

The Road Less Traveled

Matthew 7:13-14

Life is often filled with choices and decisions. Many of us have major decisions to make in life. Sometimes those decisions are somewhat overwhelming. I think about people that are faced with situations in life that call for a lot of wisdom, a lot of prayer, a lot of deep meditation. I want to suggest to you today that as we think about living life and trying to live a life to the glory of God, that we have to understand that there are really two roads that a person could follow in this life.

There is a road that will ultimately lead to eternal security and satisfaction. There's another road that leads only to destruction. Jesus was, as has often been said, so many times. He was the master teacher. I don't know if anybody that had the ability to communicate like the Lord did. There was something about Jesus, his character, his nature, something about his message that resonated.

People were drawn to him. You remember in Matthew chapter seven, the Bible tells us at the conclusion of what's often called the sermon on the Mount, the people on that occasion, they were astonished at his teaching. The reason was because he taught them as one having authority and not as one of the scribes. In John the seventh chapter, in verse 46, it is said of Jesus, no man ever spoke like this man.

The apostles had the opportunity to spend about three, three and a half years in the presence of Jesus. Now try to imagine if you can, you have the opportunity to literally walk in the footsteps of Jesus, to hear his message over and over again, to have the opportunity to contemplate that message, to meditate upon it, and then firsthand the miracles that he performed.

You're you're on the front row. You're seeing this happening before your very eyes. What conclusions would you have drawn in the sixth chapter of the book of John? Jesus identifies himself as that living bread that came down from heaven, the bread of life. And you remember, John tells us by way of commentary that there were many people on that occasion that responded by saying, this is a hard saying.

This is a difficult saying. Who can accept it? And so then John says, by way of commentary in verse 66, from that time, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. And then Jesus turned to the 12 in a very poignant, profound way, asked this question Will you also go away? Peter spoke up, didn't he?

And you remember Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? For you have the words of eternal life. Now think about that for a minute. Peter's been spending time with the Lord, as had the apostles as a whole. They've been in the presence of Jesus and they have come to conclude the profound thought that he had the words of life eternal.

And Peter said, we've come to believe and to know that you are the Christ, the son of the living God. What's a powerful statement, isn't it? So as we think about Jesus trying to decide what road will travel on life or in life in Matthew chapter seven, as Jesus comes to the close of this great sermon on the Mount, he's been talking about divine truths that were to be internalized in the lives of those who belong to him, those of those who would call themselves his disciples.

But they were to be internalized and also demonstrated on a daily basis. So in Matthew

chapter seven, Jesus really in a very, in a very profound way, said, you need to make some decisions back in verse 24 of chapter six. Jesus had already said no man can serve two masters. So in verse 13, Jesus would say, enter in at the narrow gate, for what is the gate?

Broad is the way that leads to destruction. And many are there who enter, and there and but narrow is the gate. Difficult is the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it. So what about you? When it comes to the two roads of life. What road are you traveling? In essence, we might sum this lesson up in these words.

The road less traveled. The road that is often less taken. Now what Jesus is doing is drawing some contrast here. You have two gates, two paths or two roads and two eternal destinies. We might say two choices. So what road would you be traveling at this point in time in your life here on planet Earth? The Bible speaks of us as pilgrims or sojourners.

And the idea is that we're just passing through this land. We're not here forever. Now, I know there are folks in the world today. They act like they're going to be here forever. In some cases, they've literally hooked their wagon to the world and everything that everything is all about the world. That's where all their eggs are in one basket.

Well, what Jesus is saying is we've got to make some choices in life. Now we can either lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven, or we can lay up treasures for ourselves on earth. Again, the choice is ours. Now Jesus said, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The Lord was trying to emphasize the importance of thinking from a spiritual vantage point.

How many people in our world today are more concerned about the secular rather than the spiritual? Didn't Jesus say in Matthew six, verse 33, but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. The word first there means before anything else. So what Jesus is saying is that when it comes to the kingdom and the king of that kingdom, well, that takes priority.

That takes precedence over all things. As Paul would say in Colossians 1:18, that in all things he might have the preeminence. In Colossians chapter three, Paul said, if you've been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Now listen to in verse two. Set your mind. Set your affection on things above and not on things which are upon this earth.

