

The Sermon on the Mount
Two Gates, One Decision (Part 1)

Matthew 7:13-14

November 24, 2013

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Most people on this planet believe in a divine being, even if it's one of their own making. They see themselves, for the most part, as on a spiritual journey. You ask the average person to describe what that spiritual journey is like, and you'll hear something like this. "Well," they'll say, "imagine that we all stand at the foot of a huge mountain, the very same mountain, and around that mountain on every side are countless trailheads. Each of those trailheads begins at a different place, and each follows a different route up the face of the mountain. But eventually, all of those paths arrive at exactly the same place, the mountain summit. And so, it doesn't really matter what trailhead you choose or what path you take, because regardless, you're going to end up at the top of the mountain. And so will everyone else."

Now the point of that little parable that's so common in our world is this: all the world's religions start off in different places. The great monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the Eastern religions of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism; the polytheistic faiths of animism, Hinduism, and ancestor worship; or the designer religions that are now crafted by every individual who makes his own little religion - regardless of whether you're talking about the great world religions or those created by individuals, they would say, they all start at a different trailhead. Each takes its own unique path up the mountain to "god," but eventually when life is over, all the world's religions, they would say, end up at the same summit of the same mountain. Whether it's described as heaven or paradise or god's presence or nirvana, it's all really talking about the same place and the same reality. That's the common picture of man's spiritual journey that's told in today's world.

But that is not the picture of man's spiritual journey that Christ drew. As He began to finish His most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus drew a shockingly different picture of man's spiritual journey. He said, "Forget the illustration of a mountain surrounded by countless trailheads all leading to the same summit. Instead," He says, "here's how you're to think of it: all religions start in one of two places, and they all take one of two paths, and those two paths all arrive at two completely opposite destinations." That's Jesus' description of mankind's spiritual journey.

Today we come to the conclusion of this wonderful sermon. As we begin to look at it, let me just

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remind you of the structure and how this sermon flows. Jesus begins the sermon in chapter 5 verse 3, and down through verse 16 of that same chapter, He describes the citizens of His kingdom. He describes what those who are part of His spiritual kingdom are like in their characters. He lists what we call the Beatitudes. He says they are beggars in spirit; they realize they have nothing to offer God; they come to God pleading for His mercy; they come as mourning of their own sin; they come hungering and thirsting for righteousness; they come longing to be pure in heart; and so it goes. He describes their character in those things we call the Beatitudes. And then He describes their influence. If that's the kind of person you are (and you are that kind of person if you're in Jesus' spiritual kingdom, to some extent and in some measure), then you will be like salt and light in the world around you. That's what the citizens of His kingdom are like.

Now that brings us to the body of the sermon, to the real heart of Jesus' sermon, and that begins in chapter 5 verse 17, and runs down through chapter 7 verse 12. And here Jesus describes how those who are really citizens of His kingdom live: the righteousness of the kingdom. They have a right relationship to the Scripture; that is, it's not merely external conformity to the Scripture, but they even care about obedience in the heart. They don't merely content themselves with not committing adultery, they worry and struggle with the issue of lust. They don't want that to be a part of their lives. They're not content merely to be those who don't murder, they don't want to hate others in their hearts. They have a right relationship to the Scripture. They also have a right relationship to God. They don't put anything else alongside of or above God. They worship Him only - not wealth, not anything else. And they trust Him in the daily affairs of life. They have a right relationship to others in how they interact. And we've just come through that section. That's the body of the sermon.

What we begin today, beginning in chapter 7 verse 13, and running down through verse 27, is really the conclusion of the sermon. And in the conclusion, Jesus presents several dangers related to the kingdom. There is, first of all, the danger of finding the wrong entrance, in verses 13 and 14. There's the danger of false teachers in verses 15 to 20, and that's because false teachers will point you to the wrong entrance. And there's the danger of having a false profession of the true Christ and the true gospel - understanding Who Christ is, understanding what the gospel is, professing that gospel, and yet being lost and on the wrong path - in verses 21 to 27. Those are big dangers, and this is what Jesus addresses in the conclusion of His message.

Now today, we're just going to begin this conclusion to His sermon, but what I want you to understand is, this is application. Jesus is applying His sermon to those who listened that day. He's applying it to us. It's also an invitation, as we will see. And it's a warning - a sober, solemn warning - from Jesus Christ to every person who listened to, or who now reads or hears, this sermon.

