

Sermon on the Mount
Lesson #21
“Kingdom Responsibilities”
Enter through the narrow gate V
Matthew 7:13-14

Scripture: Matthew 5:20 *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Introduction:

To this day I still don't know the names of the streets in the small town I grew up in. One of the main streets is called Commercial Street I think but I don't know which one it is. If we needed to explain where to go we used bench marks like turn north at Chuck's Drive in or its behind the bank or out on two mile blacktop right past the rail road tracks by the big cedar tree.

With this in mind you might understand the great amount of stress this old country boy felt when I was driving on and expressway through New York City and accidentally got in an exit lane and found my in Manhattan. Of course there was no entrance back onto the expressway at that place so I found myself in a sea of yellow taxi cabs hoping that God would just beam me up...

I was in real trouble for the first time in my life. I was moving to Connecticut to work for General Dynamics and had my car packed with all my clothes and even a few of my person guns which I realized that if I got pulled over they might through me in jail for life.

After a couple of hours I realized that I was getting no-where and pulled into a gas station and asked the man who barely spoke English for directions. I left that place with a little feeling of ease but following his directions lead me past a sign that said welcome to Harlem.

Harlem might make good glob trotters but it didn't look friendly to me at all. I remembered seeing people watching ever car that came by as if they were some kind of human vulture waiting for me to slow down enough to steal my wheels off my car as I drove down the road.

Then just out of the blue I ended up at the entrance to some kind of expressway. Seconds after entering it I found myself driving through some kind of tunnel with water dripping from the ceiling. I had driven through the Holland tunnel and ended up on Long Island I guess and had to turn around and pay tolls again to get back to Harlem.

I turned my head to heaven and just said ... “help” when it came to me. If I found where the sun was I would know North, South, East and West and I could simply head in one direction till I came out of the city.

So by letting the sun set my direction I escaped New York City and haven't been back since and have absolutely no plans to ever return.

Transitional Statement:

Church, lost is a real potential for us, but the Son of God gives us direction.

Read:

Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter through the narrow gate...”

I. First of all, Jesus tells His disciples to enter through the narrow gate.

- A. My first thought here is....enter where or what?
 - 1. There are some clues here to answering that question.
 - a. First the word “*enter*” is an imperative Greek verb.... i.e. a command
 - b. So if it is commanded it is something that they have a choice about, so that seems to rule out heaven as the where or what, because entrance for us there is God’s choice.
 - c. Another clue comes from the Greek verb tense which is Aorist, which points to one time actions as opposed to continual action.
 - 1) So we might think of our initial entrance into relationship with God at baptism, ...but these disciples were already in relationship with God through Jesus.
 - 2) So what other one time action could possible be in view here?
 - 2. The greatest clue for me is the whole context of the Sermon on the Mount which seems to direct us to a proper approach to God, combined with the connection to life in this passage makes me think that here Jesus is pointing to a solid choice to approach God in His way.

II. Specifically, Jesus points to an exact gate that His disciples were to use to approach God.

- A. This example of entering something through a gate really made a connection with those disciples in that day because cities were fortified with great walls and they all had gates that were shut at night for protection. They went in and out of those gates almost daily.
 - 1. Perhaps from this mountain top, where Jesus had taken these disciples and was talking to them, they could see the walls and gates of some city.
 - 2. Or maybe Jesus just called it from every day experience.
- B. But the idea is that these cities had many different gates and for the most part it was a matter of choice or convince which gate to use.
 - 1. But in these passages Jesus points out that there is only one gate to godly righteousness.

II. So to explain this Jesus goes on to say that you don't want to end up at the wrong gate.

He says:

"... for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it."