In Philippians chapter three, in verse 19, Paul speaks of those who are minding earthly things. It's all about the here and now. In contrast to those who recognized their citizenship, their commonwealth is in heaven. Now, those who were on the narrow road, that difficult road often fraught with difficulties and trials, persecutions. Those who were on that road. The assurance is that that life will end in a good way, because eternal life will be theirs.

But those who are traveling that broad road, well, they're headed for destruction. Let me just call your attention to some things that maybe we ought to consider in light of our theme, the road less traveled, the road less taken in life. And again, we ask the question, what road are you traveling in life today? I know that there are a lot of people that have difficulty comprehending the fact that Jesus said, only a few will travel this road.

So you mean to tell me that the vast majority of people who've ever lived are going to be lost? I mean, is that what you're saying? Well, has God ever saved but few in light of the many? Go back and look at Genesis chapter six for a minute. You remember the Bible says that every imagination of the thought of man's heart was only evil.

Continually. And God said, I'm going to destroy man whom I've created, both man and beast. The Bible says that the earth was filled with violence, and yet there was a fellow by the name of Noah. Noah was a man of God. Matter of fact, Moses said, talking about Noah. But Noah enjoyed God's grace. But he was a man that had been blessed by the grace of Almighty God.

But he said that not only did Noah. Not only did he find favor or grace in the eyes of the Lord, but he was a just man, perfect or blameless in his generation. And the Bible says that Noah walked with God. And so in verse 14, God said to no one the long ago, Noah, I want you to build an ark of gopher wood, setting forth the dimensions of that ark 450ft long, 75ft wide, 45ft high.

There were to be three decks in the ark. One window, one door. And the Bible says in Genesis six, verse 22, thus did Noah, according to the all that God commanded him, so did he. I don't know how many people were living on Earth on planet Earth when no one his family entered the Ark. But I know this.

Peter speaks of the longsuffering of God waiting in the days of Noah. Now listen to him. Where in few that is, eight souls were saved by water. What are you saying, Peter? That out of the vast numbers of humanity living in that day and time, that only eight were saved? That's exactly right. Only eight. You know God's interested in everybody.

The Bible clearly says that God would have all men to be saved. Come to the knowledge of the truth. Furthermore, Jesus said, For God so loved the world that encompasses everybody. God loves you. God loves you more than you can ever begin to comprehend. But God demonstrated his love for you. How to do that? By sending Jesus to die on Calvary and hope, hopefully and prayerfully.

When you began reading and sifting the scriptures and you read about the love of God and the love of Jesus, his willingness to go to Calvary that will resonate in your heart, and you'll make the decision that you want to travel, that narrow pathway. Come what may. Even though that pathway may be one of difficulties and trials and tribulations and persecutions, you're on board.

You're willing to travel that road. Now, again, we talked about contrast the few versus the many. When we talk about that wide gate Broadway. You remember what Jesus said. Many are there that follow that road. A lot of folks on that road. It is a road that is relatively easy. Does it require effort? As is the case with the narrow road, the difficult way?

No, this is a road where there's really no resistance, no requirements. You, just as we often say, do your own thing. Do what you want to do. Live how you want to live. Live it out to the fullest. Well, that's how a lot of people are living. But to understand that at some point in time, this life's going to come to an end.

It's going to come to a crashing halt. And just like children get on a merry go round. And when the when the ride comes to an end. They've got to get off at some point in time. Your life here is going to come to a crashing halt. Whether you like it or not. You're going to have to get off life here and enter into eternity.

So what are you traveling? Are you on the road that's less traveled, or are you on the road? That broad road that ultimately leads to destruction? Jesus is trying to get people to think, and Jesus is saying, look, this one road. Oh, it's an easy road. There are no requirements, no restraints. Again, you just do your own thing.

You do what you want to do. Isn't that what the devil says? I mean, doesn't the devil say you live your life how you want to live it? You can be your own God. You can be the master of your own faith. Well, that's not what the Bible teaches. No, the Bible teaches that we're to live our lives to the glory of God.

So what would it take for me? What would it take for me to walk the narrow road, that narrow path? Well, number one, I've got to understand the following. This road, this path. In life, it's going to require submission. It's going to involve my absolute submission to the will of God. Now, if you drop down, look at Matthew chapter seven.