Now, why was that necessary? Why were these dangers so much an issue in Jesus' mind? It's because of the people who were listening to Him. Let me remind you—because it's been a long time since we began the Sermon on the Mount - let me remind you who was there that day on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Luke tells us specifically in his gospel record. In Luke 6:17, here's how Luke describes it. He says, “Jesus came down with [His disciples]....” Now stop there and let me explain something - remind you that the night before the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had spent all night in prayer. That was the night that He prayed and asked the Father to help Him choose 12 representatives, 12 apostles. So He prayed all night. Then He gathered all of His disciples to Him to the top of the mountain, and He chose 12 of them to be His official representatives, His apostles. And then, the Twelve and the rest of His disciples came down from the mountain. And it goes on to say, “Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples....” There's the first part of the crowd.

There were a lot of people who were followers of Jesus Christ. “... [A]nd” Luke says, “a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon....” Not only from Israel itself, but even from the Gentile nations around. In fact, look at chapter 5 of Matthew. Actually, start at chapter 4, verse 24. “The news about Him spread throughout all Syria....” And so they bring all of these people who need healing, “...and He healed them.” Verse 25. There were also “large crowds” from within Israel. Now notice, at this stage in Jesus' ministry there were still these large crowds attached to Him. That wouldn't always be true, but for now they were. And these crowds, while they brought the opportunity for ministry, they also brought a great potential for confusion, spiritual confusion, over who were truly His disciples, and who were those that were merely attached to Jesus because of what He was giving them - healing their loved ones, giving them food, and so forth. And so notice chapter 5, verse 1. “When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.” So He goes slightly back up the mountain, and He begins to teach. And in His hearing you have these two groups: a large crowd of His disciples and a large crowd of people who are attached to Him because of what He's done for them, because of the miracles, the healings, because of their curiosity, their interest.

So, that's what compelled Jesus to preach this sermon, and throughout this sermon Jesus keeps cycling through these issues. Who is just a part of the crowd and who are truly His subjects? Who are true citizens of the spiritual kingdom over which He reigns? And at the end of this sermon, Jesus provides them, and us, clear insight into who it is that has truly entered into His kingdom and who has not. And it begins by discerning if you came in at the right place, if you entered the right gate.

Now with that in mind, turn to chapter 7, and let me read our text for this morning. Matthew 7 and two monumental verses, 13 and 14. This is what our Lord says:

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

Now, these two verses are absolutely foundational to understanding life in this world. In two short verses, just 45 Greek words, Jesus describes the spiritual journey of all of humanity. And He very clearly corrects the common mountain analogy. Instead of being able to start at all 360 degrees of the compass and eventually arrive at the summit, Jesus says 359 of those trailheads all lead to one destination away from the summit, and that is the eternal destruction of the soul. Only one trailhead of the 360 possible choices will ultimately enable you to arrive at the summit. Or to use Jesus' picture, there are only two gates, and each of those gates leads to entirely different paths, and each of those paths will lead you to an entirely different destination, to an entirely different eternity. Now in light of that sobering reality, Jesus says, “Be careful which gate you choose; make sure you enter the narrow gate.”

Now, as we begin to unfold what our Lord teaches here, I want you to notice that there're a series of contrasts in these two verses. First of all, there's a contrast between two gates. Then there's a contrast between two paths or roads. And then there's a contrast between two destinations. And finally, there's a contrast between two crowds, who are on those two different roads. So, there's this series of contrasts. This morning, I just want to begin to look at the first contrast, the contrast between the two gates, because the heart of this passage is really about these two gates. Everything else really flows out from this. Notice how they're described. First of all, verse 13 speaks of “the narrow gate.” In verse 14, Jesus puts it this way: “the gate is small.” And then back up in verse 13, you see the other gate. It's called a “wide” gate: “the gate is wide.” So in the spiritual world, Jesus says, “Here's how I want you to think about it. There are these two gates and only these two gates.” Picture them with me, because this is the picture Jesus is drawing. One of them is this huge, massive, beautifully ornate gate. It is incredibly wide. It's like the gate you would expect to be at the entrance of the capital of one of the world's great empires. It's mammoth. The other gate is a small, simple gate, barely broad enough for a single individual to squeeze through. So here are these two gates.

