

**Reading:** Matthew 7:13-29

**Theme:** Which Way Will We Go?

It is so frustrating when you are driving and just get on a motorway, then you hear or see a traffic warning of delays ahead! You end up stuck and going nowhere fast! Or you just pass a junction, then get the traffic delay warning and end up sitting doing nothing for ages! Motorways are not nice places when in thick fog. I hope we would drive sensibly, all needed lights on, we slow down and then cars go whizzing past us as if we are in reverse! Some people just have motorway madness, plunging into the fog, not knowing what lies ahead - possibly being involved in a pileup. In such situations it's best to get off the motorway onto a better lit and slower road.

We will look at v13-14, but before we do, notice the position of these verses in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has said many wonderful things which people admire and marvel at. Yet Jesus doesn't want people only to admire and marvel at His teaching, for His teaching had practical ends in view. In rounding up this Sermon, it is as if He is saying "*Now listen and listen well and apply what I have said to your lives.*" This Sermon on the Mount is practical, is meant to be applied, worked out and lived out in all our lives.

There is a danger we can just hear it, read it, listen to what is preached from it and go away and do not apply it to our lives or live it out. Jesus wants us to work it out in our lives every day. Here in v13-14 Jesus says we are to make sure **we are on the right road**; then in v15-23 we are to apply tests to see **if those around us are in the right way**, including ourselves, for we can be deceived and suffer judgement. In v24-27 Jesus underlines the importance of **building our lives on the foundation of His teaching** - we are to be doing as well as listening, else when the storms of life come upon us we will not stand and we will be ruined, if not for time, but certainly for eternity.

Jesus had taught amazing things - what a Christian is, the effect we are to have on society, the righteous standards required, how to live aright in the world with respect to religious things, with respect to everyday things - including the area of a harsh judgemental attitude is covered. Then Jesus turns the spotlight on all who have ever heard His teaching and says in effect “*Well then, what about you?*” Well, what about us - you and me? 1<sup>st</sup> of all are we listening? By that I mean, are we hearing and applying Jesus’ teaching to our own lives and living it out? This final section of the Sermon on the Mount challenges us and also warns us of judgement if we do not listen to and keep Jesus’ words. This section challenges us, probes us as to whether we are applying these things regarding our choice of direction **in** our lives, our choice of influences **upon** our lives and our choice of foundation **for** our lives. In each of these 3 cases Jesus says, in effect, “*Look carefully to see the difference between reality and illusion; between the true and the deceptive.*” The 1<sup>st</sup> choice we are called to is:

### **The Choice of Direction for Our Lives** (v13-14)

Which way will we go in and through life? I’m not speaking of careers, of jobs, of universities, of boyfriends or girlfriends, of life partners, of retirement, of our financial investments, our retirement plans - for the Lord Jesus wasn’t speaking of these at all. He was speaking of **the most important decision** - not even a life and death decision, but one much more important, for it is an eternal life or eternal death decision! Jesus uses a picture to drive home the need for us to get off the road that leads to destruction, to do so and definitely not get stuck on it. We are to get off the broad road that leads to destruction, get onto the narrow road that leads to life, eternal life. We have to decide, choose between one or the other! See 4 things from these 2 verses:

#### **1. The Choice of Entrances.**

There are 2 entrances facing us all this day. One is wide, looks appealing and many people are going through it. The other, well we don't really notice it at 1<sup>st</sup>, in fact we have to go out of our way to find it and then we discover it is narrow and small. A good picture of this is a very narrow turnstile - only one at a time can get through and not able to carry any luggage through it.

As we look at these 2 entrances we see the wide gate has many, many people going through it. It's so easy to go through, we go as we are, along with the crowd, it doesn't cost anything, no changes required in one's attitude or behaviour or our way of living. In fact, anyone and everyone is welcome.

Yet the narrow gate, O dear, what a sad and dreary gate. There's no room for achievements, for being good, for pride, certainly no room for doing wrong, no room for the good works that we try to do throughout our lives, no room for a proud, boastful, self-confident self. In fact, the ones who go through that gate seems so poverty struck, so mournful, so hungry and thirsty after something other than what this world can give.

This gate cannot be passed through unless we are aware of our poverty before God, of His righteousness and purity. We can't enter here if we carry the weight of all our wrong thoughts, deeds, words, desires and all the guilt that it carries towards God. We cannot force our way in by weight or pressure of good works, of religiousness, of turning over a new leaf. This gateway cannot be entered if you feel you are fine. It can only be entered when you are stripped of everything which includes self-worth and value. To be perfectly honest, I personally feel the wide gate looks much more preferable. Now see:

## **2. The Choice of Roads.**

One of the roads is broad and we get to it via the wide gate. The broad road has room enough for all sorts of people, for all sorts of ideas, beliefs and behaviour. Anything goes here, everything and everyone is tolerated. People on this road seems so carefree, so happy, so self-indulgent, so unaware of troubles. The broad road has a party atmosphere about it - people eating, drinking, being merry and indulging in whatever they want to.

Things don't seem to improve by going through the narrow gate - for the road remains narrow also! People are careful not to do certain things, and some even make it appear narrower than it really is! They seem constricted by what God's commands and what He wants them to do. It is narrow and at times it appears as a hard climb up this road. People are often on their knees and there are also tears. We could see some feeling like giving up and yet incredibly they still keep on going on and amazingly want others to join them!

What a choice - a motorway or a harsh steep narrow track. The broad way appears much more preferable, people usually stick with it, for all of us are on this broad road anyway - on it from the moment of our birth. What we face this morning is the choice to leave it or decide to remain on it. See:

### **3. The Choice of Companions.**

The broad road has many, many people on it. All kinds of people, countless in number. If there was a sign at its start, or along the way and it would seem to say "*The more the merrier, all friends together. Travel as you wish, as fast or as slow as you wish, how you wish.*" On this broad road, all mankind is naturally on it, everyone present, all making their way down this broad road.