You remember in verse 21 the Lord said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have I not prophesied in your name, in your name cast out demons in your name done many mighty works.

And Jesus said, then will I say to them, or profess to them, depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you. Now wait a minute. Are you telling me that religious people will be lost? Are you trying to say that there are folks out here that are laboring? They're serving. They're sacrificing. They're putting it all on the line, so to speak, and they're going to be lost.

Well, don't take my word for it. Listen again to what Jesus said. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. You know what he's saying? There. The Lord is saying that our entrance into the kingdom of heaven is predicated on our willingness to obey the Lord.

What was it Jesus said? Luke six, verse 46. Jesus asked the question, why do you call me Lord? Lord, listen to him, and do not the things which I say? Are there people in our world today? They're honest, genuine, based upon what we see, based upon what they say. We would have every but we would have every reason to believe.

They believe the teaching of the Bible, that they want to follow the teaching of the Bible. But there's a problem. Well, what's the problem? They have not yet submitted to the teaching of the Lord. Well, what do I mean by that? Then Jesus say, I want to on one occasion, all authority. All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

And didn't God the Father say of the son? This is my beloved son, in whom I'm well pleased. Here you have found in Matthew 17, verse five. And was it not the apostle Paul who said, whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father through him?

What does it mean to do something in the name of the Lord Jesus? It means to do it by his authority. So what I'm saying is that I'm willing to subjugate my life to the teaching of the Lord. Well, are there not people out here in the world today that say, you know, I hear what you're saying, and I know that you guys have said from time to time that you've got to be baptized to go to heaven.

You ever heard that you ever made that statement? Are there people in the world today that will tell you right up front that baptism is not essential to salvation? Well, there are a lot of people like that. Matter of fact, I can hear on a regular basis individuals on the radio, on television. And here's what they'll tell you.

If you want to become a Christian, here's what you need to do. Accept the Lord Jesus into your heart. Recite the sinner's prayer and boom! You're a child of God. Is that what the

Bible teaches? Know what Jesus said? Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven.

Are there sincere, honest people in their heart of hearts? They believe they're a child of God, but they haven't obeyed the will of the father. Yes. Are they going to be saved or lost? Listen to what Jesus said. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. The Lord Jesus placed believe and baptism before salvation. Now somebody says, I don't believe it.

Well, Jesus said, he that believeth not should be condemned. Mark 1616 if you don't have faith in the Lord and his teaching, you're lost. It doesn't matter if you've been baptized, if you don't have faith in the Lord and you're baptized, then you just got wet. You just took a bath. No, we're talking about believer baptism. Now, I know that there are folks in the world today.

They'll tell you that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you're saved. And then that's followed by baptism. That's not what Jesus said. No, Jesus said, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. One. Two. Three. It's just that easy. Pentecost day when those folks heard the gospel for the very first time in all of its fullness.

You remember. You remember what Peter said to those who had been convicted when they wanted to know men and brethren, what shall we do? What was it Peter said? Did Peter say, everybody bow your head except the Lord Jesus into your heart, and then repeat after me these words and say this prayer. Is that what he said? Now Peter said, repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

Well, what does it mean to do something in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Again, it means to do it by authority. You mean there? There are folks that are on the broad road leading to destruction. The vast multitude of people in the world today. Religious, yes, but lost. Why are they lost? Because they haven't obeyed the gospel.

In first Peter chapter one, verse 22, Peter said, seeing you obey the truth through the spirit. And the idea is that we have taken the truth. Remember what Jesus said. You should know the truth. The truth shall make you free. Listen, the devil wants you to live in darkness. He doesn't want you to believe the teaching of Jesus.

He wants you to question whether or not the Lord meant what he said. And in Mark 1616, the devil wants you to think that you're saved without having been, without having been baptized into Christ. But that's not what inspiration says. The Son of God said, you got to believe. You got to be baptized, and then you're saved. Peter said, you need to repent.

You need to be baptized. And then you enjoy the forgiveness, the remission of your sins. Now the Lord Jesus is saying, if you're going to be on this narrow, narrow road, number one, you're going to be willing to submit your life to the teaching of the Lord God. That is, you're going to alter your life to fit what the Bible teaches.

