

Walking with Jesus - Part 11
The Narrow Gate
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Matt 7:13-23
Subject: What happens when you know Jesus as your personal Savior
Complements: you have eternal life.
Exegetical idea: When you know Jesus as your personal Savior you have eternal life.
Homiletical idea: **Enter in the narrow gate!**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers receive Jesus.

Introduction

Have you ever tried to imagine what it will be like when you finally meet Jesus face to face? For many of us, that picture generates many positive thoughts and feelings. Finally, meeting Jesus face to face! Amazing! But now try to imagine how a person would feel if Jesus said, ““I never knew you. Depart from Me...”

What a terrible thought! To hear Jesus saying, “I never knew you. Depart from Me...” It makes me shudder. And yet, according to Jesus, some people will actually hear those words. Who are those people, and how can we avoid their fatal mistake?

We’ll find the answers to those questions in our study today of the Sermon on the Mount. We have been studying this great sermon of Jesus for the past 10 weeks, and now, near the close of His sermon, Jesus makes an earnest appeal and gives a solemn warning.

We are going to begin our study today in Matthew 7:21-23. Please take your copy of this great sermon of Jesus and find Matthew 7, beginning with verse 21. Let’s read out loud together.

“.....”

Jesus is addressing religious leaders. These people prophesied in Jesus’ name, cast out demons in Jesus’ name, and did many other wonderful works in Jesus name. But Jesus says, “I

never knew you. Depart from Me....” “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus might have added, “Not everyone who prophesies, or casts out demons or does marvelous works shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” Who then shall enter? Jesus answers that question in Matthew 7:21b “.....”

Now hear is the crucial question. What is Jesus referring to here? What is “the will of my Father in heaven?” Be careful before you jump to any conclusions! I have heard a myriad of answers to that question. What is the will of my Father in heaven that we must do if we would enter the kingdom of heaven? Write these texts down: John 6:40; Matthew 18:14.

“.....” The will of our loving Father in heaven believe in Jesus, receive Him as our Savior and are saved and have eternal life. Jesus doesn’t want to have to come to you and say, “I never knew you. Depart from Me....”

That is why Jesus gives the solemn appeal as He draws to the close of His great sermon. We can read that solemn appeal in Matthew 7:13. “.....” I learned something new this week as I studied this passage. The Greek word translated “gate” here in Matthew 7:13 is typically used for a large entrance to a city or edifice. It’s actually a startling statement. Because Jesus says, “Enter by the narrow main entrance.” This is not a side door. This is the main entrance. In fact, Jesus clearly teaches that this is the only entrance.

Why does Jesus use the expression “narrow gate?” Why doesn’t He just speak of a beautiful gate or a glorious gate? Why is this main entrance narrow? The KJV speaks of a “strait” gate. The Greek word used here, “narrow” or “strait”, is only used 3 times in the NT, all when describing this gate that we must enter. Jesus restates this teaching in Luke 13:24. There Jesus uses the Greek word for a common door, but He uses the same adjective to describe

that door. It is NARROW. There has to be some significance to using that word to describe the gate: the NARROW gate.

What is this narrow gate? Where is it located? Or should I ask, “Who is this narrow gate through whom we must enter the kingdom of heaven? Several words of Jesus come to mind. In John 10:9, Jesus says, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved. And in John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by Me.”

Jesus is the narrow gate. Let me ask you a question. Is it easy or difficult to enter this narrow main entrance? What is the answer? Is it easy or hard? The answer is both. Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28-30, “.....” That sounds easy. But Jesus also says in Luke 13:24, “.....” The NIV says, “Make every effort.” But I think that the verb is more intense than that. It’s the Greek verb ἀγωνίζομαι, from which we get our English word “agonize.” Agonize to enter in the narrow gate.