This narrow road, well it is a wonder that it is not overgrown! There seems to be so few finding the gate and entering in. Only a few on the road. No wonder, for it appears to be so narrow and hard at times.

This road is fine as long as you don't mind your own company, don't mind going in a different direction to the majority of mankind.

On the whole the wide gate, the broad busy road appears much more preferable than the narrow gate and the narrow road that has few on it. Remarkably Jesus commends this narrow gate and road. Surely the narrow gate and road must have something going for it? The answer to what commends it is most clearly seen when we see:

#### **4. The Choice of Destinations.**

The broad road, into which all of us have been born and are going along at different paces, is the motorway to destruction. Its end leads to destruction. Not only death - for really, we all know our lives will end in death - but when Jesus says destruction, He is referring to hell - a real everlasting place of everlasting punishment by God upon all who do, say, desire or think wrong things. Tragically, all of us are born with this bias toward wrong - words, thinking, desiring or doing, we are all heading to hell and therefore eternal (*for ever and ever*) destruction. One of the most tragic things about hell is that we will be ever be being destroyed in this punishment, but it will never destroy us and so goes on forever and ever.

This is where the wide gate, the broad road leads to and everyone on it are heading there. Some are heading there with a complete and utter disregard for God, His person, His law, His love and His gospel. They go on in their broad road madness on an uncertain road ahead to an unknown destination that will end in their destruction.

Others ignore the warning signs of the danger ahead, are content to say "*God will never be like that*" or "*There is no God, nor life after death and when we are dead we are dead and so it does not matter!*" Others go along, concerned about the warning signs, but assume they have been left by former generations that knew no better. Yet God

the Son, the Lord Jesus says *“Be warned and be warned today of this broad road you are on for it leads to eternal destruction.”*

The narrow gate and road leads to life. Yes, it may appear and seem to be narrow and restrictive, and as you enter the narrow gate and narrow road, you find you are freer than you ever were on the broad road. Every step on that broad road seem to have a fading joy and pleasure; each wrong thing seemed to be adding to the weight of your guilt and was heavy upon you. Yet on this narrow way you’ve been given new life, your sin and its guilt have been removed and there is a peace and joy that had eluded you before. Now you discover you are free to live in God’s commands - which were before as barbed wire walls to hem you in, but now they are as railway tracks to allow you freedom and direction in your life.

Yes, there may be few on the road, but they are of a like mind and more than that there is the presence, love, care and company of the Son of God Himself. We find that any tears are necessary tears and that He is there to help us, to keep us going on when we would give up in the dark times and the hard times.

That is something of the narrow road life journey and yet best of all at the end is heaven - eternal life in all its joys and wonders - this is LIFE and it will go on forever and ever - millions, billions of years of joy and pleasure. An hour in heaven, no, a millisecond in heaven and the most painful, hardest life of suffering will be forgotten and heaven will more than compensate for such!

Appearances can be deceiving and we are to recognise the roads are not what they 1<sup>st</sup> appear to us. The broad road seems so inviting, so easy, so busy and yet it ends an awful eternal destruction. The narrow way may appear hard and harsh and yet it leads to life, to abundant life which is enjoyed in part, with wonderful foretastes of heaven even as we go on that narrow upward way.

Now comes the time when we have to choose! Is it going to be the broad road that leads to eternal destruction or will it be the narrow way that leads to eternal life? Don't be foolish and choose fleeting moments of pleasure and gain an eternity of suffering. Tragically that's what most people do. Jesus places before all of us - heaven or hell, eternal life or eternal destruction. What are you going to go for, what will your choice be?

Jesus does not invite or encourage us to do so, He commands - for when He says "*Enter through the narrow gate.*" It is a command, an instruction that must be obeyed for it is given by the King of heaven to people like you and me. He wants our truest best for our lives and eternity. This is a serious matter and yet the King of Kings calls to people like us to go into the way that He has provided freely for our eternal well-being, joy and comfort.

This means we are to recognise who we are before God, that all of us only deserve hell, but that Jesus came and died to save, to rescue us and set us free from our sin, its guilt and its eternal consequences. We need to turn from our wrong, to call on Him to forgive us it all - then it will **ALL** be forgiven as we trust Him as our Saviour and not just rely on our feelings or experiences.

Jesus Himself is the only door and way to heaven. All who go to Him in trust and faith will be in no way cast out, rejected or dumped. We are to believe what He says, what He promises and He will always keep His word. When we trust in Him, He will be our Saviour and will bring us safely to heaven.

There are no shortcuts to heaven, no easy ways, but there is only this narrow road. Me this morning I'm just a warning sign signalling in the fog and confusion of modern life, with all its ups and downs and confusing sights, attractions and signals. I am pointing you off the

road to destruction, calling on you not to persist in broad-road-madness but am calling you to get off the motorway to eternal destruction and get on the road to eternal life. Which choice will you make for your eternal wellbeing and life?

Those of us who are on the narrow way are to be honest that it is narrow, it does cramp our style, it does make life harder for us at times, but recognise the love of God which is lavished on us as we are on the way of eternal life, with the Son of God as our companion, God the Holy Sprit as our helper and comforter and we are heading to our heavenly Father's home - where there are pleasures for evermore. Our lives, compared to eternity, are shorter than a single flash of a strobe light compared to a billion years. Then we will have joy, peace, love, pleasures and the presence of the Triune God and any sorrows we know in life will not be worth comparing to the glory to be revealed in us, to us and through us.

Which way will we go? For that determines the end to which we will we go? Choose the way of life.