- A. Getting on the wrong road will lead you where you don't want to go.
 - 1. If you have ever got lost driving down the road you surely know how stressful that can be.
 - a. Realizing your lost and don't know where you are, and in a matter of minutes you begin to feel all alone in the world and even scared.
 - 2. But maybe after a while you find a road where lots of traffic is flowing in the same direction and you turn onto that road and join the crowd and feel a sense of relief that if all these folks are heading in that direction it must be ok.
 - 3. So you turn onto that road only to figure out when you pass your first sign that your headed in the wrong direction.
 - a. Can you imagine being lost and as you drive along you see a great city and immediately you begin to think that this is great and you have at least found someplace to be, but as you enter the city the sign says:
Welcome to Destruction
 - 1) Population.....so many the sign can't hold the numbers.
 - a) This could be a clue that your on the wrong road...right?
- B. You know basically Jesus is saying that the four lane roads of this life lead to Hell.
 - 1. You follow the crowd and you'll end up with the crowd.
 - a. It's true you'll have lots of company
 - b. You'll fit in the crowd
 - 2. But it is sad to realize that somehow we think something is wrong when we are going the opposite way of the crowd.
 - a. But church, listen to Jesus here. The crowd as a whole will lead you right off a cliff.
- C. If you follow the crowd you'll end up with a permanent residence in the city of destruction.
 - 1. Where there will be eternal torment
 - 2. Weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - 3. Shut out of the presence of God for eternity

III. In contrast Jesus points to the gate of God's intention.

He goes on to say:

"For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

A. There is no mistaken where this way or road will take you

1. To the City of Life

a. Where there is great joy in the presence of God.

1) There we will be gathered with the whole of God's eternal people

2) Where there is no pain

a) The miseries of this life will end.

b) Tears will dry up

3) Our pilgrimage will be ended

a) And eternal roots can be laid.

4) And the celebration of God's eternal reward among the saints of all ages will fill our hearts as we sing praises to our king.

a. In view of this city....the Apostle Paul said to live is Christ and die is gain...Phil 1:21

2. But it's a narrow road

a. Narrow like many gravel roads

1) You know why gravel roads are gravel? There not traveled as much and not as important enough by world standards to pave.

b. There's no passing lanes needed on this road

b. Sometimes this road can feel lonely

c. There are not convenience stores along the way

1) And this road has many struggles and trials.

2) Many that look down it just shake their heads and walk away.

B. But Jesus explains that this narrow way / road leads to the only acceptable Gate of the City of Life.

1. Here the gate is both small and narrow

- a) The idea is one of restriction
- b) When I was little my dad worked at McDonald Douglas building fighter planes and he wore a badge on his shirt with his picture on it.

- 1) That was about the coolest thing in the world

- 2) When we dropped dad off for work we couldn't walk with him to his building because he had to go through a gate and show his badge to get in....I must tell you that this made me want to go in more than ever...but I couldn't because I didn't have the right credentials to get through that old gate.

- 3) When we picked him up it was the same ...we had to wait at the gate, because we couldn't get in.

2. The City of Life is a restricted entrance also.

- a) Straight seems to carry the idea of shape also.

- b) You have to be the right shape to fit through the gate.

- 1) If the gate is triangular shaped and your round....it's not going to work.

3. First century cities had gate Porters.....people assigned to stand at the gate and control who entered in.

- a) Jesus is the porter to the City of Life.

- b) All must go past Him John 14:6

C. Few find it.

1. Harsh words for a world that promotes toleration instead of truth.

2. The world view seems to be that lots of folks will make it and we are all not that far off.

3. But Jesus says...No!....Only a few will find it.

- a) The city of Sodom and Gomorrah had many people but only four were found worthy

- b) The world had many people in the days of Noah, but only eight were found worthy....this pattern merely stands to further substantiate what Christ is saying here

Conclusion:

Well, I certainly don't want to end up in New York City again that's for sure, and even more than that I don't want to end up in the City of Destruction.

God has given us a definite road map to the city of Life...His Word.

Maybe the question today is where have you been looking for direction? Are you driving along with the crowd? Or finding your way through life by what feels right? What road map is guiding your way?