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## *Many Professing Christians are Choosing the World as their Ultimate Reality...to their Eternal Destruction*

*March 11, 2018*

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 7:13-14

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew 7:13-27

Mat 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

This morning I have skipped ahead into the seventh chapter of Matthew. We will still look at this passage in detail as we move on through Matthew in our current series, but I am compelled this morning to encourage you, warn you, and remind you of certain fundamental truths concerning the Christian and what the Bible calls, *the world*.

The world in which we live appears to us to be *natural*. Nature looks *natural*. That is to say, the ground that you stand upon, the food that you eat, the sky that you see, the animals, other people, tools and cars, money and houses, all appear to be the world in which we live. They are things we can touch and see and smell and taste and hear. They are familiar things to us. Things that don't startle us when we see them because we are so used to them.

You don't rush home or into a group of your friends all excited and shout "man! Do you know what I just saw? I saw a TREE!" You may as well wear a sign that says "I'm an idiot."

In contrast, what if you say a ghost? Or what if you saw a dead person, or more – what if you saw a dead person come back to life? When you run to tell your friends, either they are going to think you are just seeing things or that you have lost it, but they aren't going to say "so what?"

Trees are natural. Ghosts and risen from the dead people are not. They are super-natural. Above nature.

But what I want to show you this morning is that, in fact, trees ARE *supernatural*. In fact, I want to show you that all of nature, all of the universe – is *super-natural*. Oh, not in the sense that so many people today worship nature or embrace some other crazy philosophy. But I want to show you that seeing the universe and everything in it *as a creation created by an uncreated Creator*, necessarily causes us to radically “tweak” our thinking – our worldview, you might say.

Nature, you might say, is *natural*. That is to say, in the thinking of most people today, *nature begets nature*. Trees beget trees. Animals birth animals. And somehow, even the physical universe begat itself! This allows people to live their lives in what I call a “meat and potatoes” mindset. They might acknowledge that God exists, but in fact they live as if He did not because they consider this present world, their present life, as all there is. They were like the Corinthians whom Paul rebuked:

1Co 15:32 What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we

die."

You see the very same “now is all there is” philosophy exposed as false in Jesus’ account of the rich fool:

Luk 12:15-21 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (16) And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, (17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' (18) And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Notice carefully what philosophy guided the thinking of this fool. *This present world, this present life and existence, is what life really is and all that it is*. In other words, this man believed that nature was it. That there was nothing beyond it or above it. And therefore the goal of life is to get what

you can, enjoy what you can, be as happy as you can, while you can.

This kind of thinking is sooooo dangerous and sooooo prevalent that YOU have been affected by it far more than you realize.

But the world is NOT “natural.” The world is not self-generating and self-perpetuating. The world is a creation that was created. YOU are a creation and YOU were created, all by a Creator. And therefore – get a firm hold on this – NOTHING in nature is natural. It is ALL super-natural. But we are blinded to it if we are not careful. Let me show you.

Birth ←-----→ Death

There is YOUR life. Those few dashes between the arrows. The Bible reminds us:

Psa 39:5 Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah.

Now, consider how foolish it is to live your life as if this present life and world is all there is. Think:

\*\*Birth – Where were you before you were born? As I have said before, I can look out at you here and I remember

that I came here in 1993, almost 25 years ago. Some of you were here then and even before that. But many of you were not. Numbers of you were not anywhere because you had not been born yet.

Now think....carefully. Here you are, and yet right here in this very place, in this room, many of us were here every Sunday doing what we are doing right now, worshipping the Lord. YOU however were not here. Because you did not yet exist. You had not been born.

And consider the other end of the line. Death. Here WE all are right now in this very place, and in this very place there used to be some people here every Sunday, who are not here now and in fact are not anywhere on this earth now, because they died. THINK! This is amazing. It is SUPER-natural. We make an entrance into time, into history, into this world, and then we make an exit.

So WHERE did we come from? And further, WHERE did these people go who are not here anymore?

