

Two Ways¹
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
August 10, 2025

Text: Matthew 7:13-23

Purpose: Set before men, there are two ways we may go. One leads to eternal life with God, the other destruction and judgment. “Choose ye this day whom you will serve!”

A woman rushes to see her doctor, looking very much worried and all strung out.

She rattles off, "Doctor, take a look at me. When I woke up this morning, I looked at myself in the mirror and saw my hair all wiry and frazzled up, my skin was all wrinkled and pasty, my eyes were blood-shot and bugging out, and I had this corpse-like look on my face! What's wrong with me, Doctor?"



The doctor looks her over for a couple of minutes, then calmly says, "Well, I can tell you one thing...there's nothing wrong with your eyesight."²

I am so tired of going to the eye doctor and he says, “Your vision is normal for your age.” The audiologist says, “Your hearing is normal for your age.” Are you having the same issues as well?

Today, we come to a wonderful passage of scripture that wraps up the Sermon on the Mount in a nice tidy package. You may think that these final four parables are unrelated to all that Jesus has said in chapters five, six, and seven. Nothing could be further from the truth.



One theological reference book I consulted said this was the Eschatological Epilogue.

Eschatology is the study of the end times and epilogue is an

addition to a prior teaching. In layman's terms it means Jesus has given us a unique glimpse into how He will be judging others at the end of time. We saw that last week in the parable of the sheep and goats. We also saw a glimpse of those that are taking care of their neighbors in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus gives us four different parables to make His point very clear to those listening. (We are going to look at the first three parables this morning.)



- 1) Jesus talks about the two paths we face in life.
- 2) He talked about the two plants – one with good fruit, another with bad fruit.
- 3) He told the story of some people that make a profession of faith, but their life does not bear out that profession of faith.
- 4) The last parable given to us, which we will look at next week, is one where someone plans to build their house on a sandy foundation and how it falls, whereas the one who built on the rock makes it safely through the storm.



It is at the end of our life we can look back and see if we were on the right path, if we have produced good fruit or bad fruit, if our profession of faith is real or only lip service to God, and if our foundation is built on the rock of Jesus or the shifting sand of others unstable theories of life.

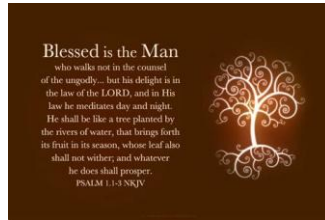
Jesus is giving those gathered there a final admonition and warning. Those gathered here today are hearing the same. Maybe Jesus is attempting to give us a word picture of how the citizens of the Kingdom of heaven are to live and act for the minds of those listening. I am sure many of them said to themselves, “How can anyone ever keep such rigorous demands? Maybe you have been asking yourself the same questions as well.

It is possible for certain people to keep it – the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is only possible because we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit enabling us to live as Jesus taught if we abide in Him. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we live victoriously.



God has given us a unique opportunity in life to choose which way we will walk in this world. He could have made us without a free will - only doing the things God commands like we were robots or puppets. Instead, God has given us a free will and what we choose to do with that establishes a pattern pleasing unto God or one that will be rejected by God.

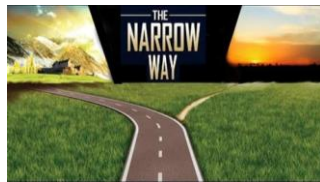
I am reminded of Psalm 1 which lays out two choices. Even in the Old Testament when David penned those words over three thousand years ago, they knew there were two paths in life.



*Blessed is the man who walks
not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor sits in the path of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of the scornful.
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and in His law, he meditates day and night.
He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
that brings forth its fruit in its season,
whose leaf also shall not wither;
and whatever he does shall prosper.
The ungodly are not so,
but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the ungodly
shall perish.*

Two Ways

The point of this sermon is to illustrate that there are Two Ways we can go in life. This is not just a preacher standing up here trying to persuade you to live better. The choices you face in life are real and you alone must make those choices. Your mother and father cannot make them for you. Your aunts or uncles cannot force you to choose right. Your children cannot make them for you. You and you alone are responsible for your life choices.



