

Sermon on the Mount Part XXXIX - Narrow and Wide Gates

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[0 : 00] It's taken from Revelation chapter 14 and verse 2, and it says, And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harp.

This is a poem that Marie's late husband, Dave Weinbrenner, wrote. I knew he was quite a musician, and he was our pianist for several years.

I went to be with the Lord, but I didn't know that he was much of a poet. Listen to this. From Revelation 14.2, Amusing thoughts I share with you.

Harpers harping on their harps, Sometimes in flats, sometimes in sharps. Fiddlers fiddle on their fiddles, Which brings to mind a couple riddles.

[1 : 19] Do fluters flute upon their flutes? Or are their sounds, in fact, just toots? Do drummers drum upon a drum, Or simply hit on beats that come?

Trumpeters trump to reach those highs, Or do they blow to improvise? Musical questions do abound, Concerning just what makes a sound.

Forgetting doubts these queries bring, Just let musicians do their thing. So, fluters, you come back and do your thing.

And we will enjoy it. The ninth session together in the Sermon on the Mount.

And we are closing in on the end of it. I know some of you thought it would never come, But it will be upon us. Only a few verses left.

[2 : 22] And our scripture reading for today will be taken from Matthew chapter 7. Just a couple of verses. Would you follow along as I read verse 13 and 14.

Matthew chapter 7. Our Lord is speaking and he says, Enter by the narrow gate. So, today's session has to do, Again, With contrasts.

The entire context is about contrast. In fact, The whole Sermon on the Mount is about contrasts.

And the contrast that exists is between the teaching Of the then current religious establishment Of the scribes and Pharisees With that of what Christ taught.

He repeatedly used the phrase As he goes through this Sermon on the Mount, You have heard, You have heard, You have heard. From whom did they hear that? They heard it from various Ecclesiastical teachers, Scribes, Pharisees, So-called experts of their day.

As they attempted to explain to the people Or to put in writing What they thought the law of Moses meant. How it was to be interpreted. But in so many instances, They had it all wrong.

[4 : 09] And we talked about that last week And gave you some examples. Our Lord countered their teaching with, But I say unto you. And that, Even though it doesn't come across As so obvious to us, It was explosive to them.

Because what it meant Was that Christ himself, In his own person, Was claiming to be The authority.

Not an authority, But the authority. And if you look at the last couple of verses Of chapter 7, That explains what's going on And what I just said.

The result was, That is, After Christ delivered the content Of 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew, The result was That when Jesus had finished These words, The multitudes Were amazed At his teaching.

And the reason they were, Was he was teaching them As one Having authority And not as their scribes. So the scribes were limited To quoting others Who were recognized As authorities.

[5 : 23] But Christ took that authority Unto himself. They'd never experienced that before. And his, But I say unto you, Would automatically elicit A response like, Well, who are you?

What makes you so special That we should pay attention To what you have to say? And that's the thrust Of the whole thing, of course, As to whether or not Jesus was Who he claimed to be.

So this contrast Is not only set forth here, But actually it is All the way through As Christ is contrasting The interpretation Of the law of Moses As it was given By the religious establishment With what the law Really meant.

They were always Interpreting it over here In light of The letter of the law. That's what led them Into all of the nitpicking And all of the detail And all of the making The major issue The minor issue And vice versa.

Christ cut through All of that And reduced the law To its simple Straightforward meaning Which is precisely What was intended.

[6 : 32] You know, The Bible Is an intelligible book. It was given With the intent Of being understood. It was never given With the intent Of confusing people.

Of puzzling people. Of not being understood. The message of God Is rather straightforward. When you take it At face value. That's when it makes The most sense.

And of course The Bible is replete With a great deal Of figurative language That was never intended To be taken literally. But in the main You approach it From a literal standpoint.

And of course There are figurative expressions Poetic expressions That are used Throughout scripture. Just as we have Our own idioms. There were oriental idioms That they used And they must be understood In that light.

But in the main The Bible is intended To be taken At face value. It means what it says And it says what it means. It is not intended To be very complicated. This does not deny That there are Some very complex things In the Bible.