What do they describe? What do they picture? Well first of all, consider the word 'gate' itself. In the New Testament, the word 'gate' is used in several different ways. It's used to describe the gates of a city. It's used to describe the gates of the temple in Jerusalem. It's used to describe the gates of a prison. And it's also used in Jesus' famous statement about building His church, of the gates of Hades, or the gates of death and the grave. Clearly here, Jesus isn't referring to literal gates; instead, it's a simple metaphor. He's saying, “Listen. All men are on two spiritual paths, one of two spiritual paths or roads, and these two roads are leading in opposite directions, to two totally different destinations.’ And once you understand that, the major point He's making with the picture of the gates becomes clear. The two gates simply represent the two entry points to these two spiritual pathways that lead to either eternal life or eternal destruction. They're the entry points.

Now also notice that there are only two choices where to begin your spiritual journey. Every person in this room is on a spiritual journey. And every person in this room started that journey at one of two gates. One gate will eventually lead to heaven; the other gate will eventually lead to hell. But there're only two gates. There're only two points of entry to these two paths headed in different directions. And every person in the world is on one of these two paths. By the way, that's every person here. You, in the mind of Jesus, are on one of these two paths. You say, "Well, I haven't chosen yet." If you haven't chosen yet, you've already chosen. In other words, you can't be neutral. There's nobody who hasn't yet found himself or herself on one of these two paths. You already have entered a gate. You remember, this picture comes to us from the Old Testament - Deuteronomy. Moses, in Deuteronomy 30:19, says, 'I set before you two ways: the way of life and the way of death.' In Psalm 1, the Psalmist says, 'There are these two ways: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked.' So you have already chosen one of these two gates, and you are already on one of these two paths.

So with that basic understanding, let's look at these two gates. First of all, consider the wide gate. The Greek word for 'wide' in verse 13 refers to something that is "great in extent from side to side;" it's broad. The word is also translated at times "spacious." In the Septuagint, this word is used most often of the large, open square that was at the center of ancient cities. And so, here's a gate that is so big and so broad that it's as big as the open square of the town center. It's attractive. It's not confining. It's beautiful. And it's really busy, because a lot of people are going in this gate. There's a lot about this gate that you find immediately attractive, compelling.

But obviously, in Jesus' parable here, the wide gate is the wrong starting point on your spiritual journey. The wide gate is the entry point to the path that leads to destruction. So here's the key question: Why does Jesus call it wide? The wideness of the gate implies that there are many different ways you can get on the path that leads to destruction. It's not confining. There's not one little area you must travel over; instead, it's an expansively wide gate that allows you to come into that path from many different directions. For some people the entrance to the wrong path is through apathy and indifference to spiritual things. I have no doubt there're people like that here this morning. You just really don't care. You'd just as soon not be here, and if you weren't compelled by something, you wouldn't be. Understand this: notice Jesus doesn't say that you need to choose to be on the wide road, you need to choose the wide gate. He doesn't say that. He says, instead, you've got to choose to enter the narrow gate. What's the implication here? If you haven't entered the narrow gate, you have already entered the wide gate. You are already on the path to destruction. Every human being - by birth, by default - has already walked through the wide gate and is already on the broad way. All you have to do to enter the wide gate is just don't do anything. Do nothing. And so people who are apathetic and indifferent - whether they like it or not, whether they feel like it or not - according to Jesus Himself, if He were here He would say, "You've already walked through the wide gate; you're already on the broad way

that leads to destruction.” Just do nothing, and that path will lead you to destruction.

There's a second entrance to the wrong path that leads to destruction, and that's human philosophies and ideologies. The world is filled with them. There's an interesting passage in 2 Corinthians 10:3, where Paul says we fight - we're in a war of ideas. And he says, "...the weapons of our warfare are not [fleshly]..." that is, they're not human; they're "powerful." He's talking about the Scripture, the ideas of Scripture, the truth of Scripture. That's the weapon with which we fight. And he says we're fighting against "fortresses." What's he talking about? What does he mean, we're fighting against "fortresses"? Well, he explains it in the next verse. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, he says, we are fighting against "speculations" and every "lofty" thought elevated "against the knowledge of God." He's talking about human ideas. We live in a world that is filled with human ideas that are exalted against the knowledge of God - human speculations about what is true, and what is right, and how we should live; philosophies like evolutionary naturalism, post modernism, anti-supernaturalism, feminism, radical environmentalism, and on and on it goes. Our world is filled with these anti-biblical philosophies and ideologies. Understand this: those philosophies are merely new entry points into the wide gate.

