

Matthew 7:13-20 - “Right Route, Wrong Root”

As we talked last week about not judging others, we will see now in the remainder of the chapter that there are certainly times we need to be very discerning. Because life often presents two different tracks for us to follow. So, in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus shares a series of 4 contrasts. Each contrast is between that which is of God, and that which is not of God. And we need to judge each scenario and be discerning to follow the right action.

1. The Two Routes – 7:13-14

7:13-14 - “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. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Right away we’re confronted with the reality that there are two paths in life. There is a **narrow** way and there is a **wide** way. One leads to **life** and the other leads to **destruction**.

We have two gates, two paths, two crowds, and two destinations.

Now gates were very important in biblical times as cities were typically walled for safety and protection. The gates were the only way in and out of the city. The larger the road leading to the city, the larger the gate. It made it better to accommodate those coming into the city to conduct business or carry out commerce. In other places around the city wall that were less travelled you could come upon smaller, narrower gates that didn’t have the same traffic as the main gate.

Jesus uses this picture to draw out a spiritual truth.

People love the accessibility of the wide gate; it’s well used and easy to enter. But is it the most beneficial? The easy way does not always equal the right way.

- **Proverbs 16:25**, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”*

There’s two gates and two paths. One path leads to life and the other to destruction. We’ll talk about that momentarily.

We also see there’s two crowds. Because regarding the wide gate and the broad way, it says **there are many who go in by it**. You see a lot of people get fooled

into thinking they are on the right path because it's the most popular! *Everybody is doing it. If everybody is doing it, it can't be wrong? Right?*

- Well I tell you I saw a lot of people follow along with the Covid lies. People quick to go along with the narrative and think it must be the right thing because so many people are doing it. Those that took a different path were the fringe minority. But I'll walk the fringe minority path all the live long day!
- The truth is, the majority is not always right. God never needs or requires a majority to carry out His work.
- In fact, what I saw through the Plandemic is that it was a remnant that stood for the things of God rather than side with the majority. God's people, the ones that stand for what's right and true, have always been a remnant and minority in this world.

So why do so many people choose the wide gate? Because it's the path of least resistance. It's the easy way. It's Broadway – filled with bright lights and self-indulgence! The path is wide and non-restrictive.

But they fail to look at where it's heading. People just want to enjoy life and not think about what's next. But that's the most important thing to be concerned about! Where we spend eternity is riding on it.

And sadly, Jesus makes it clear that those who are walking on this path that's filled with crowds, the path that seems so right because how can all these people be wrong, is heading straight to eternal destruction.

Jesus clearly uses this term to speak of hell. This person is not just heading to an eventual problem or hurt in his life. This path ends in eternal damnation; utter darkness. This is contrasted with the **life** the person finds through the narrow gate. Jesus isn't just talking about natural life, because both groups of people have that at the moment. He uses this to speak of eternal life – life in Heaven with our God and Saviour!

So the narrow gate, as hard as it might be, is the one that leads to the greatest blessing! And notice what is first said about it: **Enter...**

We're all given a ticket to ride. Nobody is excluded from the opportunity to enter in and find life. There are some that would like to say that God chooses those who enter in. Only those He has regenerated can come. But there's no stipulations on this invitation. You either enter in through the narrow gate or you enter in through the wide gate. One is the right way leading to eternal life, the other is the wrong way leading to eternal death.

So what is this narrow gate? This is speaking of Jesus Christ!

- **John 10:9**, *"I am the door [gate]. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."*
- **John 14:6**, *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"*

The gate is narrow because it's the only option. There's no other way to the Father and eternal life except through Jesus. He has become the gate; the way in for us.

- If you are not on the way to Christ, you are on the way from Him.
- You're either on broad way or on His way. Which path are you on?

Now again, here's what causes many people to choose the wrong path. Not only because they follow the crowd and think the majority can't be wrong, but it's also because this path is **difficult**. Now I don't like to hear that too much. That doesn't excite me and it probably doesn't excite you. But why is it difficult?

- It's difficult because you are the minority. You're swimming against the current of the world. Listen, any dead fish can swim downstream, it takes a living, vibrant, creature with faith in the Lord to swim upstream. It's not easy, but it's the most beneficial and rewarding life.
- This word difficult is not just speaking of a minor challenging path. It's the Greek word *thlibō*, which is translated elsewhere as afflicted or crush.

