

Weaving the Word

Two Gates, Two Roads

Part 49 – October 25, 2015

Welcome to where we're learning to count the cost to follow the One who paid the price!



On the hill, Jesus is rapidly winding down His training with His newly appointed twelve and the large crowd of disciples (the boys were chosen from), on the hillside around 'em. He began their training by correcting their perspective on the purpose for His coming.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish **the Law** or **the Prophets**; I have not come to **abolish them** [the Law and the Prophets] but to **fulfill them** [the Law and the Prophets].” – Matthew 5:17 NIV

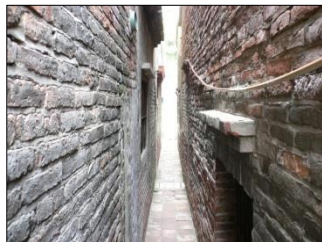


And, He's just explained how **His ambassadors must not be judgmental, stunted, sin-picking, blind-eyed guides; but, must be discerning, maturing, people-helping, clear-eyed healers.**



He now sums it up in a few *very simple* words:

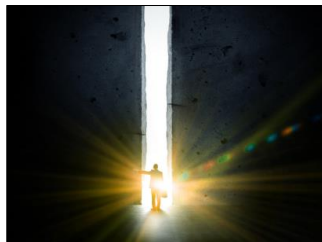
“So in everything, **do to others what you would have them do to you**, [The *Golden Rule*] for this sums up **the Law** and **the Prophets**.” [Which He came to fulfill] – Matthew 7:12 NIV



He's also just finished telling 'em to ask, to seek, and to knock. And, now He says to: “**Enter through the narrow gate.**” – Matthew 7:13a NIV

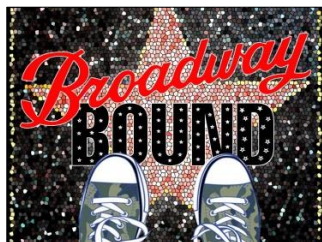
Enter *what*? The way to the truth and life.

The fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

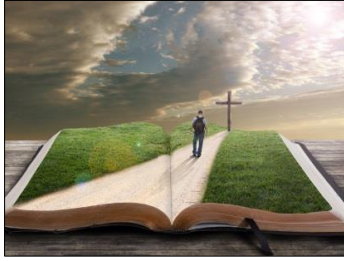


Jesus uses the word for a large gate [pylē], like to a city or palace. And, the word “narrow” [stenos] means both “straight” and “narrow”, So, **the gate is tall but the way is tight.**

For **wide** [wide open] is the gate and **broad** [eurychōros: spacious: roomy] is the road **that leads to destruction**, and many enter through it. But **small** [stenos: straight and narrow] is the gate and **narrow** [thlibō: pressed; squeezed; troubled; afflicted] the road **that leads to life**, and only a few find it.” – Matthew 7:13b-14 NIV



Because only a few seek it – which doesn't mean they won't eventually travel it. **They may be broad way bound, as most are, but the True Way has a way of getting in the way.**



You see, **the Truth you seek is seeking you.**

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. – 2 Peter 3:9b NIV

We don't know the lengths God goes to bring us home; but, we do know the only way He could get His way was to become *The Way*.

The Way is demanding but forgiving.

The Truth is exacting but empowering.

And, the Life doesn't wait for us to seek it ... it seeks us!

You're the lost sheep the Good Shepherd left His flock to find.

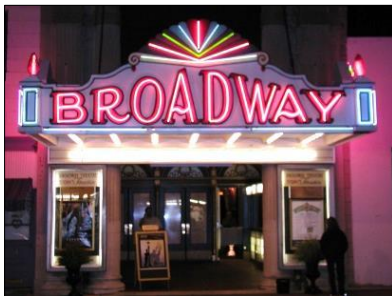
50 days after Jesus' death, Peter declares to the religious Jews:

"God has made this Jesus, whom *you crucified*, both Lord and Christ." [Talk about being on the *wrong path!*] When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" – Acts 2:36-37 NIV

And, to paraphrase Peter, he said: "Switch roads; you can enter through Christ (He even called Himself the Gate!)" And *they did!*

Because they realized that **going to church doesn't mean you're going to Heaven.**

There are a lot of folks whose salvation is self-delusion.



