid is actually not the final fare at all because they're going to charge you for your luggage and if you've got two or three pieces of heavy luggage you're in big trouble you're going to find a very heavy price tag on them and but but they'll tell you that they can take as much luggage as you want there's always a luggage restriction whenever you fly there's always a luggage restriction on it and the wide gate has no luggage restriction you can bring as much baggage as you want anything that you want to bring of your old life no problem you can be on this road and you there's no change whatsoever in your life you can carry on along this road as you are but let me tell you how narrow the narrow gate is it's very narrow and you can't pay to take more baggage along that would be easy wouldn't it if the lord said to us tonight well you can come into my kingdom but i'll charge you a little bit extra for what you want to take with you that'd be quite easy wouldn't it i'm quite sure a lot of people would say yeah that's a reasonable deal but he doesn't say that at all he said nobody he says no baggage you come by yourself only yourself only you get in that's what the narrow gate is when i was a young boy used to go to football matches at love street and paisley and in those days there was a turnstile don't know if there is nowadays or not i haven't been for ages but there was a turnstile and that meant that only one person could get through that turnstile at a time the narrow gate is a

turnstile only one person and you can't take anything with you no baggage you leave the old life behind and i reckon tonight that's why so many people haven't been converted because they can't face the prospect of leaving the old life behind there's too many things they want to hold on to too many things they love and really what you're saying if that's you tonight what you're saying is i love things more than god there are things that i love more than god and i'm not willing i know that i have to take the gospel seriously and actually there's something in my heart that wants to take the gospel scene i want to be saved and yet there's this conflict in me between when god says leave it behind come as you are i just feel that i can't you've got there's no other way there is no other way this is not negotiable you come as you are and you take nothing with you and then you discover what god can give you to replace what you've left behind but that's where this is the point at which you have to trust him that he will do that and i wonder how many of there are of us there are tonight and you feel that that's where you are you're at that turnstile and you're thinking very seriously about the gospel and yet you're so locked up you're so caught up with the life that you live at the moment and you know that your life as a christian you will be required by god to live a different life a different lifestyle and you're afraid because you're so emotionally attached to the life that you've got and you find it difficult to trust that god will supply all your needs you find it difficult to just commit your life to him like the life of a christian is a life of faith in which you have to give yourself to god believing that he'll look after

[20 : 15] every aspect of your life some people think that being a christian god only looks after your soul but being a christian god looks after everything that's what he said jesus said seek first the kingdom of god and his righteousness and all these things all these things will be added they'll be given to you god knows what you need he knows what your future is he's mapped out your future he has a plan why are you so hesitant to give him who else is there to trust in this world have you not discovered how uncertain this world is you think that one thing's going to happen and it turns out so differently from what you expected you hope and you dream and you plan and sometimes these plans come true other times they don't you don't know what's going and if you haven't discovered that you haven't lived long in this life how who else can you trust in this life other than your maker your creator who wants the very best for you he wants you to know him he wants you to be reconciled with him and he wants to lead you for the rest of your life on the very best path yes it's a difficult path yes it's a path that is narrow and it's lonely at times and there are difficulties that you've never experienced before but there's one thing on this path that's for sure that god is with you every step of the way i can tell you nothing can compensate for that nothing can take that place and tonight if you're a christian you can face anything any sadness and uncertainty and darkness and i say that very carefully but we know that the lord is with us and he has promised his own presence with us whether we feel it there are times when we lose sight of that presence even but we know we believe that god has pledged himself to be with his people so what i'm saying tonight is is yes the way is narrow but go for it go for the lord take him and accept him for what he has done for you then there's two destinations that jesus talks about enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction the easy gate the wide gate the one that you can take your baggage along with you the wide path in which there are no restrictions and everybody seems to be on this path it's the path where the crowd is jesus says for sure if you follow the rest of the world it leads to destruction now what does destruction means well jesus doesn't define it here but he does elsewhere and you only have to look at the way in which he describes the end of time and the end result of a life that's lived outside of god's kingdom is one which he he describes as weeping and gnashing of teeth a place of outer darkness these are his words i don't want to go further than that but i believe that there will be a judgment the bible tells us that there will be a judgment and we will be judged not on the basis of whether we've been better than someone else but on what we have done with jesus and how we have responded to the gospel and whether our sins are forgiven but the narrow way leads to eternal life there's a sense in which the moment you come to jesus you have eternal life if you're a follower of jesus tonight you don't look forward to eternal life you've got it already but eternal life means life life that never ends life that goes on beyond death so that at the point of death the your soul separates from your body and your soul goes to be with the lord