What it is about entering this narrow gate that is hard? Any ideas. I want to suggest that you have to leave some things behind when you enter the narrow gate. You can’t bring all of your baggage with you. You have to leave your cherished sins behind. That doesn’t mean that you’ll never sin again. But you don’t keep embracing those cherished sins when you enter the narrow gate. You have to leave your self-righteousness behind when you enter the narrow gate. You have to leave you self-sufficiency behind. You have to leave your arrogance and your pride behind. The gate is narrow.

And Jesus says that once you enter through the narrow main entrance, the way is “difficult”, “compressed” or “confined.” This word can also have the meaning of being

oppressed, or troubled. How are we oppressed, troubled or persecuted on the way that leads to life?

I can still remember the testimony of a young lady in Allentown, Pennsylvania who had just decided to follow Jesus. She had just decided to enter in the narrow main entrance. And she was amazed at what happened. When she was living for the devil, abusing her body, staying out all night, her parents didn't say a word. But once she decided to follow Jesus, her parents were all stressed out. They told her that she was becoming a fanatic. She couldn't understand it. She was going to hell and nobody cared. As soon as she decided to enter in the narrow gate and walk the way that leads to life, she started experiencing difficulties, trouble, oppression, persecution.

And Jesus warns us that some of the difficulty will come from people who appear to be followers of Jesus. Listen to his words in Matthew 7:15. "....." Didn't Jesus warn us about possible persecution at the beginning of His sermon? What did Jesus tell us in Matthew 5:10-12. "....." Listen also to the words of Jesus recorded in John 16:1-4. "....."

These people who want to kill you are also religious. They believe that persecuting you is offering service to God. But actually, they are not connected to God at all. They are not walking with Jesus at all. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. And when you decide to enter in the narrow gate and walk on the way that leads to life, you'll meet some of those wolves in sheep's clothing.

No wonder that some people get discouraged with church. There are some ravenous wolves in the flock, dressed up to look like sheep. These ravenous wolves have not entered in through the narrow gate. They have not surrendered to Jesus as their personal Savior. They

appear to be walking with Jesus, but actually they are in rebellion. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

How will you be able to identify these ravenous wolves? Jesus says, "You will know them by their fruits." Now, let me remind you that fruits are not always immediately apparent. Sometimes you have to wait for a while to see what fruit a life is producing. But when the fruit appears, you will know whether someone is a good tree or a bad tree.

Because you can't always tell for sure, at least at first, whether a person is a good tree or a bad tree, it's best not to look to people for your example. People can disappoint you. People can let you down. Scripture says that we ought to look to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith!" We ought to enter in through the narrow gate, and keep on fixing our eyes on Jesus.

So I have a simple question for you. Are you one of those who has done the will of our Father in heaven? He is not willing that any should perish. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. His will for you is this: that you respond to His gift of love by receiving Jesus as your personal Savior and having eternal life through faith in Him!

When I met Nathan, He was just beginning to learn about Jesus. His mother died of cancer two days before his 17th birthday. For several years, he'd been running wild. He had searched for truth in eastern religions, secular humanism, and martial arts. He had been taught to learn from the masters but be subject to none.

When Nathan heard about Jesus, he realized that Jesus didn't give him the option to take one of many roads to the kingdom of heaven. There is only one way. And Jesus didn't give him room to bring all of his baggage with him. The gate is narrow.

Nathan walked away from E.S.T., he walked away from his martial arts master, who used to cut fruit on Nathan's abdomen with a sword, he walked away from his substance abuse, and he surrendered his life completely to Jesus! Even though most of his friends didn't understand what was happening to him, Nathan was not ashamed to give his testimony, even if it meant suffering, trouble, and persecution. Nathan invited more than 100 people to his baptism. He was baptized outside, in a pool, because most of his friends had never been in church!

