

Matthew 7

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back again to the chapter we read in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 7. And we read verse 13, Jesus says, Matthew 7 verse 13, Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

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.

Life is constantly full of choices and decisions that we have to make. Some of these choices are incredibly simple.

For instance, if you go on the ferry in the morning and decide to go for breakfast, the version behind will say, choose any six items.

And you're having to make choices between tomatoes and beans, or link sausages, flat sausages. And these are choices that have absolutely no bearing upon your life.

[1 : 14] They're just ordinary things. And all the time we're making little choices like that, that are really totally insignificant. They have no bearing upon life.

But then there are a lot of other choices that we're making that do have an impact. Maybe there are young folk here and they're thinking about their future. Where are they going to go?

What are they going to do? And they're wrestling with all these kind of things and decisions that are having to be made. Because we're constantly having to make choices and make decisions.

And some of these, as we know, are big decisions. The impact is going to be big. The consequences are going to be big. But Jesus, right throughout his teaching, and particularly here, is highlighting the big choice, the big decision that a person has to make.

And this is a decision that is monumental. Because it affects not only where we are now, but where we are going to be forever and ever. And that is the most solemn thought.

[2 : 22] Because, as we say, some of the choices are insignificant. But here is one that affects time, and particularly eternity. And really, what we see here is that there are two ways.

One way is narrow, and one way is broad. And maybe you're here tonight and you're saying to yourself, well, you know, actually I wish there was more than one way. I'm sure there are people who often say, well, I hear the Bible, and I hear it saying, here is the way of salvation.

And there's this one way. And you're saying to yourself, well, I wish there was actually more than one way. It would be much better if there were other ways. It would be less rigid.

It would be less tough going. If it could be sort of widened out, a wee bit broadened out. Well, that's the very point that Jesus is making. He said there is another way.

And it's wide and it's broad. And there's loads of people on it. And on that way, you can do whatever you want. You can believe whatever you want.

- [3 : 29] You can hold to any dream you want. You can achieve anything you want. But on that road, unless you have Jesus, that road is leading to destruction.
- It does not lead to eternal life. And that's a point that Jesus is making, that there is another road, but it's narrow. And that's what we have here.
- It's a narrow gate. Now, it almost has a sort of a degree of negativity the way you look at it, because this idea of narrowness has the idea of being squashed or being crushed.
- It's like this gate. It's a confined space. It is somewhere that's almost difficult to get through. And we don't like confined spaces, particularly if anybody is in any way claustrophobic.
- If any of you have gone up Scott's Monument, right all the way up to the top, as you reach nearly to the top, it becomes very, very narrow. And some parts on the way up you can pass, if there's one coming down and one.
- [4 : 37] But as you reach the top, it becomes so, the stairwell becomes so tight that two people cannot pass. It becomes, some people say, they begin to feel claustrophobic in it.
- Well, here's the idea of this gate that is narrow. It's got the idea of being crushed. But the other gate, the other way we see is broad.
- Entered by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide. And the way is easy. That leads to destruction. So there's this narrow gate and there's this wide gate. As we said, on the wide gate, you can be what you want to be.
- You can do what you want to do. You can believe absolutely anything. And that's a problem. There are loads of people today on that broad road who will tell you, listen, as long as you're sincere, you can believe what you want.
- God will accept you. No, he won't. God in his love and in his mercy has revealed to us there is only one way.
- [5 : 41] But the interesting thing is that although the gates are completely different and the roads are completely different, the destinations almost work in reverse.
- Because the narrow, that's what we find, that the narrow gate and the way that is hard, it leads to life.
- And what the scripture shows us in that life is the very opposite to the sense of narrowness and confinement and crushing that we have in the way of entry.
- Because it leads us into a broad place. It leads us into spaciousness. It leads us into liberty, into freedom. And the opposite is true, that the wide gate and the broad road actually leads into the place of confinement, into the place of crushing, into the very opposite for what those who are traveling on that road expect to get.
- Now, this idea of two ways is nothing new in the Bible. Well, right throughout the Bible, we have being held out before us the two opposites.
- [6 : 59] For instance, when Israel entered the land of promise, Joshua read out the law. And he read out before them. It was read on two different hills or two different places, the blessings and the cushings.
- The blessings for obedience. The blessings for following the Lord. The cushings if they went after other gods. And in fact, it's very interesting what the Lord says about blessings.
- He says that the blessings will overtake you. That's what will happen. That they will just, that they'll come, they'll catch up on you. And likewise, the cushings. So right throughout the Bible, there's this contrast between the two ways and the two groups of people who are on the way.

