**Which Path have you Chosen?**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Matthew 7:13-23**

**Sunday Morning**

**October 27, 2024**

**Matthew 7:13-23**

13 "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. 15 "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 thorn bushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 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. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Saints, the choices we make today determine our tomorrows.

That’s why it’s so important to give careful thought to the consequences that result from our decisions. We’ve probably all made mistakes we wish we could reverse.

If we’d only known what would result, we’d never have gone down that path.

Christ has given us clear direction to help us find the best way to live and avoid the painful consequences of a wrong choice.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about two paths of life and described the final destination of each. To emphasize His point, Jesus contrasted….

**Small and Wide Gates**

**Narrow and Broad Ways**

**Good and Bad Trees and the Resulting of types of Fruit**

**Sincere and False Professions of Faith**

**Wise and Foolish Builders**

**Rock and Sand Foundations**

**Secure and Unstable House**

Saints, in each case, one way led to destruction and the other to life.

**Christ limits our choice to only two Possible Paths**

During our lifetimes, we must walk on either one or the other. Before we can choose wisely, we need to understand the characteristics and final destination of each.

**The Broad Way**

The most commonly traveled path has a wide gate and offers freedom to believe whatever one desires. All religions, philosophies, and opinions are welcomed and accepted.

**1. This is a Crowded Path**

Saints, many people choose this route because it offers them the freedom to do what they want and go wherever they desire. But freedom without Christ ends up in a real place the prophet Isaiah says is truly horrific!

**Isaiah 5:14**

"Therefore, hell has enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoices, shall descend into it."

**Romans 1:28-32**

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,

30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

 **2. The Broad Way is the Ungodly Path**

Saints, those who travel on this path don’t want anyone telling them what to do.

Satan walks this path convincing people that an undisciplined life is the way to freedom and happiness.

What people on this “freeway” don’t see is the consequences which result from an ungodly lifestyle.

**Matthew 7:13**

"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.

**3. The Broad Way is a Path of Darkness**

**Proverbs 4:19**

The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.

Saints, Jesus confirmed this when He said that men love the dark because light exposes their deeds as evil.

**John 3:19-21**

19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Saints, many choose this road because the darkness makes them comfortable with their sin.

They reject Jesus, who is the Light of the world, in order to avoid conviction and guilt.

**4. The Broad Way brings Sevier Disappointment**

Saints, the travelers on this path try to convince themselves that following their own desires will make them happy and content, but it ultimately results in bondage to sin and disillusionment. Sin never delivers the rewards it promises.

**Romans 6:22-23**

22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**5. The Broad Way Ends in Destruction**

Saints, those who choose this course keep hoping their lives will improve, but they will eventually face destruction. In trying to save their lives, they’ll lose their souls for all eternity.

**Mark 8:34-38**

34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

**The Narrow Way**

Saints, Jesus calls people to take the narrow path. There is no mixture of religions here. Only those who believe in Jesus can enter the small gate.

**1. The Narrow Way Requires Discipline**

Those who walk this road practice self-restraint and avoid sinful practices.

**Galatians 5:24-25**

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

**2. The Narrow Way is for the Few**

Saints, Christians are in the minority compared to the world’s population.

Even when Jesus ministered on earth, only a small number of people followed Him.

**Matthew 7:14**

"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

**3. The Narrow Way is the Path of Wisdom**

Saints, those who walk it listen and accept instruction from the Lord, knowing it guides their way.

**Proverbs 4:10-14**

10 Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. 11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble. 13 Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life. 14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.

Saints, the people taking this path is committed to living a holy life, a righteous life and experiencing the peace and joy that come with obedience.

**4. The Narrow Way is following Jesus**

Saints, this is not the glamorous highway of the world but the road of faith in Christ.

Those who enter the small gate believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died for their sins.

They trust Him as their personal Savior and surrender their lives to Him.

This requires giving up their old way of life and walking as new

creations in Christ.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Saints, Jesus' Spirit lives within them guiding their way and empowering them to live a godly lifestyle.

After death, we will all stand before Christ.

**Hebrews 9:27**

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment..."

Saints, those who took the narrow path will come before Him washed in His blood, holy and righteous because of their faith in Him.

But the people who rejected Christ and walked the broad path will stand in their sins.

There will be no rationalizations or excuses in the presence of His radiant holiness and glory as His light reveals the darkness of their sin.

**Revelations 21:8**

"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Saints, at the end of the narrow road is the entrance into heaven, but the broad way leads to hell and eternal separation from God.

**The Carnal Christian**

**2 Timothy 3:5**

…having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Saints, although it’s impossible to walk both paths simultaneously, some Christians try to go back to the lifestyle of the wide road.

Each of us has the capacity to sin because we still have our flesh or naturalness which causes us to seek sinful desires.

But God has promised that if we walk by His Spirit, we won’t carry out these desires.

**Galatians 5:16-18**

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Saints, God enables us to overcome temptation. Although we may sin occasionally, we should never let it become our habitual practice.

**The Saved and Unsaved**

Saints, since this is the most important decision anyone will ever make, Jesus gives guidance for distinguishing whether someone is walking on the narrow or broad way.

**Matthew 7:20-23**

20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Jesus says people are known by the fruit in their lives, not just their verbal profession that Jesus is Lord.

Believing in Christ is more than mere mental assent that He is the Son of God. In the New Testament, the word believe signifies action.

Jesus says of those who are religious but whose lifestyle is characterized by sin,

**Matthew 7:23**

“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”

Saints, Jesus’ words reveal that they had not taken the narrow road of salvation because their faith wasn’t authentic since it didn’t result in a changed life.

However, no one has to remain on the wide path headed for eternal destruction.

Those who truly believe in Christ and are willing to repent of sin and surrender their lives to Him can enter the small gate and begin following Jesus on the narrow way.

Saints, I have some questions to impose upon us!

**1. What decisions have you made which have led you to the place you are now?**

**2. What blessings or negative consequences have resulted?**

**3. What guides your decision making?**

**4. Have you contemplated where your choices will lead you?**

**5. Do you usually consider what God desires for you?**

**6. Which Path are you Traveling Today—the Narrow**

**Road or the Broad Way?**

**7. Have you tried to Straddle both Paths so you can have your way and still go to Heaven?**

**8. Why won’t this work?**

**9. What Evidence or Fruit in your Life Proves that you have been**

**Transformed into a New Creation?**

Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) pe**