Let me illustrate the same thing with another example. You can tune in on YouTube and watch all kinds of history. Let’s say you decide to watch films about the second world war. You see people. Soldiers. You see places.

REAL people. REAL soliders. All doing things even in places that you could go to right now and visit. There you would be, but those people aren't there. And when you watch those films and you see those people back then, YOU weren't there! They were. You weren't.

## PEOPLE COME AND PEOPLE GO

### WHERE DID THEY COME FROM AND WHERE DO THEY GO?

Do you begin to see? THIS present world is NOT all there is, and history proves it! There was a "before" and there is an "after." YOUR present life is not all that there is. YOU were not part of the stock market crash of 1929 if you weren't born until 1970. YOU are not part of 2018 if you died in 2000.

Now, why am I laboring this point? This is why, and this is what brings us back to Matthew 7 –

*One of the chief ways that we are drawn into loving the world and living according to its thinking is to lure us into believing that this present life is our real and only life.*

You have seen these reality shows on TV, right? Real housewives. Yeah,

right. There's nothing real about any of it. Well, let's put it like this:

*The world is one big reality show trying to convince you that you need to imitate it, join it, embrace and love it, because in fact it is what is real. It is your life. So eat, drink, and be merry because this is all there is.*

And so the sobering warnings of Scripture:

1Jn 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

And then our text:

Mat 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

A similar warning is given in Luke's Gospel –

Luk 13:23-24 And someone said to

him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, (24) "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Let's consider a very common example of how the world lures us into thinking "this is your reality." Think of Rick, we will call him. Rick is 16 years old and is a student in high school. Every single day, Rick gets off the bus, walks through the big double front doors of his school building, and immediately he senses he is on display. People are looking. They are looking at:

- How he is dressed
- How his hair is styled – or not
- How he walks
- How he talks
- Who he associates with
- Whether he has tattoos or piercings
- What he says about current events, or about his parents, and just about any other subject

Rick, in other words, is under immense pressure to be *conformed*. To fit himself into a particular mold so that he is shaped in such a way as to be accepted and popular. Rick is being pressured by the world. And in the vast majority of cases, people like Rick do all they can to be conformed to the

world. They become *worldlings*. And in terms of what Matthew puts it, they choose the broad, wide, easy way. The way that ends in death in other words. The way that most everyone else is traveling. And they end in hell.

Worldlings are also what the Bible calls "natural" men or women. Here it is:

1Co 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

The natural man is really the same thing as the man who "lives according to the flesh" -

Rom 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

In fact then, the worldling, the natural man, the man of the flesh *is really not much more than an animal and will become increasingly more like a beast than a human as he continues to embrace the world as his life and reality.*

Listen to Matthew again:

Mat 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow

gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Do you understand? YOU have a choice and in fact YOU will make that choice if you haven't already. Two gates. Two ways. Two doors. When Rick walks through those front doors of his school, he actually is faced with these two doors – the narrow one and the wide one. And he necessarily must choose the one or the other. By default, all human beings will choose the wide way that leads to hell.

Think carefully about the characteristics of the two ways:

<b>Narrow</b>	<b>Wide</b>
Hard	Easy
Few	Many
Life	Destruction

Increasingly today I believe we are seeing more and more people who profess to be Christians, choosing the Wide Way to destruction. They claim to be followers of Christ, yet their values and thinking and pleasures are characteristic of the world. When confronted with Christ's word and commands, they find it distasteful. They actually believe that what is most

important is being accepted now, happy now, fitting in now. In contrast, here is what the Lord requires and what genuine faith chooses:

Heb 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (26) He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

You can have it hard now, and end in life eternal OR you can have it easy now and find yourself in hell eternal. Which choice are you making?

What do you believe? Really? Be honest. What do you believe about this present world and about the fact that here you are in it right now? Is this "reality" your reality? Or do you have the faith that Christ gives His people so that you can see what is not seen? The answer to such questions reveals whether you are on the Narrow or the Wide way.