Another part of the wide gate is not only apathy and indifference and human philosophy, but also false religion. False religion will get you through the wide gate. You see, much of the width of the wide gate consists of damning false religion. You understand that the Scripture very clearly teaches that there is one true God, and there is one way to know that true God, and that is through His Son. That's it. Everything else is a rebellion against that revelation of God. All other religion is false. It is anti-God. The Old Testament is permeated by such worship. But here's what's interesting: those gods don't really exist. The idols that people worship, all religions other than the worship of the true God Who's revealed Himself in the Scripture and in His Son - it's false. It doesn't exist. So what does exist? This is what's very interesting. Moses, in Deuteronomy 32:16-17, he said that behind the idols of the ancient world, behind the false gods of the ancient world, there were demons impersonating those gods. The gods themselves didn't exist; they weren't real; they're pretend. But the demon who was impersonating that god was very real, and he excited the worship of people. If you think that's just an Old Testament idea, understand, Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 10:20. He says, "...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons...." So the wide gate is made up of false religions of every kind, and those false religions are energized by the work of Satan. And behind each of those false gods, there is a demon impersonating that god, who excites people's worship and distracts them from worship of the true God. From moralism to pagan idolatry, from the millions of gods of Hinduism to the environmentalist's worship of Mother Earth, apart from the worship of the true God revealed in Scripture - listen carefully - there is no religion that is not energized by Satan, and that is not part of the wide gate that leads to destruction.

The fourth part of the wide gate is the corruption of the true gospel and the distortion of the true Christ. You see, the wide gate isn't just about paganism and blatant idolatry. When people distort and pervert the worship of the true God through His Son, they are also entering the wide gate. This was true of Old Testament Judaism. Remember, the Old Testament believers were worshiping the true God with the revelation that they had. They understood the right way to know Him, but there were those who embraced Judaism who distorted it enough, who twisted it enough, so that instead of becoming the entrance to the narrow gate, it became the entrance to the wide gate. In Matthew 23, this is exactly what Jesus says about the Pharisees. They were worshipers of Judaism, but a corrupted form of Judaism that was distorted enough that it made it something entirely different. In Matthew 23:13, Jesus says to the scribes and Pharisees, ““But woe to you...hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” ““Woe to you,”” verse 15, ““scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte....”” In other words, you work really hard to get one person to believe what you believe, and when you do, ““...you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”” You see, they were claiming the true worship of the true God, but they had twisted and distorted it enough that it became something else. Instead of the entrance to the narrow gate, it became the entrance to the wide gate and to destruction.

The same thing happens when it comes to the worship of Jesus Christ and the true gospel. There are those who claim to be Christians, but who take it and warp it and twist it just enough so that it becomes damning error. And yet they still claim to be Christians. In fact, you can see that here in Matthew 7. Notice verse 15. Lord willing, we'll look at this in a couple of weeks. ““Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”” Jesus said, ““Listen. There're going to be people coming, claiming to speak for Me, but they're not the real deal. They twist and they distort the truth about Me and about My message, so that it becomes something that isn't health producing, but it's soul destroying.”” In Galatians 1, Paul warns about this. He says, ““Listen,”” to the Galatians. He said, ““I'm amazed that you're turning to a different gospel, which really isn't a different gospel; it's simply the real gospel that has been distorted and twisted to such an extent,”” he says, ““that it's no longer the true gospel.”” He says, ““...if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!”” He is to be anathema. Pronounce a curse of damnation on him. And so understand, any gospel other than justification by faith alone based on the work of Christ alone is a false gospel, and it is merely another entry point at the wide gate.

So understand then that the wide gate is not only forged of false religion, it also is forged by those who call themselves Christians, but who worship a false Christ or embrace a false gospel. For example, in our day this would be the false gospel of Roman Catholicism that says your works contribute to your salvation before God. It would be that of the distorted view of Christ that comes out of the Jehovah Witnesses. It would be the Mormons, who worship a different

Jesus and teach a different gospel. It would be much of Seventh Day Adventism. It would be most of the Church of Christ that believes that we are saved by baptism, just as the Judaizers of the first century believed they were saved by circumcision. All of those are entry points, not into Jesus' spiritual kingdom, but they're part of the wide gate that leads to destruction.

