



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 7:13-29

Topic

Jesus warns you about the broad way
that leads to destruction

Title

"Give No Regards to Broadway"

Introduction

All roads **do** lead to God.

That does not mean everyone will be saved in the end. It means everyone - believer and nonbeliever - will appear before God.

Believers in Jesus Christ will appear before what is called the Judgment Seat of Christ. It won't be a judgment for sin because Jesus already died for their sin. It will be an evaluation to distribute rewards as they enter joyfully into eternity in Heaven.

Nonbelievers will appear before what is described as the Great White Throne. They *will* be judged for their sin because they chose to reject Jesus Christ. They will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire for an eternity of agonizing suffering.

These two groups of people and their two destinations were on Jesus' mind as He concluded the Sermon on the Mount. In addition to the two groups and the two destinations, He spoke about two gates, two ways, two trees, two fruits, two builders, and two foundations.

In other words, it was decision time. He challenged His hearers to decide what group, what destination, what gate, what way, what tree, what fruits, which builder, and which foundation they were going to choose.

If you are not a believer, His challenge is definitely for you.

But it is just as important for believers. It is a challenge to remain in the way, the truth, and the life of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 The Sayings Of Jesus Mark-Out A Footpath For You To Stay On, and #2 The Sayings Of Jesus Lay Down A Foundation For You To Stand On.

#1 The Sayings Of Jesus Mark-Out A Footpath For You To Stay On

(v13-23)

Jesus started this sermon by telling His hearers that their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and Scribes.

As He began to describe the righteousness He had in mind, He several times prefaced His comments by saying, "you have heard it was said... but I **say** to you."

Now, at the end of the sermon, in verses twenty-four and twenty-six Jesus says, "if anyone hears these **sayings** of mine."

Jesus' "sayings," then, are His teachings in this sermon (and elsewhere) about what constitutes true righteousness.

We might think of "sayings" as quaint little motivational phrases that are on posters where we work. The sayings of Jesus are His commands and demands for His disciples.

In His powerful closing argument He contrasts those who hear and do His sayings with those who hear them but do not do them.

And although Jesus clearly had nonbelievers in mind as those who do not do His sayings, it should concern us as believers if we see in our walk with The Lord *any* similarities with them.

Mat 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

Mat 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

The "narrow gate" is the Bible way of righteousness - that we are all unrighteous sinners and must be declared righteous when we believe on Jesus Christ by grace through faith.

The "broad... way," in context, is the external, self-righteousness typical of the Pharisees and Scribes. We would expand that to include any other way of approaching God, or living life, that does not involve the necessity of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins and His resurrection from the dead in order for us to be made right with God.

It's interesting that biblical Christianity is accused by so many seemingly broad-minded individuals of being narrow-minded.

It's accurate. The world's way **is** broad. Think of all the religions, all the philosophies, all the -isms, that mankind has suggested over the course of human history. None of them deal with the root of the problem, which is sin.

I like the old Billy Graham quote, "the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart."

Since they cannot atone for your sin, the broad-minded ways of the world all lead ultimately to "destruction." The persons traveling on any of those paths along the broad way *will* meet God. But they will meet Him when they are raised from the dead to stand before the Great White Throne where it will be too late to alter their eternal destiny.

If the narrow gate is salvation by grace through faith, why does Jesus say it is "difficult?"

One reason He might say it is difficult is because a person must admit they are a sinner, in need of a Savior. They must repent, turning to God from sin, sometimes at great personal cost. Multitudes find it offensive to be told they are sinners. Others consider the cost and choose to continue in their sin.

Theologian Charles Ryrie points out another reason the free gift of salvation might be considered difficult:

When we ask someone to believe in The Lord Jesus Christ, we are asking the person to believe in Someone he or she has never seen. When we ask someone to believe that Christ can forgive his sins, we are asking him to believe in an almost unbelievable concept. It is not easy to believe that Someone whom you and every other living person has never seen did something nearly 2,000 years ago that can take away sin and make you acceptable before a holy God. **But it is believing that brings eternal life.**

In verses fifteen through twenty Jesus described the character and characteristics of the teachers you encounter on the broad way.