[7 : 38] Nobody I know Certainly not myself Can claim to have A handle on all That the Bible teaches. That has depths And mysteries to it That have not yet Been plumbed.

But you can count on this. The thing that God Wants you to know most Are the things He has made The clearest And the plainest And the most obvious.

And it is so With our Lord's Interpretation of The Sermon on the Mount. So the contrast Was between The letter of the law And the spirit And intent of the law. And we saw Just in these last few verses Where we were dealing with.

The contrast was between The fish and the snakes. The contrast between Bread and stones. And today's contrast Specifically is between Two kinds of gates And two kinds of ways.

There is a wrong Wide gate And a right Narrow gate. There is a wrong Broad way And a right Narrow way.

[8 : 39] They are obvious contrasts. Contrasts. There is a wrong Wide gate That leads to destruction. There is a narrow Gate that leads To life. And we saw that In the verses That we just read.

And they of course Are right there In the text In verses 13 And 14. What is this business About gates And ways? What actually Is it saying?

How is our Lord Expecting anyone To understand this? Well in the first place If you were in that culture It was not a problem. It was very obvious To them. It isn't so obvious To us Because we don't deal All that much In gates and ways Etc.

As they did But in his day A great many Of the cities Had walls around them And the walls Were designed For one purpose And that was For protection.

It was a defensive Posture And lots of times There were enemies Lurking about And the city In order to protect Itself Would build a barrier. Build this wall All the way around it. You're all familiar With the wall Around Jericho Etc.

[9 : 44] Well there were Many others. And of course If you've got a wall Around you still Have to have ways To get in and out Of the city And that's where The gate came in. If you ever Have opportunity To visit Israel You will Be confronted With the wall That is all around The old city Still intact And you can Still see The places On the On the Uppermost part Where the parapets Is.

You can walk All the way Around the wall On the parapets Above. You can see Where the archer Stood And the slit In the wall Through which An archer Could place His arrow To shoot it out On somebody Who was invading.

All of those Things are there In tact As well as Stains on the Side of the wall Where they poured Down boiling Liquid of one Kind or another To fend off Anemone. And around The walls Around the wall Of old Jerusalem Is still today Are the gates.

There is The Damascus gate. Well why is it Called the Damascus gate? Because if you Go out that gate That indicates That you're headed In the direction Of Syria.

You're going to Damascus. So you go out Through the Damascus gate. And there are Other kinds of Gates. Probably the most Famous is called The eastern gate. And that is the Gate through which Our lord is Supposed to come.

[11:05] Jewish tradition Says that when Christ returns He will land On the Mount Of Olives And he will Walk to Jerusalem And walk Through the Eastern gate.

You can see Pictures of it. It's a double gate. Two arches Side by side. And when the Arabs Through Muhammad And his Hordes Came into the Area And built The mosque Of Omar Which is There now They Bricked up Walled up The eastern Gate So that it's Closed now.

And they did That in response To the Jewish Tradition that When the Messiah comes He will enter Jerusalem through The eastern Gate. Of course The Arabs And the Muslims Do not believe In the Jewish Messiah.

So they said Well just in Case he does Come we'll Just wall it Up so it Won't be able To get in. Can you imagine Such nonsensical Thinking?

But that's the Kind of thinking That goes on In natural Minds. So the gate Is there And it is Walled up But I'm sure That will be No problem If our Lord Wants to Enter that Way.

[12:17] The contrast That is being Established here I think is Very obvious When you look At it. What Jesus Is saying Is simply This. There are Two kinds Of ways Of approaching Life and Death.

One is a Way of Error. The other Is a way Of truth. There isn't Any in Between. The law Of the Excluded Middle Applies That it Is either A way Of error Or it Is a way Of truth.

And what He is Simply saying Is that The wide Gate That provides A maximum Kind of Opening Is such That more People can Go through At one Time.