Tragically, there's one other entry point at the wide gate, and it's a surprising one. It's a false profession of the true Christ and the true gospel. You see, there are some people who have chosen the wide gate, who know they've chosen the wide gate, and they know they're not on the way to heaven. But sadly, many, perhaps most people on the broad road think they have chosen the gate that leads to heaven. Of course, many of them would be enslaved in false religion. But here's the tragic part: some of those who are on the broad way understand the true biblical Jesus, and they understand the true biblical gospel, and they profess to be His followers, and yet they're still on the broad way headed to destruction. Jesus describes them here in Matthew 7, and we'll study it again in just a few weeks. Matthew 7:21. He fast-forwards to the Day of Judgment, and He says,

“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 [that's the one who] will enter. Many will say to Me on that day,” that is, the Day of Judgment, “‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you;’” and here's the key, “‘depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Tragic, that there are people on the broad road, who know Who the true biblical Jesus is, who understand the true biblical gospel, but who have made a false profession. They claim Jesus as Lord, but as we will discover, they don't obey Him as Lord. They live their lives as though He were not. And Jesus will say to them at the Day of Judgment, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who [work] lawlessness.” So, Jesus describes the gate that leads to eternal destruction as wide, because there are so many points in which you can enter it.

But let's move on briefly and consider the narrow gate. The narrow gate. Notice verse 13. “Enter through the narrow gate....” Verse 14. “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Now, notice the two words in verse 13 and 14, the words ‘small’ and ‘narrow.’ Both of those are the same Greek word. The translators have just chosen to vary it, and we'll talk about that next week as to why they did that. But it's the same Greek word; it's ‘narrow’ in both cases. The word is used to describe the door of a prison cell that was very narrow. It's used to describe the narrow entrance to a grave that was cut through the rock. In one case, in secular Greek, it describes a passage that was so narrow that it was difficult even for a relatively small man to pass through it without some degree of difficulty and distress. Jesus uses the word here to refer to the gate that leads to eternal life. In other words - listen carefully - the narrow gate is the entry point to Jesus' spiritual kingdom or in other words,

to salvation.

Let me show you this. Turn to Matthew 19. In Matthew 19, in the context of the story of the rich young ruler, this idea of entering in and several different expressions are used synonymously in a short section of Scripture. Let me show them to you. I don't have time to walk through the whole passage. Let me just point these out to you. First of all in verse 17, Jesus talks about "enter[ing] into life." Note that one. And then in verse 23, "And Jesus said to His disciples, 'Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.'" Verse 24. "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man..." here's another one, "...to enter the kingdom of God." Verse 25. "When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and [they] said, 'Then who can be saved?'" Or we could say, "Who can enter into salvation?" Now Jesus is using all those expressions synonymously: to enter into life, is to enter into the kingdom of heaven, is to enter into the kingdom of God, is to enter into salvation. They all describe the same reality. So the 'narrow gate' then, is how one enters into those things; it's how one enters Jesus' spiritual kingdom, how one is truly saved from the penalty of sin, and how one enters into spiritual life. It marks the entry point.

So why does Jesus describe the entry point to true salvation and to His spiritual kingdom as 'narrow'? I think there are three reasons. First of all, because the entrance is hard to find. The entrance is hard to find. Go back to chapter 7, and notice verse 14. "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." There's only one very small entrance, only one way to get in. It's exclusive, and it's very small. In fact, as Jesus described this narrow gate, one expert on first century says, it's very likely that the thing in most people's minds, because they lived in walled cities, would have been - most walled cities, in addition to those mammoth gates that you see in movies and things, would've also had a small door-like entrance somewhere hidden in the wall that only the citizens knew about. And at night when those massive gates were closed, you could enter in through that door that only a few people knew about and was hidden in the surface of the wall. It also, of course, was carefully guarded. But it was there for the citizens. It's easy to overlook, even if you're looking. And frankly, most people pass by this narrow gate, because they aren't looking. You see, in a world filled with philosophy and religion, this small, narrow gate is very hard to find. Satan is very clever, and he has hidden this gate in full view by surrounding it with clutter, surrounding it with noise, so you can't hear the simple straightforward message of the narrow gate. It's hard to find.

Secondly, He says that it's narrow because it's hard to fit through. It's hard to fit through - narrow, confining. There're several implications of this. One of them is that only one person can enter at a time. Martin Lloyd-Jones compared this gate to a turnstile - only one person can fit through at a time. In other words, you don't get to go through the gate with somebody else. You don't get to walk through the narrow gate into life with your parents, or with your spouse. You have to enter the gate alone. There's no baggage allowed. To enter into the narrow gate, you

have to let go of everything else. You can't get through the turnstile with your baggage. In other words, you've got to leave all of your efforts, your own merits, your works, your self-righteousness, out there. To get in the gate, you've got to renounce everything you are and everything you've done. As Alexander Maclaren, the great preacher, said that on each side of the narrow gate, there were two signs, the two beatitudes that come first, "You must come in as a beggar in spirit mourning over your own sin." Kent Hughes puts it this way: "We must come to God holding nothing in our hands except our inadequacy and our consciousness of sin." You got to let the baggage go.