Mat 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Mat 7:16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

Mat 7:17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Mat 7:20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

I mentioned earlier how crowded with religions and philosophies the broad way is. It's obviously impossible to get accurate figures, but it is estimated that there are at least 4,200 religions in existence today.

As for philosophies, they are like noses - *everybody has one*.

Jesus' comments are concentrated on the person rather than their particular teachings. I think what He was suggesting is that no matter how appealing what they say might sound, if it is not repentance and faith in Jesus as God come in human flesh, it is false and dangerous.

He says they are wearing sheep's clothing but are really wolves. Their nature has not been transformed. They themselves remain lost and perishing even while they are telling you how to live.

How can a lost person, dead in their trespasses and sins, lead you to an abundant, eternal life?

Before I was a Christian, and after I graduated from UC Riverside with degrees in Philosophy and Psychology, I tried to get into a Masters Degree program at Cal State San Bernardino. It was a counseling program to train you for helping people.

I had the degrees, but I was a drunk, a stoner, an amoral person whose marriage was about to disintegrate. I was sincere about wanting to help others... But how could I since none of it was working for me?

Even if something on the broad way seems to 'work,' that is of no eternal value. If it simply reforms without transforming, it may be more dangerous than remaining in crisis if I am led to think I don't need salvation.

Jesus also said, "you will know them by their fruits." If they have not been transformed from within; if they are not indwelt by God the Holy Spirit; there can be no lasting spiritual fruit.

No matter what these folk look like, being unsaved, they are like pruned branches or nonproducing trees and are headed for the fire.

Christians must be very careful to not borrow from, or buy-into, the broad minded methods of the world when it comes to the issues of life and godliness. We really do have, in the sayings of Jesus, everything we need for life and godliness. The Word of God empowered by the Holy Spirit of God is the only agent that can discern between the soul and the spirit within us and bring restoration or recovery or healing or wholeness or holiness.

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

Mat 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

I don't understand, and I never will, why unsaved people are empowered to do some of these things, except that God is merciful to help the recipients of their signs and wonders.

The point is that no amount of works can earn you a Golden Ticket. Regardless your spiritual resumé, doing "the will of [the] Father" is the standard Jesus sets.

Instead of doing the will of God, they "practice lawlessness." It's a distinction between what they *profess* publicly and what they *practice* privately.

In other words, these folks claim to be followers of Jesus, and they even have works to show for it, but privately they disobey His will and practice things that are clearly forbidden by the laws of God.

A biblical example: Judas went about with the other apostles doing signs and wonders but he was not saved and he was simultaneously stealing from the offerings.

More and more I am encountering folks who claim to be Christians, who have some sort of spiritual heritage or resumé, but who are living in sin and acting like it's OK - at least for them. Some go so far as to claim their sin **is** God's will - for them.

For example the Bible says, "for this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" (First Thessalonians 4:3). Yet today not only are people who profess to be believers living together in sexual immorality, they are claiming it is OK with God.

Are they Christians? I don't know; but I don't want to assume they are since the consequences are grave. Jesus *will* say to some who are not doing the will of God, "I never knew you..."

Right now, if you are a believer, you are being assaulted in some decision you need to make. You're being tempted by the world to broaden your thinking.

The narrow gate and the "difficult" path **are normal**. They are the normal Christian life intended to bring blessing and abundance to those who walk thereon. Don't buy-in to the criticism that you are too narrow-minded - as if you're missing something, as if God has it in for you.

As for the broad way, we might want to think of it as an ever broadening way. The world is always pushing God's loving boundaries, always making the broad way broader, so to speak. If we are not careful, as Christians we can find ourselves on a narrower way than those in the world that a few years ago we would have consider a broad way that leads to destruction.