i don't understand what that means your soul i think i understand i believe it i grasp it but it takes me into the realms of something that i can't rationally figure out but that's what god is god is beyond our understanding for as high as the heavens and above the earth his ways are higher than our ways and our understanding and if i could understand everything in the bible there wouldn't be any need

for faith there wouldn't be any need for trust but god tells me in the bible that when it comes point the point that place when i leave this world that it is an entrance into his presence from where i will never leave and tells me furthermore that a day will come when the graves will open and when my body will rise from the dead it might have been dead a thousand years or two thousand years who knows there have been christians dead for thousands of years their bodies will come to life again god will reconstitute their bodies and bring them to life again in a glorified state so that we will be recognizable as we once were but we will be glorified and made made like to jesus again i don't understand that to me it's an impossibility and yet god is the god of the impossible that's what eternal life means and the day that happens it will be the day when jesus comes again in all his glory and brings his people to life again brings their bodies to life again rather i should say reunites their souls with their bodies and brings them into his presence where there is a new heaven and a new earth where the dwelling of god is with men and where there is a recreation of paradise never again to fall and never again to be become separate from god the same way as the first one was there are also two crowds on this road as you look around you if you're on the wide road you see plenty of people plenty of companions and it's easy to go where the crowd is i'm sure there have been often times in our lives where we've gone where as soon as you see a crowd you want to go in the direction to to find we're all there's some there's a sheep-like quality about all of us and there's something within perhaps some of us tonight and you're drawing back from the gospel because you know that your friends are all going on the same road and it's easier to do what your friends do and to be amongst them than to separate from them and to be on the other road and you know that at some point that if you start following jesus you're going to have to explain to them that you are following now you've believed in jesus that doesn't mean you you become unfriendly towards them of course it doesn't in many ways you want to be friendly as as much if not even more than than because you want them to have what you have i don't believe for a moment that christians should not have anything to do with their unconverted friends i think that's awful what did christ do when he was in the world he surrounded himself with publicans and sinners the very worst surrounded himself why because he wanted them to come into the kingdom so should we and it shouldn't involve compromise that's where the challenge is it's the easiest thing in the world to lock yourself away in your house if you're a christian not have anything to do with anyone else and then just and and and for for because you feel that that it's safer it might be safer but it's it's not right who's going to be witnesses for the lord if we all lock ourselves away and separate ourselves but what i'm saying is this

there's got to be some separation and you're going to have to at some point explain to people and you don't know what their reaction will be and it's true their reaction might be ridicule they might say off i have no i have no idea what's come over you i have no idea why you've decided to go down this road they might decide to separate from you that maybe that's what you're afraid of that you might have to change to such an extent that your whole circle of friends changes it might be it might be but once again i'm asking you to listen to god tonight i'm asking you to put him first i'm asking you to come into his kingdom because he is asking you to come into his kingdom it's him that's giving you this in invitation the narrow road seems deserted there are a few people there are a few people but in comparison to the number of people on the broad road there are very few and those people are not always having an easy time at all some of them are are being tempted some of them are are tempted to give up sometimes they stumble and fall uh it's being a follower of jesus involves all kinds of different hardships but that's not what what counts it's what counts is where that road ends it the road ends in eternal life in heaven itself and one day those who have traveled on the wide road and who have gone through the wide gate will wish that they had taken the other one but it will be too late well i don't have time then this evening to go on to the two houses i want to close by asking this very simple question how do you get on to the wide road yeah i meant it how do you get on to the wide road i didn't make a mistake some of you are looking puzzled how do you get on to the wide road as you just stay exactly where you are don't change how do you get on to the narrow road you come to the gate the open gate the turnstile who is the gate jesus is the gate you come to jesus you come to him as you are in all your emptiness you come to him and you take what he has done for you when he died on the cross take it accept it receive it that's where his life lies in his death and come to him as you are personally and ask him to have mercy upon you and to change your life and entrust your life in its entirety into his hands and then i believe with all my heart you will see what he can do with someone who comes in faith and in faith alone let's pray our father once again we ask that you will bring the gospel to us lord we thank you for the simplicity of the

gospel we thank you lord for how uh how clearly jesus spoke to all those who would listen to him and we pray that you will give us ears that listen to jesus tonight and give us a desire to be saved give us a real desire and if we have no desire we pray that you will awaken that desire within our hearts and show us lord that our time here in this world is limited we don't know how limited it is and maybe more than we think but we ask lord that you that you will come to us in your mercy and in your power and open up our hearts to your voice in jesus name amen you