Now, the Bible often talks about the godly and the ungodly. And very often, when we think of the ungodly, we think of people who are really wicked. People who, you might say, you had one look at them and you would know, you'd say, oh, that's an ungodly passion.

But when you really strip it all down, an ungodly passion is somebody who does not have God. Or somebody who does not want God. Now, that passion might be by nature very nice.

[8 : 15] Might do many good things. But that passion is ungodly. Does not have God. Does not want God. So there is always this contrast between. A lot of the Psalms are full of contrasting the righteous and the wicked between the godly and the ungodly.

So Jesus is simply developing this theme in the Sermon on the Mount. And again, he's showing us that on the broad road.

Because as Jesus is speaking to the vast crowds that are there. He is showing us that on that, if you take all his teachings on board, he shows that on the broad road are the people who might be religious.

People who pray. People who do good things. This, of course, was very startling to Jesus' audience. But when we go back, say, for instance, to chapter 6, Jesus is highlighting these very people.

That there are people there who, they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and street corners. That they may be seen by others. They like to do their religious deeds in order to be seen by others.

[9 : 29] So that people will pat them on the back. And people will say, oh, look. Look at how good he is. Look at how good she is. All that they do is outward to be spoken well of people.

They do things so that God will owe them one. Do you ever have that idea in your thinking? And you say to yourself, well, if I do this and that and the next thing, then God will owe me something.

God doesn't work like that. That's not the way it works. Or if we do things so that we will appear well. Now, I'm not saying that that means not in any way suggesting that we go against the grain and sort of that we're awkward in life and that we don't do good and don't do well.

Of course, we ought to do. We ought to do well, Jesus. We see the golden rule. So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.

But the point that Jesus makes so often is that our faith at one level, although it is public, it is private.

[10 : 37] This is something in our heart between ourselves and the Lord. And that that faith that we have with the Lord is something that will reveal itself in life.

Jesus goes on to say that by the way of good fruit and bad fruit. You see, life, a life of faith will reveal itself. It cannot remain hidden.

And that is why quite often within the church, you will find people say to some people, and I've said it and I know that others say it as well, you'll say to somebody, Have you thought about going forward?

Have you thought about making a stand for the Lord? Because you can see within that person. It's not that you're trying to give somebody false hope.

But there is something about that person's life. It's bearing fruit. There is a presence. There is a sense within.

[11 : 40] You know, there's an amazing identity of one Christian with another. There's almost a sort of instinctiveness. A sensitivity.

Where God's Spirit, it's in you. There's this sense of identifying those who belong to the Lord. Those who love the Lord.

So there is this sense of fruit bearing that Christian cannot really hide. They might. They might. I know that we use the term secret disciples.

And there are lots of people who love the Lord but have never publicly professed that they love the Lord. And yet, they cannot really hide it. Because the fruit that is in their life is becoming evident.

And this is part of what Jesus is saying. That you can have people walking down the road. The broad road. And outwardly, they're doing the religious deeds.

[12 : 40] And outwardly, they're doing things. But they're doing it before God. So that they will look good. It's nothing to do with honoring the Lord. Or doing work humbly.

So we find this. Again, those who are on the broad road. I believe that Jesus warns at the very beginning. Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged.

And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. And so on. You know, I believe one of the worst things that people can do. Is to spend their life judging others.

And you know, it's part of what we're very good at doing. Do you know, when you think about it, it's actually an exhausting thing. If the Lord delivers you from spending your life judging others.

You know, you get great liberty and great freedom. It's like you're released. It's like a huge weight is taken off you.

[13 : 44] Because if you're to judge anybody, judge yourself. That's where judgment begins. Where we come and look at ourselves.