Pause and look around your life. Be certain you're not on the ever broadening way of the world.

#2 The Sayings Of Jesus Lay Down A Foundation For You To Stand On

(v24-29)

We've established that you are going to be seen as a narrow-minded person. You're surrounded by broad-minded people whose choices and decisions are going to be very different from yours.

You're going to be misunderstood, ridiculed, criticized, by unsaved family and friends. They'll have opinions about how you live, how you raise your kids, your priorities, your habits, and your pursuits.

More-and-more you are even going to be criticized by other believers who have relaxed the Lord's standards in order to fit-in with the world.

Since we are strangers and pilgrims journeying through a world that is opposed to our Lord, a world whose god is the devil, there will always be pressure from both within and without to compromise the sayings of Jesus. To encourage us The Lord gave us the illustration of the wise builder. In it we are reminded to look at the big picture. You must consider the end of all things.

Mat 7:24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

Mat 7:25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

Mat 7:26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

Mat 7:27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

How many disaster movies have there been, and will there yet be, in which the evil capitalist corporation cut corners in order to make a profit but, in the end, lives were lost?

Sadly, it plays out in real life, too, sometimes. **You don't want it to play-out in your life.**

Believers build their lives day-by-day. Nonbelievers build their lives day-by-day. Whose lives usually seem better off, more secure? That's right - the nonbeliever's life seems better.

But no matter appearances, if you are not building on a rock-solid foundation, the structure will not survive the storms of life.

And even if you get through life relatively unscathed, as we must admit that some nonbelievers do, what you build upon the shifting sand of the world apart from Jesus cannot survive the final judgment of God.

Keep in mind you are going to live forever. Believer or nonbeliever, you are going to live forever. It pays, then, to build as if you were going to live forever rather than just a few short decades on the earth.

It pays to build on the solid rock that is Christ.

The apostle Paul picked-up on this builder illustration.

He described your appearance, as a believer, before Jesus' Judgement Seat as if you were going to be reviewed by the materials you used to build upon the rock-solid foundation of Jesus Christ.

1Co 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1Co 3:12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

1Co 3:13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

1Co 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

1Co 3:15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Think of the projects around your house. There are always choices in materials. Some will do the job but won't last as long. You might choose them when you're putting your house on the market.

Other materials have a much higher quality. You choose them if you plan on living in your house for a long time.

The point Paul was making seems to be this: As a Christian building upon the foundation of Jesus you can choose either costly or common materials which are either more or less permanent.

The Lord leaves it up to you to determine just how committed to Him you're going to be on your way to the Judgement Seat. Go for the gold! Invest more-and-more in Heaven and less-and-less on earth.

In fact, pause for a second right now and ask yourself if it can be said that you are building more for Heavenly rewards than earthly comforts.

Mat 7:28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,
Mat 7:29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Anything Jesus said is greater than *everything* ungodly men have said.

Does the Word of God still astonish you? Not the teaching of it. The Word itself.

Do you sit in awe and wonder that Almighty God, the Maker of Heaven and earth, speaks to **you**? Lives in **you**? Loves **you** with an everlasting love?

Is building you a mansion in a celestial city? Is coming for you to present you faultless before His Father in Heaven?

Pray that everyday, in every way, we would again be astonished by our God.

One of the commentators, I think it was G. Campbell Morgan, pointed out that this entire section could be summarized by Jesus' declaration in the Gospel of John, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

- "I am the way" - faith in Jesus is the footpath embarked upon through the narrow gate.
- "I am the truth" - as opposed to the multitudes of wolves in sheep's clothing peddling false religions and philosophies that are fruitless and cannot save or sanctify you.
- "I am the life" - He is eternal life for those who will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat to live.

The sayings of Jesus, here in the Sermon on the Mount and everywhere in the Word of God, mark-out the normal footpath you who have entered by the narrow gate should stay on.

They encourage building a life that will last beyond this world into eternity.