Jesus has talked a bit already in the Sermon on the Mount about the persecution you may receive for being a follower of Christ. Is that going to cause you to give up, retreat and jump through the wide gate? Or are you going to persevere knowing the outcome is far greater on that narrow path.

- **Matthew 5:10–12**, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ 'Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

We always have to look at the end result. The wider gate may be easier today, but is it worth the suffering that you will experience for all eternity?

Asaph wrote some wise words along these lines in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73:1–5, *"Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. ² But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. ³ For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm. ⁵ They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men."*

Psalm 73:16–25, *"When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me— ¹⁷ Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. ¹⁸ Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. ¹⁹ Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. ²⁰ As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. ²¹ Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind. ²² I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. ²³ Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. ²⁴ You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You."*

The narrow way may be difficult, but we continue on knowing the outcome – both for us who enter through the narrow gate, but also knowing the outcome for those who have chosen the wide gate.

When Luke writes about a similar theme he says:

Luke 13:24, *"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."*

- This word strive is the Greek word agonizomai (agonize). Think about an athlete and how they train and endure much to get to where they want to be. Now salvation has nothing to do with effort on our part. Our matter of being saved is not dependent on our striving and making it happen. What we must be sure we do is enter through the right gate – the narrow gate. That narrow gate is Jesus! We are saved simply by His grace through faith. Meaning, He's done the work, and now we've got to put our trust in His work alone as sufficient to save us.
- But may we strive to stay in that place of faith in Jesus. It may be difficult at times, but it is so worth it! And there are many things that are trying to trip us up in this too; many things that are causing the masses to make the wrong choice. Jesus takes us to an example next.

2. The Two Fruits – 7:15-20

7:15-17 - “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Jesus gives an important warning here, there will be people that will come to deceive. They will act like people of God, but they are far from God. They are imposters.

The Old Testament had many false prophets who pretended to speak on behalf of God but they spoke what the king or the people wanted to hear.

In Jesus day the Pharisees were like the false prophets. They claimed to be the most religious and closest to God yet they were far from God (of course there were exceptions like Nicodemus). They acted religious, sounded religious, but they were wolves in sheep’s clothing. And they’re out to gain for themselves by devouring others.

Jesus said they are **ravenous wolves**. That word can mean robbers or swindlers. These false prophets have been robbing people of life, leading them through the wide gate and down Broadway. They’re motivated by a self-serving agenda and the end of their victims would sadly be destruction. These are deceptive leaders who are not born again, and only pretending to be genuine.

- Today we have many people walking around pretending to be sheep but they’re leading people down a deadly path all for their own profit.

Jesus tells us we need to be on the lookout of such people. Don’t just assume because a person carries a bible or can say hallelujah after each sentence that they’re on the mark. You need to go deeper than that. You need to evaluate people’s fruit.

It says **you will know them by their fruits**.

What’s their fruit speaking of? How they conduct themselves. How they line up with the word of God. How they treat others.

- These wolves in sheep’s clothing may put on a display of religion and holiness for a time but eventually their true nature exposes them.

I’m saddened when I see the foolishness and deception that gets passed on by Christian leaders today. And the sad truth is that many are following them. I don’t get it!

Some may claim that we’re not to judge them. But Jesus says to beware. Take stock. Be fruit inspectors! That requires an element of judging. Yes, we don’t judge unto condemnation, but we judge against the truth – the Word of God.

You're not going to get anything good from them. You don't gather grapes from thornbushes. A bad tree bears bad fruit. Don't keep going back thinking something good will eventually come. They're not linked to God or rooted in Him. Bad root, bad fruit.

The root determines the fruit. If the root is bad, the fruit cannot be good. If false prophets are serving themselves rather than God, you're not going to get good fruit from them.

If a person is truly rooted in Christ, then good fruit is going to come. And these things become tests or indicators of where a person is at.

7:18-20 - *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*

God desires every person that is linked to Him to bear good fruit. Idleness or unproductivity is a sign of not being properly rooted in Him. If there's no life, it's really only good for fire fuel.

These words of Jesus echo what John the baptist said:

Matthew 3:10, *"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

2 Peter 2:1–3, *"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."*

But their fruits you will know them. This determines everything. Don't fall prey to being misled and deceived. It's crazy how much silliness and deception is running amuck in churches today. Be discerning, be fruit inspectors. Check that things line up with the word of God.

And don't just evaluate others, evaluate yourself. *John 15:1-4.
Are you rooted in Christ; abiding in Him and bearing fruit?

Some of the fruit to be showing is listed in Galatians 5:22-23.