

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 4TH-5TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

TWO ROADS (MATT. 7:13-14)

NOTHING NEW HERE

The 2nd half of chapter 7 isn't Jesus giving us new commands, but Him simply reminding us to obey what has already been taught.

- The teachings of the Bible are simple, and Jesus' ministry further simplified the clear instructions of God to mankind. **Our problem is more about application than understanding.**

SO, WE MUST MAKE A CHOICE

Jesus is going to present only two paths: one that leads to life and one that leads to destruction.

- When it comes to our relationship with God there is no 3rd choice. **We either love and submit to Him, or we choose to live life without Him.** There is no in-between.
- **DEUT. 30:19-20 (CSB)**

"CHOOSING LIFE" IS MORE THAN JUST BELIEVING

If we choose to follow Jesus, we should **go beyond just believing in Him to actually doing what He commands us to do.**

- The difference between life and destruction boils down to how we choose to live, either for God or against Him. **We often say we believe, but do we live it?**

WHAT IS THE "NARROW GATE"

The **narrow gate** is the exclusivity of Jesus Christ being the only pathway to God the Father and eternal life. **There is one way.**

- In simple terms: **we must have faith in Jesus, believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and follow the commands set forth in the Word from God.**

WHAT IS THE "WIDE GATE"

The **wide gate** is any pursuit besides Jesus Christ. Before the western civilization the wide gate would be characterized by many manufactured gods, but our civilization emphasizes **the god of self.**

- **When we depend on any form of our righteousness besides God's, we are on a path to destruction.**

EVIDENCE (MATT. 7:15-23)

"BE ON YOUR GUARD AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS"

There have always been people that have taught false religions, but Jesus knew that many would come after Christianity had begun and they would distort the truth.

- Jesus takes heresy very seriously. He calls them "ravaging wolves" in sheep's clothing. **Proper biblical theology is very important to God!**

WOLVES MUST BE REMOVED

Wolves seek to harm the "flock," and they cannot be rationalized with. So, the only way to deal with a wolf, is they must be removed.

- In the context of church, this can be very unpopular. **Though we can work with people's struggles and mistakes, we cannot allow divisive people free reign in the church.**

WE MUST BE LOOKING AT THE FRUIT

Jesus gives us the most practical way to identify wolves; look at the fruit they produce. This works with all people when trying to make righteous judgments.

- **The gifts of discernment and wisdom allow us to see true fruit, and even if people can fake it for a time, the real fruit will manifest itself.**

BAD "TREES" WILL BE DEALT WITH

Jesus alludes to eternal judgment when He says, "Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into a fire."

- Not only will true Christians recognize "bad trees," but **God will deal with people that have distorted the truth for personal gain.** This should strike fear into some actors we call pastors.

FOOLING OTHERS BUT NOT GOD (V22-23)

There are crafty "wolves" out there that may succeed in fooling large amounts of people that they are holy, but when the day comes when we will be held accountable before God, He will have seen through them.

- **Many people will try to use religion as collateral for salvation, but it is only by relationship with Jesus we're saved.**

FOUNDATIONS (MATT. 7:24-29)

"HEARS...AND ACTS ON THEM"

The mark of a true Christian is not only to hear the words of the Bible, but to live them out in obedience. Jesus says that when we live in obedience to the Word, we are building foundation on "the rock."

- **There is a false sense of security in simply saying we "believe." We must also live the truths of the Word.**

TRUE BELIEF SETS US UP TO BE TRULY SECURE

Jesus' analogy of the rain falling and rivers rising is not literal, but about the storms of life. Jesus is telling us that **a relationship with Him doesn't prohibit tough times, but sustains us through them.**

- This life will have turbulence, **so the Christian must remember that this life is temporary.**

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

Jesus didn't leave any ambiguity as to Who He was and His authority. He openly claimed to be "one with the Father," meaning He was both the Son of God and God Himself.

- **The identity of Jesus is at the core of salvation.** We must be clear on Who we believe Jesus to be. **Do we believe in a biblical Jesus?**

"WHO HEARS...AND DOESN'T ACT"

If active listeners build a foundation on a secure rock, then non-active hearers build a shaky foundation on sand.

- Again, turbulence will come, but **if we have not built on a "rock," the rivers that rise and storms that come will demolish the weak things we have invested in.**

"ASTONISHED AT HIS TEACHINGS"

What started as just a talk with His 12 disciples turned into a lesson to a massive crowd. As they heard the simple yet profound teachings of a young man, they were amazed at the wisdom of His words.

- **The simple, practical, and challenging words of God are amazing if approached with humility.**

THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

- The Bible is the book that has changed the world in many ways. It holds **the fundamental principles of God, the plan of salvation, and the practical instruction on how to live.**
- Are we humble, teachable listeners or just spectators showing up to hear something new?

ROCK VS. SAND

- Are we acting on the information we hear during sermons, reading the Bible, and prayer time? **Is believing enough without doing?**
- What have we invested in? How are our ways holding up? Have the world's ways worked? Are they working now? **Will we learn our lesson?**

A TRUE ENCOUNTER WILL CHANGE US

- The crowd saw something different from their religious practices: they had encountered the true power to save and change their lives.
- **Have we had a life changing encounter?** If so, **our actions will speak for us.** If not, what will it take to acknowledge that we need something greater?

Point to the sinking sand of the world—the weakness of our flesh, the uncertainty of the markets, the mortality of us all.

Preach and prize Christ the Rock—knowing that He alone can, and he alone will, weather the storms.