To follow the Way to life, we must allow His Spirit to work within.

Because, **we're squeezed in so our sin can be squeezed out.**

He's not saying only a few will inherit eternal life.

He's talking about the path that *leads us* there. And, *out of the gate*, most prefer the hollow promises of the broad way.

But, the Lord knows something most must come to discover: **the broad way takes a toll.**

It sucks you into its muck, and even as you sink, it makes you pay more and more for less and less. Whereas the narrow path is free and freeing and solid as a Rock.

But, it's not without its dangers: "Watch out for false prophets." – Matthew 7:15a NIV

Those are those who say they love God, but turn against the Truth the moment it fails to fit their self-centered, unjust, agenda. Ezekiel prophesied this about Jerusalem's religious leaders:



Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. – Ezekiel 22:27 NIV

So, Jesus warns His hand-picked apprentices, as well as those around ‘em who *didn't make the cut*:



“They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **By their fruit you will recognize them.** [Remember, we can judge without being judgmental. Big difference between *recognizing* and *condemning*] Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. – Matthew 7:15b-17 NIV



What do you pick from briars? Blackberries. And, a blackberry is very similar to a grape-cluster. The biggest difference being the *size*.

The small gate offers the big reward. Forever! The big gate offers its needles and the smallest reward possible to keep you hooked. For now.



And, what do people pick from *thistles*?

Nothing! It's just a painful weed permitted to go to seed, and to spread, by those who have no intention of tending their garden.



A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” – Matthew 7:18-20 NIV

Who? The wolves dressed as sheep. *It ain't rocket science*: just **check your influencer's fruit!**



The thorny tentacles of the brier creep along the path, on their belly, in the dust, ready to take root, and offer their meager fruit, to gain a stranglehold on your garden.



There's a wolf in sheep's clothing listening to Jesus. *Judas*. And, he'll lead a pack of ferocious officials into the garden at night.

[Zephaniah said of *Jerusalem*] She obeys no one, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord, she does not draw near to her God ... her *rulers* are *evening wolves* ... – Zephaniah 3:2-3a NIV



In the Garden, Jesus warns His boys that they're *sheep* who'll scatter when the Shepherd is struck. Then Judas arrives with the wolves, still pretending to be one of the sheep.

Recognize the fruit before the wolf attacks.

And, beware of the *backsliders*. **Not everyone who starts on the path stays on the path.**

“Not everyone who [in the beginning] says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will [in the end] enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, **did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?**’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” – Matthew 7:21-23 NIV

Ever wonder who these people are? They prophesy in His name, drive out demons by His authority, and perform *many miracles*, and yet they *don't remain faithful?! Who are these people?!*

It's the crowd of disciples standing behind His chosen twelve on the hill above the Sea.

After this the Lord **appointed** [i.e. *called*] seventy-two others and **sent them two by two ahead of him** [on a narrowly defined road] to every town and place **where he was about to go**. [To fulfill His fate; making this quite literally the road that leads to life ... *for us ... death for Him*] He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but **the workers are few**. [Few be those who take this road] Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out **like lambs among wolves**. [They'll be *pressed; squeezed; troubled; and afflicted*] ... **Heal the sick who are there** [They're going to “*perform many miracles*”] and **tell them**, [i.e. “*prophesy in My name*”] ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’” – Luke 10:1-3, 9 NIV

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even **the demons submit to us in your name**.” [Sound familiar?] – Luke 10:17 NIV

But, later, Jesus tells ‘em that they must trust Him completely as the Bread of Life sent by God, to be their Savior and Lord. (John 6:28-71)

[John 6:66] **From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him**. “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” Then Jesus replied, [“*Those guys might be the many I called, but ...*”] **“Have I not chosen you, [“My few”] the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”** [And then, my *favorite* clarification in scripture] **(He meant Judas ...)** [“*We all knew there was something wrong with that guy's fruit!*”] – John 6:64b, 66-71a NIV

Anyone can pose on the path for a period of time – trip down the lane selfishly or superficially or circumstantially. **But, when your feet hit the floor which gate do you take?**

His mercies are new every morning, but His Word remains.

Do you choose the easy way that takes a toll and takes you down?

Or, the firm and narrow that frees your soul and takes you home?

You choose. He empowers.