

October 30, 2005
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“How To Find Life”
Matt 7:12-14(NIV)

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

These verses come toward the close of the greatest sermon ever preached. It has been called the Sermon on the Mount because Jesus gave in on a hillside near Capernaum. Jesus begins this sermon by saying: Matt 5:3-10 NCV

"Those people who know they have great spiritual needs, and are broken over their need, and humble themselves and call out for God's mercy, because they want to do right and want to be pure in their thinking, and be those who work to bring peace are happy and blessed, because God will call them his children and bring them into His Kingdom, they will know God. And by the way, you would think that those who live that way would be popular but instead Jesus says those who live that way are, many times, treated badly for doing good. But if you live like that you will have an enormous influence on the world around you.

Then Jesus spoke on many topics raising the standard of how we should live. He talked about how to deal with anger, how to avoid lust, how to avoid divorce. He spoke about living and acting with integrity, how to respond to evil people, how to love our enemies, how to give, pray, and fast. He spoke on how to handle money, how to stop living with worry and anxiety and start living, how to handle criticism, how to get our relationships right. And after Jesus spoke on these topics He sums up all He said (as we see by the word, "So") with what has come to be known as the Golden Rule: "do to others what you would have them do to you." If you want to know the specifics read the rest of the Sermon (it starts in chapter 5) but generally speaking His teachings can be summed up like this: "whatever you desire that others would do to and for you, even so do also to and for them." (AMP)

So, Jesus comes to the end of His sermon. Then He says it's decision time. Jesus says you must choose. You can follow Jesus and live as He has taught us to live in this sermon or you can choose not to. He gives these two alternatives that have far reaching consequences, for the decision you make will effect the rest of your life, not just here on earth but for eternity. First, He says...

1. There are two roads (or lifestyles)
One road is "broad" and one road is "narrow."

a. The Broad Road

The broad /wide road has no boundaries: you can do whatever you like. You don't have to do for others as you would like them to do for you. You can be selfish, you can hate people, you can be vengeful, abusive, non-forgiving...you can live any way you like. You can live with anger, lust, and divorce; you don't need to be a person of integrity, you can hate your enemies rather than seek to love them, you don't have to give, pray, or fast. You can live with greed, worry and anxiety. You can be judgmental and you don't need to get your relationships right if you don't want to – you can be unforgiving. It's a road of ease, an easier road than seeking to live a life as a follower of Jesus. But when you live a life where there are no boundaries people get hurt. You can lie and cheat, you are free to do that on a road with no boundaries, but that means someone else will be cheated and you will lose integrity. You are free to abuse alcohol but you may hurt your relationships with spouse or children. You are even free to drink and drive, but someone else or yourself can be hurt or killed. You are free to look at pornography or commit adultery but that means someone has to be abused and again spouses and children can be hurt. You are free to divorce, but then your children will have to come from a broken home. This is the broad road, there are no boundaries – anything goes.

b. The Narrow Road

The narrow road, rather than having no boundaries has tight boundaries. Many things are not permitted. No lying or cheating, no drunkenness, no lust, no greed, no hatred, no selfishness. Not only are many things not permitted, there are many things that are required, like: “do to others what you would have them do to you.” Forgiveness, humility, purity, mercy, giving, prayer and fasting these are not optional but required.

These are the two roads or lifestyles to choose from.

2. There are two destinations

One road leads to “destruction” and one road leads to “life.” This is not a threat but a warning given by the Lord with love. He doesn't want to ruin your fun. He wants you to find and experience life. He doesn't want your destruction. So he warns that a life of pride, anger, lust, hatred, greed, unforgiveness, selfishness and everything else you are free to do on the broad road will destroy you ...and others. The broad road leads to destruction in this life. It destroys, health, relationships it hurts and can kill you and others. Yes, pride, anger, lust, greed, unforgiveness, selfishness all these things can hurt you and others. But the lifestyle on the wide road of living anyway you choose also leads to hell after this life. That is not what God wants for you and so He puts up a warning sign on the road to point us in the right direction. Jesus is telling us that the narrow road leads to life...supernatural life...not only eternal life in heaven but a life you can enjoy right now. Jesus describes Eternal life as knowing God and you can experience that right now as well as forever. The narrow road leads to life.

3. There are two groups of people

The “many” people on the broad road and the “few” that are on the narrow road. The broad road has more people on it. But just because more people are on it does not make it all right. Large crowds can give a false sense of security. (illustrations)

G. K. Chesterton: "Right is right even if nobody does it. Wrong is wrong, even if everyone is wrong about it."

Things that we all believed were wrong at one time we now justify doing by saying, "Everybody else does it!" Remember what your mother said when you told her that? "Yeah, and if everybody jumped off a bridge would you do it to?" Do you have the courage to say no to what God says is wrong and join the few on the narrow road. Just because there are many more on the wide road of destruction than there are on the narrow road of life doesn't mean you should stay there. Enter the narrow road and find life.

4. There are two entrances

The broad road has a "wide" entrance or gate and the narrow road has a "small" gate. The wide gate would imply that there are many ways one could enter the wide road. It has bright lights, it is very appealing to the senses and there are others shouting, "Step right up, and come right in, you'll have a great time!" Do you remember Pinocchio and how the boys started out having a grand old time doing anything they wanted, but they were turned into jack-asses. Don't be stupid. You see living any way you choose instead of follow Jesus is not just wrong, it's stupid. God always rewards actions true to His character and always punishes actions that violate His character – don't be stupid, be smart. Do you know how Jesus ends this sermon? He ends it with these words: (Matt 7:24-27 NCV) "Everyone who hears my words and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and hit that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock. 26 Everyone who hears my words and does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and hit that house, and it fell with a big crash."

Jesus says that those who build their life on Biblical principles are wise, He didn't say they are good or righteous. He said they are wise. And He measures disobedience to His words not by it's wrongness, but by it's foolishness. The person who obeys God is just being smart! Write this down and bank on it: Living by the words of Jesus is always smart, not living by His words is always stupid. Consider that the next time you are tempted. It is not just a question of right or wrong but of smart or stupid. The wide road leads to destruction. And although the narrow road is not always a safe road God loves us and puts up warning signs: Don't hate, don't commit adultery, choose God's way it is always best for you in the long run.

The broad road has a wide gate, many ways to enter. The small gate would imply that there is only one way through to the narrow road. Jesus said (John 14:6 NCV), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me." Now I know that is not very popular today. We want to believe that there are many ways to God and those who say otherwise are narrow-minded and intolerant of other religions. Let me remind you that this is not my claim but the claim of Jesus Christ. If you have a beef take it up with Him who said, "I am the way- there is no other way to know God except through Me!" Repentance and faith in Jesus is the only way. The way off the wide road that leads to destruction onto the narrow road that leads to life is small. There is only one

way and it is by turning from all you know is wrong, ask Jesus to forgive you and put your faith and trust in Jesus.

Everyone is on one of the two roads. There is no middle road, no third gate mentioned. If you are on the broad road you don't need to do anything in order to stay on it. But if you want to get off you can through Jesus. As you enter through the narrow gate, you will find that although there are boundaries, the narrow road has something the wide road does not have, Jesus! And although you may not find a huge number of people on that road, you will not be alone there. Jesus goes with you. And although it is not the easy road because Jesus is there with you it is the more exciting path.

These are the two alternatives that you have and they have far reaching consequences, for the decision you make will effect the rest of your life, not just here on earth but for eternity. Be smart, choose wisely, don't be stupid. "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."