Fourteen months after his baptism, Nathan left his job at a foundry and went to college to study more of God's Word. Today, Nathan is a pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist church. He is still walking on the way that leads to life. He has experienced some trouble, some oppression, some persecution. But as the apostle Paul declares, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor 4:17-18

And I have no doubt that on the day when Nathan meets Jesus face to face, the Savior will not say to him, "I never knew you. Depart from Me..." Rather, Jesus will say, "Come, you blessed on my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you." It is the same kingdom that Jesus spoke about at the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven."

Blessed are those who recognize that they need a Savior. Blessed are those who recognize that God so loved the world..... Blessed are those who receive Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. Blessed are those who enter in through the narrow gate. Even those the way may be difficult. Even though those who walk with Jesus may suffer trouble, oppression and persecution, that way leads to life!

In fact, that way not only leads to life in the future! That way leads to life now! Eternal

life is already yours once you have entered in the narrow gate. Eternal life is already yours as you walk with Jesus on the way. That was the testimony of the apostle John at the close of his first letter. His testimony is recorded in 1 John 5:11-13. “.....”

And so my appeal to you today is a simple one. And an earnest one. I appeal to you to enter in the narrow gate. I appeal to you to receive Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord. I don't want him to say to you, “I never knew you. Depart from Me...”

And if you have already entered the narrow gate, and you are experiencing some challenges along the way, I encourage you not to get discouraged. You are on the road that leads to life. And that life is already yours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So press on. Keep walking with Jesus! Keep looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Keep knowing Him, whom to know is life eternal. And then share what you know with others. Tell them about Jesus. Tell them about His appeal to enter the narrow gate and walk on the way that leads to life.

Is there someone here today who needs to enter in the narrow gate? Is there someone here today, either on campus, or joining us via our media ministries and you need to receive Jesus today as your personal Savior and Lord? I appeal to you to say “Yes” to Jesus today. He doesn't want to say to you, “I never knew you. Depart from Me...” He wants to say to you, “Come, you blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you!”

You'll notice that there is a white response card in the pew rack in front of you. On the reverse side, it says prayer request. Can you find one of those cards right now? If you want to make a decision today to receive Jesus and enter in the narrow gate, I wish you would write that down as a prayer request. If you want us to pray for someone you love who needs to enter in the

narrow gate, someone who needs to know the love of Jesus and be saved, I wish you would write that person's name down so that we can pray for him, pray for her. And if you would like to be part of this church family that teaches the Word of God and leads people to Jesus, you can write that too. Then just put your name and contact information on the reverse side and give it to me, or one of the other pastors, elders or deacons after the service. Or you can leave it at the welcome desk. We want to pray for you and thank God for a decision that you made today.

I will always be grateful that I had the privilege to invite Nathan to enter the narrow gate. On the day when our Lord Jesus returns in glory, and the dead in Christ shall rise from their sleep, Nathan's mother is going to have a wonderful surprise. Her wild teenage son not only choose to become a follower of Jesus! He has also devoted his life to encourage others to enter in the narrow gate and walk on the way that leads to life!

I can only imagine what it will be like, when I walk by Your side...
I can only imagine, what my eyes will see, when Your Face is before me!

I can only imagine. I can only imagine.
Surrounded by Your Glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for you, Jesus? Or in awe of You, be still?
Will I stand in Your presence, or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing 'Hallelujah!?' Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine! I can only imagine!

I can only imagine, when that day comes, when I find myself standing in the Son!
I can only imagine, when all I will do, is forever, forever worship You!

I can only imagine! I can only imagine!
Surrounded by Your Glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for you, Jesus? Or in awe of You, be still?

Will I stand in Your presence, or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing 'Hallelujah!?' Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine! Yeah! I can only imagine!

Surrounded by Your Glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for you, Jesus? Or in awe of You, be still?
Will I stand in Your presence, or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing 'Hallelujah!?' Will I be able to speak at all?

I can only imagine! Yeah! I can only imagine!
I can only imagine! Yeah! I can only imagine!! Only imagine!!!

I can only imagine.
I can only imagine, when all I do is forever, forever worship You!
I can only imagine."

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