Listen to John revelation chapter 22 and verse 14. Blessed are. Blessed are those that keep his commandments. Do his commandments. But they may have right to the tree of life and enter through the gates into the city. Number one, submission is a mandate. Number two, we've got to be willing to make sacrifices in life. Now, in Matthew 721 and following, Jesus talks about those who made sacrifices.

The problem was that they weren't willing to sacrifice. The problem was that they weren't willing to use their time and talent, but rather the problem was that they weren't willing to make the necessary sacrifices that were needed to become one of his children to get on

that narrow, narrow, narrow road. How many people do you think, in the world today are held back from obeying the gospel because of friends, family members and the world?

You remember in Matthew chapter ten when Jesus said, do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. Jesus said, I came to set a man at variance with his father, a daughter against her mother, daughter in law against mother in law. He said a man's foes shall be those of his own household.

He who loves father, mother more than me, not worthy of me. He loves son or daughter more than me. Not worthy of me. Well, what's Jesus saying? You've got to be willing to make some sacrifices. Now, understand the bond that we have with our family members. That is a very strong and tightknit bond. And I've known people that based upon the testimony of Scripture.

They believe what the Bible says. They have just they have decided that they're going to obey the gospel and in so doing, been ostracized from friends and family members. Is that what Jesus is talking about? You mean to tell me I've got to be willing to sacrifice sometimes even the closest of relationships here on planet Earth to go to heaven?

Yes. That's what I'm saying. It's what Jesus said. Now, let me tell you very quickly a situation that I remember going back years and years ago. There was a very sweet lady that I knew in the Mid-South area. She had been married to a member of the church. She lived with her sister in law that had been, by all accounts, an old maid ever married.

They lived together. This lady was a member of a prominent denomination. Matter of fact, she played the organ and this denomination. Every Sunday she went through a series of meetings with a friend of mine. At the conclusion of the meeting, when it was time to make a decision about obeying the gospel, here's what she said. She said, I made a deathbed promise to my mama that I would never go in the church of Christ.

What Jesus say? He who loves Father and Mother more than me, not worthy of me. I believe if that if that lady's mama could have said something to her, she would have said, you obey the gospel. You do what the Bible says to do. So, number one, we got to be submissive. Number two, we've got to be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to serve the Lord.

In Matthew 1624, Jesus said, listen to him. You said, if any man will come, come after me. Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. What does that mean? It means, number one, I've got to be willing to die myself. Now, we live in a self-absorbed, selfish world, in many cases in the lives of many people.

It's all about me, myself, and I. But that's not what Jesus said. He said, you and I have to be willing to deny self. But then he's not finished there. Then he said, we're to take up our cross and follow him. What does it mean to take up the cross? Well, a cross in the first century signified death.

So what Jesus is saying is, number one, you've got to be willing to deny yourself. But number two, you've got to be willing to die to self. Paul said, it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. Would that be you? So, number one, we've got to be willing to submit our lives to the Lord. We've got to be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary for the Lord.

And those sacrifices can sometimes come at a great cost. Not just being ostracized by friends and family, but even being persecuted for righteousness sake. Jesus, in a very forthright way, said, blessed are those that are persecuted for righteousness sake. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Paul would say in Second Timothy chapter three at verse 12, all

who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Just a part of the package. But then there's a third thought. That is, if I want to get on that narrow road and remain on that road, I've got to be willing to serve the Lord. Back in Matthew chapter five, Jesus talking to the disciples of his day and those who might potentially become a disciple. You remember Jesus said, you're the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world. He said, you let your light so shine before men, that they might see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven. To understand that we voluntarily serve the Lord. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the saints in Rome, he said, God be thanked, that though you were the servants of sin, you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered to you, and being set free from sin.

He said, you become the slaves, the servants of righteousness. You see, we've been saved to serve the Lord, and we serve him until we come to the end of this life. As Paul would say in Titus chapter two, verse 14, we are to be zealous of good works. In chapter three, verse one, Paul would tell Titus, I want you to be ready unto every good work.

So again we come back. We circle back to our question what road are you traveling? In this life? Remember Joshua in the long ago? He said, choose you this day whom you'll serve. But he said, as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord. My prayer is that you will obey the gospel. Be baptized into Christ.

You serve the Lord. You live a faithful, steadfast life in Christ Jesus. God bless you.

Well. Pretty good. We got two done. That's great. Thank you.