But I think there's more than that implied here. I think it also makes it clear that you have to trust the right person. It is a very narrow place to fit through, and there's only one person through Whom you can come. John 10:9, Jesus says, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved...." In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; [nobody] comes to the Father [except] through Me." Listen. There aren't countless gurus that'll get you to God. There's only one. There's only way, one door. Acts 4:12, in Peter's famous sermon there, he's talking about the lame man who's been healed, and he's talking about Jesus, and he says, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." It's very narrow; in fact, it's one person wide. You have to come in through Jesus Christ.

You also have to come believing the right gospel, the one Jesus preached. He began His ministry, at least as it's recorded in Mark 1, by preaching you must "repent and believe in the gospel." What is the gospel Jesus preached, and the Apostles preached as He taught them? In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul explains that gospel message. Listen to it. He says here's the gospel I preached:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to [many]....

Listen, you have to believe that Jesus, God's Son, entered the world and lived a perfect life and then died for sins - that is, to pay the penalty before God for sins that had been committed. And you must put your faith in Him. You must repent of your sins, as Jesus preached, and you must believe in Him and Him alone. You must believe the right gospel.

So, Jesus calls the entrance narrow, because it's hard to find, and it's hard to fit through, very confining. But there's another reason I think He calls it narrow, and that is the entrance is hard to accept. It's hard to accept because its demands - the demands of the gospel - clash with all of our natural tendencies - with our pride, with our love of sin. So Jesus comes along, and He says this in Matthew 16. Listen carefully. Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself...." You have to renounce yourself to get in this gate. "...[A]nd [let

him] take up his cross and follow Me.” Or here's another one. Luke 14:25.

Now large crowds were going along with Him, and He turned and said to [the large crowds], “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. [And] whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

In other words, you've got to love Jesus so much that your love for the people in your life looks like hatred. You've got to be willing to let go of your own life. For he who wants to save his life will lose it, but he who is willing to lose it for My sake and the gospel, Jesus says, will save it. This is hard to accept. This is a door that's hard to bring yourself to enter, because His demands are really high. It's narrow.

So, how should you respond to the reality of these two gates through which all of humanity passes? Well, Jesus tells you how you ought to respond. Look at verse 13. “Enter through the narrow gate....” Jesus is warning us, He's admonishing us, He's pleading with us: “Choose the narrow gate.” You see, here's the picture. In the mind of Jesus, every one of us was already on the broad way. We'd already passed through the wide gate, and we are on our way to destruction. And from His safe vantage point, He says, “Choose the narrow gate.” Off of that broad way there's a narrow gate, and you can choose to go through that gate. And that gate will lead you to a difficult path, but a path that will bring you into eternal life. Jesus says, “You've already walked through the wide gate. You're already on the broad road. You must choose to enter the narrow gate.” Jesus - listen carefully - Jesus is extending an invitation to you. This is a genuine offer of the gospel to you. He's saying, “Listen. You don't have to stay on the broad road that's leading to destruction; you can choose to enter the narrow gate. I'm inviting you to come.” In fact, He's commanding you to come: “Enter.” And if you continue on your current path, and you end up in destruction in hell forever, it will be over the admonitions and the warnings and the pleadings of Jesus Christ. You can't go through the narrow gate accidentally. You must make an intentional, thoughtful, purposeful decision that you're going to humble yourself and let everything else go, and you're going to come in His way, into His kingdom, in which He is King, and He rules and you don't. But if you're willing to do that, you're on the road to eternal life. There are only two gates, and Christ sets before you the choice of the narrow gate. Today's the day. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for the profound clarity of our Lord's teaching. Father, I pray for those here today, by Your grace and by Your grace alone, who have entered the narrow gate and are on the narrow way leading to life. Father, as we celebrate Thanksgiving this week, may we give You true thanks with all of our hearts that You have redeemed us, because, Father, we never would have chosen on our own. It was Your goodness and Your grace pleading with us in the gospel, changing our hearts. But Father, I pray this morning for those who are still on the broad way. O God, don't let them take it lightly. Help them to see the path they're on and where it's really

going, and may they listen to Jesus' invitation. And may they respond even today. We pray in His name, Amen.