And you know, if you see yourself as you really are before God. Let me tell you. Judging others will be the last thing you do. If God gives you a glimpse of who you really are.

Of what your heart is really like. Then judging others is not going to be even on your horizon. Because you will have the cry of the public.

And who's saying, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. You won't be going around tut-tutting and saying, oh, look at him. And look at that. See what they're doing. See what they've done this. They've done that. That's the judging.

And it's exhausting. Seek for the grace that delivers you from that judging. Because in it you get liberty, you get freedom. A weight is lifted off you.

[14 : 44] And so this is part of, I believe, what you find on that broad road. So Jesus says to us here to enter the narrow gate. So the way of salvation is narrow.

Now that doesn't mean there are certain things that are not narrow about it. It's not narrow by way of invitation. It's not a narrow invitation. This is a wide invitation.

That doesn't mean that everybody who's invited will enter the gate. Loads and loads and loads of people are invited to turn away. Is everybody in here tonight?

Has everybody who is in here tonight gone through that gate? Or is it possible some of you are still outside? Well, tonight again the invitation is given to enter in through this gate.

And of course we know that that gate is Jesus. But if you say no, if you turn away, then you're turning away from the invitation. So we cannot say that the invitation is narrow.

[15 : 47] It is as broad, the invitation is so broad that everybody who hears the gospel is invited in. And again the gate is not narrow with regard to the extent of the love that is shown.

Because God's love is so unbelievably expansive that it almost defies any human thinking.

If God said to us, imagine, if God were to say to the human race, I want to devise a way in order to save you.

What do you suggest? None of us would come up with the idea of asking the Father to send his Son as a sacrifice to die on the cross of Calvary for us.

It's not something we would even think. And yet this is what the eternal God has planned and purposed in his wisdom and in the extent of his love.

[16 : 59] He couldn't do more. There is nothing greater that he could do than to send the darling of his bosom, his only begotten Son, into this world to become a curse, to become a sacrifice for sin.

And yet that's what he has done. So that's why we say the love is not narrow. So here is this great invitation.

So how is it narrow? Well, it's narrow because we find that there are few who find it. You see, it requires effort. That's one of the things.

In order to become a Christian, it requires effort. All you have to do to be on the broad road is to keep going the way you are. You don't have to do anything.

Because, by and large, unless a Christian is set apart in the womb, and we know that that happens, that there are some who are, the Lord has dealt with them as little babies in the womb.

[18 : 00] But apart from that, the normal run of things is that we are born walking down the broad road. And that it's on that road that we are challenged and on that road that we are redirected through this narrow gate.

And it tells us that, from what we see here, that there are few who find it. Now, this road, or this gate, I should say, is a narrow gate.

And it's so narrow that you cannot take your own self-righteousness through. It's like if you've ever gone through one, you know these turnstiles, whether you like it, you see them at different things, sometimes at grounds, football grounds and things like that.

And only one person can get through it. It's really narrow. And you go through this single kind of gate to twist around. You couldn't take a case with you. You couldn't carry things with you.

You can only get through it. Just there's only room for you, yourself, to get round, to get through that. Well, that's the idea here. There isn't room for other things.

[19 : 11] So there isn't room for your own self-righteousness, for your own pride, for your own good works, for all these things. When you come to this gate, you have to be prepared to leave everything behind.

And that's the problem. Because most people don't want to. I believe tonight that there might be people here in the church. And deep down they're saying, you know, I need to be a Christian.

But the problem is, what do I have to give up? What do I have to leave behind? I want to take through with me, through this gate. There's loads of things I want to take in with me. The Lord is saying, I am a jealous God.

I have to be king of your heart. I am king of your life. And that's a problem. Because we don't want to give up. We want to hold on.

We want to be in control. We want to be masters of our own destiny. We want to call the shots. And so there's this conflict. There's this struggle. But the Lord is saying, it's a narrow gate.

[20 : 14] This is the only way through. By laying ourselves out before him. And so we find here that Jesus is saying, enter by the narrow gate.

Now, when we find this, a similar thing in Luke, he actually tells us to strive to enter this gate. And this word, to strive, means to agonize.

It points to intensity. So that really what Jesus is saying here is, if you're going to go through this gate, there has to be urgency.

