

Message of Choices

As we near the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount we see a series of choices. Essentially all preaching provides us with the choice of hearing and doing or simply hearing and not doing. Good sermons instruct, transform our thinking, adjust our feelings, challenge us into a godly direction, challenging us to make a decision.

Sinclair Ferguson writes,

“This may be one of the reasons Jesus regularly spent extended periods of time preaching to people. This is one of the neglected lessons of the miracles of his feeding the multitudes. If these crowds had been with him long enough to need to be fed, he must have given them hours of teaching (Mk. 8:2). He was not merely playing on their wills, calling them to decision. He was patiently expounding to them the truth of God, believing that the good seed of the word has its own power when planted in fertile hearts. The Sermon on the mount illustrates this principle. Of course, everywhere we look in it we find moral challenge. But we also find instruction, illumination, ‘teaching, rebuking, correcting [or healing], and training in righteousness,’ as Paul puts it (2Tim. 3:16).”¹

Outline of Verses 13- 27:

- I. The Need for Decision (:13-14),
- II. The Warning of Wolves in Sheep's Clothing (:15-20),
- III. The Final Judgment (:21-23),
- IV. A Call for Action (24-27),

“¹³Enter through the narrow gate,
 for the gate is wide
 and the way is broad
 that leads to **destruction**,
 and there are many who enter through it.

¹⁴For the gate is small
 and the way is narrow
 that leads to **life**,
 and there are few who find it.” (Matt. 7:13-14).

¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), pp. 161-162.

I. A Need for Decision

“Enter”

it’s time to decide to become a citizen of heaven, of God’s Kingdom and inherit eternal life, or continue to be a citizen of this world and receive damnation.

Which gate will you enter? Which way will you go?

MacArthur writes,

“In perfect harmony with His absolute sovereignty, God has always allowed men to choose Him or not, and He has always pleaded with them to decide for Him or face the consequences of a choice against Him.”²

Series of Contrasts:

- Two Gates
 - Narrow Gate
 - Wide Gate
- Two ways
 - Narrow way
 - Broad way
- Two ends
 - Life
 - Destruction

What does this mean to Jesus’ hearers?

There is a broad way of life that leads to a broad gate that in turn leads to destruction. All who are outside of Christ are taking this pathway.

There is a narrow way that brings us to a narrow gate, which is Jesus Christ and leads to eternal life. Jesus instructs us to enter through the narrow gate.

“¹³Enter through the narrow gate...”

This is followed by a warning:

for the gate is wide
and the way is broad
that leads to **destruction**,

Apparently it is a popular way,
and there are many who enter through it.

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7*, (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1985), p. 450.

Those on the path of life are few by comparison.

At the heart of the sermon's warning lies this truth:
Salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ only.

What is the gate? What is the way that leads to life?
The answer is: The Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus said,
"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved"
(John 10:9).

He said,
"I am the way, and the truth, and the life;
no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

Jesus told the Galileans,
¹⁴For the gate is small
and the way is narrow
that leads to **life**,
and there are few who find it."

Our culture has gravitated towards the idea that there are no absolutes;

"But Christianity is unique in claiming to have absolute truth, since it presents Jesus Christ as the sole way to God.... If Jesus is right, as He is, then there are no other ways to God for men to follow"³

What other ways are men wanting to come to God?

1. Nature

"The idea that God can be found in nature is an illusion and leads to idolatry"

Os Guinness writes,

"Idolatry is huge in the Bible, dominant in our personal lives,
and irrelevant in our mistaken estimations."

³ James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount, an Exposition*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 289.

Boice writes,

“A man is deluding himself if he thinks that he is worshiping God in nature ...You are either not worshiping at all or you are worshiping nature, and nature is not God. That belief is pantheism.”⁴

God condemns men for failing to recognize God in nature,

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all men, for “for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

Whatever dethrones God becomes an idol. Anything we put in front of Him or in His place is an idol.

2. Religion

Many men think they are insuring their place in heaven by pious thoughts or religion. They assure themselves that by mere performance of certain religious duties, or religious ceremonies, even if they are Christian.

“God has written a *No* over all human efforts to be religious in order that He might write a *Yes* over all who abandon religion and turn to Him in Christ. Religion is the seeking after a god in your own image.