And in Some respects That might Be a lot More appealing Because you're Thinking about Getting out Of wherever It is you Are and You see a Real wide Area over There where Many people Can pass Through That's Probably a Lot more Inviting Than is a Single door Over here Where only one Person can go Through at a Time.

So the Temptation Is to go The way The crowd Is going And you'll Get out Of wherever You want To get Out of A whole Lot more Quickly. It's Tempting But it's The wrong Way.

[13:35] The Plurality And the Majority Always Seems to Be the Most Appealing But in Essence It is Usually The most Deadly And it Is the One That is Fraught With Error.

Yet Human Nature Being What It Is There Is Something That Provides Comfort From being In the Majority. It seems Like How can You go Wrong If you Are in A position With most Of the People. We call That the Conventional Thinking. Or the Polls Say 72% Blah Blah Blah And if You're One of Those 72% It seems To be A little Cozier Than being One of The 28% That's The Minority After all Can so Many People Be wrong Yes And perhaps The most Poignant Example Of that Was Eight People Against The majority Of the Remainder Of the World's Population And we Don't Know how Many People That Was But when You take Noah And Mrs.

Noah Shem Ham And Japheth And their Wives You've Got eight People As opposed To the Whole World Where do You think The wisdom Lies Can so Many People Be Wrong I rest My case They Were Weren't They Now This Caveat Also Needs To Be Added Lest We Give A wrong Impression We Ought Not To Take Too Much Comfort If We Are In The Minority Of A Situation Because Just Being In A Minority That's No Guarantee For Truth Either So Truth Is That Which Corresponds To Reality And It Doesn't Matter How Many People Line Up Alongside It Or How Many Don't It Is Not Numbers That Determines Whether Or Not A Thing Is True If It Is True Because Of It Is Inherent Truthfulness Because It Corresponds To Reality Which Is Another Way

Our Lord Is Simply Saying Here Listen Things Are Not Always Relative Granted There Are Issues Where Relativity Does Apply Not Everything Is Black And White There Are Legitimate Cases And Shades Of Grey There's No Denying That But When It Comes To Truth And Error It Is Either So Or It Is Not So Now Which Do You Think Exists In The Majority Do You Understand That There Is Far Far More Error In This World To Avoid Than What There Is Truth To Embrace Have You Ever Considered That And It Doesn't Take A Rocket Scientist To Simply Point That Out If

[16 : 49] We Are Using Mathematics And Scientists Tell Us That That Is The Purest Form Of Science That There Is Is Mathematics 2 Plus 2 Is 4 That Isn't Only An Answer That's The Answer How Many 2's Plus 2's Make 4 Are There Just One Just One And There's Just One Right Answer 4 Now Let Let Me Ask You This How Many Wrong Answers Are To That Question You Can't Count That High Neither Can I And You Know What They're All Wrong Can So Many Answers Be Wrong Yes Where Absolutes Are Involved The Thing Is Or It Is Not This Is One

Of The Things That We've Been Dealing With For So Long And It Is One Of The Chief Character Is Relative There Are No Absolutes And You Really Need To Read That Article By Rabbi Zacharias In The Middle Of The Decision Magazine And The Case That He Presents That Just Absolutely Decimates The Atheist From His Preconceived Ideas About Right And Wrong You Need To Be Armed With That It Is Something That Every Christian Ought To Be Thoroughly Conversant With Error Is Out There And It Abounds This Is Precisely Why Such Incredible Importance Is Placed Upon The Scriptures And Needs To Be Because Only In This Book Do You Get Unadulterated Truth And It Is So Because Of The Source From Which It Comes All Scripture Is Given By Inspiration Of

God And Is Profitable And You Know The Rest Of It Thy Word Is Truth And The Entrance Of Thy Words Give Life And Christ Said The Words That I Speak Unto You They Are Truth And They Are Spirit They Are Life And Christ Himself Is Characterized As The Way The Truth And The Life We Need To Focus On This Concept Of That Which Is True And Everything That Is Contrary To It Is Untrue It's False And We Are Swimming In Falsities Today They Are All Around Us They Are Siren Calls That Have Appealed To Them And They Entice And They Entrap People Because They Can Be Presented In Such An Attractive Way And They Are Pure Poison The Only The Only Place That We Can Get Truth Is In This Book And God Wants Us To Have The Truth That's Why We Have It This Book Is Designed To Offset