There has to be determination. This is not something that you sort of, it's kind of hit or miss, or something that you're sort of half-hearted about. This is serious business.

Nobody sort of saunters into the kingdom. You know, sometimes when we're walking, we can go out with something with, when we come to something, there might be intensity about us, and urgency about us, and determination about us.

[21 : 22] There are other times that everything is very laid back, and it doesn't matter. Our hands might be in our pockets. We might be distracted at all different ways. Well, with regard to this gate, approaching this gate, there is focus, there is determination, there is urgency.

We are not going to be put off. And I hope tonight that there are people in here who are serious about this. If you are still outside the kingdom, you need to get through this gate tonight.

And let me tell you, there is an enemy who does not want you to go through the gate. Because I believe there's a conflict going on in hearts here tonight. On the one hand, there are people in their own soul saying, you know this, I need to get this sorted with God.

But there's also an enemy that's whispering and saying, that's all very well, but not just now. Don't get all het up about this. Leave this till another time. Think about it later on. Remember what you've got to do.

Remember the things that are lying ahead of you this year. Get all that sorted and seen to, and then pick it up. Pick it up next winter. Because you've got things planned for this summer, and you don't want to get, become a Christian just yet.

[22 : 35] Satan is doing all these kind of things. He's trying to sidetrack you. He'll do anything to prevent you going through that door, that gate. My friend, you've got to be focused.

You've got to strive. There's got to be an urgency. You've got to put your fingers in your ears. Remember the picture John Bunyan paints as Christian leaving the city of destruction as he's seeking salvation for his soul.

And there's all the voices shouting at him, Oh, come back. What does he do? He puts his fingers in his ears so that he won't hear them. Because the pull is so powerful, so strong.

And that's what's going on. So we've got to strive to enter. How do we strive? Well, we strive in prayer, obviously. If you're sincerely seeking the Lord, you will seek him in your own heart, quietly.

You will pray to him. Maybe you're saying to yourself tonight, Oh, well, that's all very well to say. Pray. I don't know how to pray. Yes, you do. Everybody prays. You pray.

[23 : 43] I know you pray. It doesn't have to be a long prayer. Let me tell you, I've said it so often before. Some of the most powerful prayers you'll find in the Bible are tiny.

They're just a matter of a few words. But it's the urgency. It's the intensity. It's the sincerity. Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

There was a man who was dying on the cross. And he was there. We've got to remember that the malefactors or the thieves or whatever their particular crimes were, they were worthy of death because this man actually admitted it.

And we've got to remember, this was a hard man. And he was initially a bitter man. And he was a man who was, let us remember this, on that cross, was opposed to Jesus Christ.

Because it tells us in one of the Gospels that both on either side of Jesus were mocking him and were throwing everything back in his face.

[24 : 48] But then this one turned. And he saw Jesus. All of a sudden, his eyes were opened to see that this battered, bleeding, disfigured, patient beside him, hanging, life, well, it wasn't like hanging on the cross, paralyzed, as we're talking about this morning.

He couldn't move, do anything for himself, completely immobilized on the cross, was the King of Glory. And all he said was, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

I wasn't a long prayer. But it was with all his heart. And Jesus said, verily, verily, truly, truly, I say to you, today, today, you will be with me in paradise.

I was a prayer offered and a prayer answered. And you'll find that a lot of these is the same with the publican. There's just a few words, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

That man went down to his house justified. Blind Bartimaeus, Jesus, son of David, have mercy upon me. Jesus stopped. What do you want? Lord, that I might receive my sight.

[26 : 05] That was it. Jesus said, your faith has made you whole. Tiny, little prayer. So if you are sincere about seeking, you will pray.

You will read the word. Start reading in the gospels. Read, we're going through the gospel of John in the morning. Read the gospel of John. Read all the gospels. And ask Jesus as you read, Lord, open, open my eyes.

Make me, make me see, make me want, make me believe. And you'll do what you're doing tonight. You come to God's house because this is where he is. He has promised to be where two or three are gathered together.

And the wonderful thing is that if we go through this gate, though the road might be hard, as we said, it leads into a wonderful place. And even on that road, although sometimes it's hard, it is filled with many blessings.