Christianity is God’s seeking you and moving to redeem you by the death of His Son, the Lord Jesus.”

3. Morality

God cannot be found through morality. In trying to live up to God’s standard or merely living up to our own values, we will always come up short. The reason, people are sinners. Because men are sinners they cannot be saved by good works of any kind. Paul describes the pagan man, the moral man, the religious man, and concludes with a word of condemnation against all human goodness. He shows that no one can come to the Father by good works and morality.

“There is **none** righteous, not even one;

There is **none** who understands, there is **none** who seeks after God;
All have turned aside, **together** they have become useless;

There is **none** who does good, there is not even one

For **all have sinned** and come short of the glory of God”

⁴ Boice, p. 289.

(Rom. 3:10-12, 23).

The most tangible of all doctrines of the faith is Total Depravity.

John Stott writes in his book, *Basic Christianity*,

“In the nineteenth century a liberal optimism flourished. It was then widely believed that human nature was fundamentally good, that evil was largely caused ignorance and bad housing, and the education and social reform would enable men to live together in happiness and goodwill. But this illusion has been shattered by the hard facts of history. Educational opportunities have spread rapidly in the western world, and may welfare states have been created. Yet the atrocities which accompanied both world wars, the subsequent international conflicts, the continuance of political oppression and racial discrimination, and the general increase in violence and crime have forced thoughtful people to acknowledge the existence in every man of a hard core of selfishness.”⁵

Theologian D. A. Carson says,

“Consumed by our own self-focus, we desire to dominate or manipulate others: here is the beginning of fences, of rape, of greed, of malice, of nurtured bitterness, of war.”⁶

Paul wrote that by the works of the Law that no flesh could be justified, which in essence means, no one can be saved by their morality.

In Ephesians he wrote,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and **that not of yourselves**, it is the gift of God; **not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast. For **we are His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10).

- We do not save ourselves by our works.
- We are his workmanship.
- We saved to do good works that He has prepared for us.

Our sin nature prevents us from living morally right and earning our salvation by good works or morality. Instead our hope is found in Jesus Christ. He is the narrow gate, the narrow pathway that leads to life.

⁵ John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p. 62.

⁶ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 46.

Dr. Boice writes,

“The solution is that God provided Jesus Christ as a substitute for us, that He died, not for His own sin (because He did not have any), but for your sin and mine. God will not punish the same sin twice. Consequently, if you will believe that Jesus died for you, if you will acknowledge Him as your substitute, then God will remove your sin forever, and it will be correct to say that you have passed over the narrow way through the narrow gate into salvation.”⁷

Three areas are covered by Jesus this section on the narrow path and gate that lead to eternal life:

1. **False Teachers:** Warning of Ravenous Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing (:15-20)
They teach a different way of salvation than Christ, creating bondage. Their teachings are satanically inspired, scripture twisting, and will distract people from the purity and simplicity of devotion to Christ.

2. **The Final Judgment** – “On that day...” (7:21-23),
Jesus Himself will ultimately be our Judge. The judgment which will determine each man’s eternal destiny will be based on their relationship with Christ, and it was demonstrated in their lives.
Jesus’ words,

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”

3. **A Call for Action** - Hearing and doing. *Wise and Foolish Builders* (7:24-27)

If someone hears Jesus’ words and decides to place their faith in Him, their foundation will be solid and unshakeable and stand against any storm. But those who merely hear and decide to do nothing in response to Jesus’ words, will be like a foolish builder who built a house without a foundation.

Each of these final parts to Jesus’ Sermon reflect whether someone knows Christ personally, or due to unbelief. Trusting in their own works, religion, or morality will result in an eternal destruction, instead of Life.

You might say, “*I believe that all these things are true.*”

But are they true for you personally. Has Jesus become your Savior?

⁷ Boice, p. 290.

John Stott, minister of All Souls Church in London, writes,

“I remember how puzzled, even indignant, I was when it was first suggested to me that I needed to appropriate Christ and His salvation for myself. Thank God, I came to see that, though an acknowledgment that I need a Savior was good, and a belief that Christ was the Savior of the world was better, best of all was a personal acceptance of Him as my Savior.”⁸

⁸ Stott, pp. 122, 123.