Error To Give Us The Real Scoop On Things And You Know As You Read You Start In Genesis And You Read This Book It Isn't Terribly Complimentary To The Human Race You Should Have Perceived That By Now I Mean The Book Tells It Like It Is And There Are Places In This Book That Are Not Very Flattering To Humanity You Read Some Of The Stuff In Here And You Wonder Where Do You Go To Resign From The Human Race I Don't Want To Part Of This It's Not Very Complimentary At All But It's Truth It Is An Expression Of What Is Or What Was And We Have Error All Around Us And Sometimes People Are Scarcely Able To Sort Out Which Was Truth And Which Was Error And Error Can Be Presented In Such An Enticing And Appealing Way We See This All The Time Even In Even In Television Commercial Of Which There

Are An Unending Supply Someone Has Said It's Become One Of My Favorite Quotes Because I Believe I Believe In The Truthfulness Of It It Says Most Advertising Is Legal Lying It Is It Is Most Advertising Is Legal Lying And All You Have To Do Is Analyze Some Of The Stuff That Comes Across Not Only In Television But In Other Media As Well You See That Fallacious Claims Are Made For Things And You May Have Experienced Already That There's No Truth In It Doesn't Work That Way That's Not The Way It Is But The Way They Present It Operators Are Of The You Have It All Okay Out Of This Presentation That Our Lord Is Making Here About The Width And The [21 : 50] Narrowness He Is Simply Saying That The Way Of Error Is That Which Leads To Destruction And The Way That Is The Narrow Gate Leads To Life And Few There Be That Find It few there be who are seeking for it.

And I want to take just a moment to express something regarding seeking the Lord, because I've had to change my mind on this, and it's not an easy thing to do when you've held a position like I've held for so many years.

We won't go back there for time's sake, but there is that reference in Romans 3, and I think it's verse 10, where the Apostle Paul says there is none that seeketh after God.

They are altogether gone out of the way. They become unprofitable, et cetera. There is none that seeketh after God. That isn't true. Well, then why would Paul say that?

I think that is simply a case of hyperbole that is intended. And I always took it to be quite literal, and I think I was wrong in that. I don't think it is intended to be literal.

[22 : 55] Now, I realize I have Calvinist friends, a group to whom I used to belong, who would say that that is intended to be taken literally because it is literally true.

But I cannot see how it could be literally true when we are commanded to seek. Have you ever thought of that? That human beings are commanded, are expected to seek after God?

Now, some would say that because we are born in sin, iniquity, et cetera, we cannot seek God. We don't want to seek God. We want nothing to do with God. God has to seek us, or we'll never get together.

And I believed that and taught that for a number of years. But I ran into all kinds of problems where that just wouldn't square up, and one of them is here, where Paul says there is none that seeketh after God.

I don't think he meant at all. There is absolutely no one anywhere who seeks after God. And the reason I don't believe that, and that that's not what he meant, is because in other passages we are told to seek.

[24 : 00] Now, if we are told to seek, what's that about, in light of nobody seeking? Well, I do want to give you one reference, and it's Romans.

Now, let's leave that one out, and let's go to Acts 17. Acts 17, and then we'll have some Q&A.; I don't want to deprive you of that like I have been. Acts 17, and Paul is speaking on Mars Hill to the Athenian philosophers.

And let's just jump in with verse 26.

And he, God, made from one every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God.

[25 : 14] Now, these aren't even Jews. These are pagans. These are Greek polytheists, worshipped many gods. And here, God expects them and tells us that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

What is that all about? Why is it that they are to seek? And why would anyone seek? Let me just give you a Wiseman opinion. You can take it for what it's worth.