Blessings of his peace, a sense of forgiveness. You know, you can't put price on that. Where the Lord has taken your guilt, taken your sin, taking all these things that are such a burden.

[27 : 19] He puts his love into your heart, but he also fills you with where you're going. And you know, you can't put a price on that to know where you're going and to be able to look forward and say, I know where I'm going.

I'm going to be with Jesus. And I'm going to be taken into the broadest, most expansive, most wonderful place when I die. It's wonderful. Jesus has done everything.

Can you imagine how it would be if we, if our salvation was dependent upon ourselves? if in the day of judgment and we have to stand before Jesus, it was all down to what we had done, how would we fear?

You know, sometimes in exams, sometimes the pass mark might be 50. Sometimes they lower the pass mark. Other times they raise the pass mark up to 60. Imagine if that's how you were facing death and you didn't know what the pass mark was.

How will I fear as I stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Have I done enough? Have I done enough good works?

[28 : 31] Have the bad things I've done completely outweighed the good things so that that's me finished? Imagine if that's the way we lived and that's the way we died.

And there's some people who live with that thinking that's how it's going to be. No. Only one thing will matter. Remember this morning we saw that Jesus had two accusations leveled against him.

One was blasphemy and the other was treason. And these are the two main sins that are leveled against us. In Eden Satan said to Eve you've been made in the image of God.

Take of that fruit and you will become like God. Not just in the image but like him. And that was the charge that was leveled against Jesus that he had made himself equal to God.

Which he was of course but that was what they were accusing him of. And that is at the end of the day if we die without Jesus Christ that will be one of the main charges against it.

[29 : 38] The other is treason. That's where Adam and Eve they rebelled against the authority and the kingship of Jesus Christ. It was treason. And that was the other charge leveled against Jesus.

Treason. Where he was a king against Caesar. That's where they were trying to get the Roman side of it. And these are the two charges that will face us but Jesus has borne.

That's what he did on the cross. Cancelled it out. So that if you believe in Jesus if you go through that gate with him you'll be able to stand and be able to stand and the Lord will look at the account and it's been washed clean by his blood and you're accepted.

Otherwise we've had it. And that's what Jesus is saying. But if we follow through this chapter it's contrasting and it finishes off with the buildings one on the rock and one on the sand.

What are you building your life on? Is it Jesus or is it not? If you're building on anything other any other foundation irrespective of how brilliant it may appear just now it's going to collapse into ruin.

[30 : 59] Make sure you build your life on Jesus. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God we pray that we do not reject or turn away or despise the wonderful truths that we have here in the word.

So often we use the expression that familiarity can breed contempt. And while we might not be contemptuous of the word in a way we can be so familiar with it that somehow it just brushes past us.

and the urgency of eternity and getting right with God can sometimes be pushed aside always hoping one day to deal with it.

Oh Lord impress upon us the importance of getting right with God now because we do not know what a day nor an hour may bring. We promise ourselves many things we're not even promised tomorrow.

help us then to be wise to salvation and to throw in our lot with you. Take away from us all our sin in Jesus name we ask it. Amen.

[32 : 15] Let us conclude singing in Psalm 118 Psalm 118 and this is from the Scottish Psalter we're going to sing from verse 17 to 23 the Tunis Colesill four stanzas.

Psalm 118 from verse 17 and that's on page 398 I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover the Lord hath me chastised sore but not to death given over who set you open unto me the gates of righteousness then will I enter into them and I the Lord will bless this is the gate of God by it the just shall enter in thee will I praise for thou me heardst and hast my safety been that stone is made head cornerstone which builders did despise this is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes 17 to 23 of Psalm 118 I shall not die I shall not die and live and shall the works of God discover the Lord hath me the peace of righteousness but not to death give no way

O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness then will I enter into them and I the Lord will bless this is the gate of God by it the gate the just shall enter in he will I praise for thou be heardst and last my safety be the

God the stone is made made for the stone which will burst in deep spines this is the doing
glory of the Lord and wondrous day arise now may the grace mercy and peace of God the
Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore
Amen Thank audent

For For Yo