

Light for Dark Times

You Must be Born Again!

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Two Gates – Two Choices *April 10, 2022*

Sermon Text: Matthew 7:13-14

Scripture Reading: Genesis 6

Deu 30:15-20 “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. (16) If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

(17) But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, (18) I declare to you today, that you shall surely

perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. (19) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.

Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, (20) loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

It is quite likely that the Lord Jesus had this warning and promise in mind when He stated it this way:

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.

Two ways. One brings God's blessing. The other His condemnation and curse. One leads to heaven, the other to hell.

I want us to give serious thought to these two brief verses this morning and pray that the Holy Spirit will transform our minds so that we see these things the way God does – so that we are not deceived. Let's break it down this way:

1. Everyone must make an entrance
2. Everyone must choose one of two gates through which to enter
3. One of these two gates is narrow, the other is wide
4. One way is easy to travel, the other is hard
5. One way leads to life, the other to destruction
6. Few people enter by the narrow gate. Many enter by the wide one.

Everyone Must Make an Entrance

Every human being who ever lived has been required by the Lord to make an entrance. Specifically, we all are instructed by Him as to which way we are to go. It is a given that we WILL make an entrance – the only question is, *through which gate and into what place will we enter.*

When we think of a gate, we probably imagine some kind of small garden gate or perhaps a cattle gate in a pasture. But in the Bible, “gate” usually means an entrance through the walls of some city. Jerusalem, for instance:

Joh 5:2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades.

Or it could be a gate into the temple:

Act 3:2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask

alms of those entering the temple.

The Psalmist speaks figuratively of the gate into the Lord's kingdom:

Psa 118:19-20 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. (20) This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

So everyone WILL make an entrance – and there are ONLY two choices. Gate #1, or Gate #2.

Now, one of these two ways is outwardly more attractive than the other. Jesus said that one is wide and once you get through it, the road you find yourself on is easy. Plus it seems to be the way of choice because it is the gate the majority of people are going through.

The wide gate and the easy road are the most visible. Easy to see and quite impressive in appearance. Surely this is the way. It's a multi-lane freeway as opposed to that

narrow unpaved, winding way you have to squeeze through.

Let's translate this into the things these gates and ways represent.

First of all, *everyone chooses a religion*. Everyone has a theology. Everyone has a god. Even the atheist.

But I believe that Jesus had most specifically in mind here – *confessedly religious people*. The Jews, after all, were the people He was addressing. And the gates He surely had in mind were:

1. The earthly Jerusalem temple with its priesthood, sacrifices, tradition.
2. Christ Himself – who is the Way to the Father.

We have the very same choices set before us today. Consider:

Rev 2:8-11 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. (9) “I know your tribulation and your poverty

(but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (10) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (11) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’

Or...

Rev 3:14-17 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. (15) “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! (16) So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (17) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Laodicea, or Smyrna? Large, wealthy, impressive, popular, free of persecution – or small, hated, poor, attacked by the devil? Which gate do you think most people are going to choose? Which brand of Christianity is going to appeal to the masses?

Surely Rome must be the way into God's kingdom, right? Look at how magnificent its gate is. The Vatican. Cathedrals. Magnificent processions. A Pope who is God's man here on earth. And just look at how many people choose it. Certainly they cannot all be wrong.

But we need not go to Rome to see such wide gates and easy ways. We have it right here in evangelicalism, do we not? Big, magnificent church buildings, hundreds if not thousands of people in them, and a message preached that is *easy*. That does not offend.

Listen to this example:

Pastor D. is the senior pastor of [First Church] with multiple

campuses. He began his pastoral ministry at the age of 19 by leading a Bible study of 30 people. Since then, God has transformed that small group into a church of some 15,000 people.

Today, First Church is one of the largest churches in America, and consistently ranks among the most influential churches in the country.

In 2012, Pastor D launched a nationwide event using the internet to simulcast live HD video to thousands of locations across the country. With an unprecedented 306,000 Americans in live attendance, this ministry ranks among the largest presentations of the gospel in US history.

Crusades have also been held internationally in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. More importantly, some

506,644 people have made professions of faith through these outreaches.

In 2020 Pastor D premiered his first-ever cinematic crusade, viewed by over 2 million people in its opening weekend. 150,000 people made professions of faith in 2020.

Pastor D. is the featured speaker of a nationally syndicated radio program which is broadcast on more than 1,100 radio outlets around the world. He has a on major TV networks like and he has appeared on many other television news programs.

In addition to speaking and assisting other ministries, Pastor D has authored over 70 books.

Now, I want you to put on your biblical thinking caps here – use your transformed mind, in other

words. Hold this all up to the lens of Scripture. In fact, just hold it up to our text this morning:

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.

Noah had a pretty impressive sermon to preach to the world.

Mat 24:37-39 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, (39) and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

1Pe 3:20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in

which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

Are some serious warning lights going off in your thinking right now? ...*the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.* Does this look like Smyrna? Does it look like the Lord Jesus' own experience?

Joh 6:63-67 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. (64) But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) (65) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (66) After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (67) So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?”

This week I heard one of these mega-church evangelical pastors interviewed by a professing

Christian reporter. (The same reporter had just featured Joel Osteen in an earlier interview and praised him and his ministry). She asked Pastor D. this question – “People are very worried right now. What message do you have for us about how to conquer worry?”

The answer he gave was essentially – train yourself to think positively. Worry is a disease that shortens your life. God is greater than your problems.” At the very end he made mention of Christ, rather in passing. But his comments were made in such a way as to offer God’s greatness to anyone who was listening.

Now, here is what is lacking and this is why Pastor D. and his message is so popular with everyone. He only gives the good news. He should have begun, if he were going to answer the question biblically, this way:

“Well, first of all, ask yourself why you are worried and what you are worried about. Perhaps you NEED to be worried. And most probably

you are worried about the wrong things. What are the right things to worry about?

You should be very worried if you are dead in your sins before God. You should be very, very worried that you are not born again through faith in Christ and thereby justified before God. You should be very worried that if you were to die in your sins today, you will end in hell.

Christ is the remedy to worry. Only by Him can we be put right with God.

But, you see, these Broadway preachers don’t say such things because if they did, that would be the last time the Network called them for an interview! And those tens of thousands of people would bail on them.

Our salvation is accomplished by Christ alone, and His burden placed upon us is easy to bear because He makes us new creations who love Him and want to do His will. But the cost is high and for those who refuse it, He will not

have them. These are the things that the Broadway preachers leave out:

Mat 10:34-39 “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35) For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

(37) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39) Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Two Destinations

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.

Going to hell is easy!! The way to heaven is hard!! Most people, most religious people, end up in hell. Few find Christ the Way.

Going to hell is easy. You don't have to do anything. Just drift. Just go with the flow, go with the crowd. Live an easy life. Be popular with most all people.

The way to heaven is hard. Because Christ is that Way and to follow Him means to walk that Way He leads. That is what real faith does.

Rev 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

One final encouraging word for all who are truly in Christ. Here it is:

Mat 16:18 And I tell you, you are

Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The gates of hell are very wide. They are easy to find and easy to pass through. Countless people pass through them every day. *But they will never consume Christ's people. Not a single one the Lord's elect, not one single sheep, will ever pass through the gates of hell and choose Broadway.* They are, by virtue of being born again the violent ones who press into the kingdom through that narrow way, no matter how hard the journey.

Which gate have you chosen? Is the way you are traveling easy, or hard? One thing is certain – each of us is traveling to a destination – death or life, hell or heaven.