It might not be worth much. But I think this is the kind of thing that would bring about seeking in the mind of the average person. Once you mature, grow to adulthood, at least significant adulthood, 16, 18, 20 years of age, Do you not think that it would be most natural to ask yourself, Who am I? Why am I here? Why is anything here? What is this stuff all about? Where did it come from? I can't make any of these things.

I can't make a tree. I can't make a cloud. I can't make a mountain. I can't make a lake. These things came from somewhere. Somehow, somebody had to provide all this.

[26 : 43] Who is that? That is seeking after God. That is looking for answers. Have you never been amazed at your body? I think one of the most embarrassing things to the whole medical community is that we didn't even discover the circulation of blood until 1635.

How do you account for that? William Harvey, I remember this from 8th grade physiology. I don't remember many things from the 8th grade. But I remember William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood in 1635.

You mean to tell me up until then, they disbelieved that your body was filled up with blood, and when you poked a hole in it, you leaked? Well, apparently so.

Didn't even recognize that we've got these things called arteries and veins, and that the heart pumps blood all throughout the body? And we didn't know that until 1635. Do you realize that's 15 years after the pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock?

Have you ever considered the possibility how your body functions, and you're not even aware of it? Aren't you glad that you can't hear what's going on inside of you?

[28 : 02] Well, maybe sometimes you can, depending on what you had for dinner or how it's behaving in the alimentary canal. But ordinarily, you've got all kinds of mysterious things going on in your body, and you're not even aware of them.

Have you ever wondered about, I remember Dr. Walter Wilson used to say, aren't you glad that you've got excess skin on your knuckles? Because you couldn't bend your fingers otherwise.

Think of that. Who thought of that? Who made that? Who made the hearing ear and the seeing eye? Where did all this stuff come from?

The psalmist said, I am fearfully and wonderfully made. That my soul knows right well. In a quest for this kind of information, that's seeking after God.

That's looking for answers. That's posing questions. And I think God holds man accountable for doing that. And I think that those who seek him in earnestness will find something that God will provide.

[29 : 18] Our problem is, how many of us are eager to seek? How many of us fall in with whatever the wide gate promises and don't ask any questions?

We just go along with that. You know, the longer I live, and coming up on 79 years now, the more convinced I am, it is a really serious business to be a human being.

To be made in the likeness and image of God and to be placed on this earth, it is a serious thing to be a human being. And some people never stop long enough to even think about it.

But it would do us well to do so. Our Lord is simply telling us, there is the right and there is the wrong. And most of the people are going the wrong way that leads to destruction.

Narrow is the gate and the way that leads to life eternal. How we update this from the Sermon on the Mount, which is primarily kingdom-oriented, not grace-oriented.

[30 : 33] We carry this over into the dispensation of the grace of God where we are now in the age of grace. And the principle is maintained. The principle is the same.

People think pretty much the same as they always have. There is the narrow and the confined and there is the broad way. And of the two, error knows how to make itself look appealing.

But we need to really examine ourselves and examine the evidence and see which it is that really justifies our allegiance. Only truth is worth pursuing.

Believers are supposed to be seekers after truth, protectors of truth, searchers for truth, guardians of truth, and if necessary, die for truth.

And there is nothing more noble that one can give one's life for. Do you realize that Jesus Christ died not only for the sins of the world, but he died for truth?

[31 : 44] Stephen was stoned to death for truth because all they had to do was say the right words and both of them could have escaped their death.

But you don't do that when you're committed to truth. You pay whatever price is necessary. The writer of Proverbs says, buy the truth and sell it not.

What's that mean? It means you should be willing to pay a price for truth, but you shouldn't be willing to sell it for anything.

Buy the truth and sell it not. It's a wonderful passage. Have you a question or comment before our choir comes back for postlude?

Anyone? We have a roving microphone and you will have your chance, but it will extend only for about the next 15 seconds.

[33 : 03] Okay. Choir, if you will be so kind as to come back and favor us with a postlude and thank you again so much for being here this morning. Really appreciate it. All right. Quick sense of music. Last day of the past fall is coming back a Little day a littleWow!

"...■■ of G to all those or as a little I know as this time we want to be up here with a super most■■