The Parable of the Two Paths

Jesus starts by saying, “*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. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*”

We can picture in our mind a wide road and many people are traveling along just fine. Shortly after the road starts, there are signs that tell us we need to take a more restrictive, narrow path. No one likes to be confined or restricted. The broad way is freer, more comfortable, less restrictive, has more company along the way. That is the broad way, but God is beckoning us to take the narrow way.



Some translations call it the “strait” gate. That is where we get the word straitjacket. It is snug, restrictive, and uncomfortable at times. But that strait gate is where our Lord is calling us to walk. The Christian walk is narrow but it is the only safe path that leads us to our Heavenly reward.

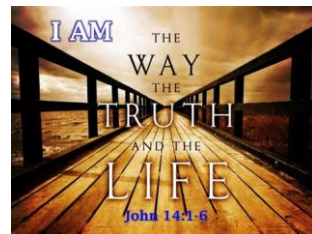
Maybe you have seen pictures of the Panama Canal. It took ten years, the loss of thousands of people’s lives, and millions of dollars to create a 48-mile canal that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean without having to travel all the way around South America.



In order for a ship to make it through the Panama Canal, it must shut off its power and allow itself to be towed into narrow channels where water is pumped in and out of locks which raise and lower the boats. Once it has passed through a series of locks, it finally arrives at its destination. Last year one cargo ship turned sideways and blocked up the Suez Canal for several weeks!

The only way the ship got to the narrow canal was “to enter in.” There was intentionality in setting course and following the path.

Jesus is inviting us to set our course,” to enter in” the straight and narrow way.



John 14:3-6 reminds us who we follow:

“And if go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” Thomas said to him, ‘Lord we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

To be a successful businessman, you must stay at it for a long time. To be a successful athlete, you must be disciplined and continue to refine your talent. To be a gifted musician, you need to continue to practice and practice.

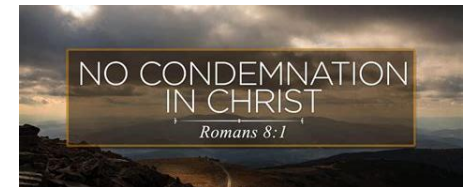
The road to eternal life is entered through the gate of Christian discipleship. Sometimes that means we need to let go of some other things in order to win the prize.



I heard a story this week about a mouse that found a small hole in a corn bin and was able to slip in and out with a few morsels of goodies in his mouth. One day the mouse decided he was tired of coming and going and ate till his heart’s content. He found out that he ate so much that he was not able to pass through the hole any longer. Some things in life will have to be left behind if we expect to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We cannot eat at the table of the world and expect to be able to enter the strait and narrow gate.

People find themselves in the broad way of life. You do not need to search for it or even enter in it. You start out on the broad way of life.

John 3:18 says, *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*



People do not want to hear that kind of narrow preaching and teaching. People want to believe all will enter into our Father’s Kingdom when we die. Only prepared people will enter. It is the unprepared and undisciplined person that wants us to sing, “When we all get to heaven what a day of rejoicing it will be.” Not all are going to be there.

The way of the world is a wide, well paved superhighway headed straight to hell. The music group AC/DC celebrated the fact that



they were on a road headed straight to hell. That road is crowded and tangled with the traffic of this world. It is a picture of carnal, uninhibited hedonism flaunted as acceptable and normal. Television today has crossed the line and glorifies immorality and immoral behavior. Broad is the way that leads to destruction.



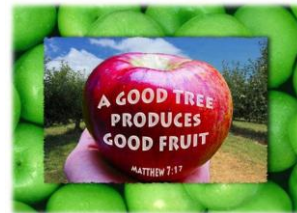
Another word for destruction is perdition. John 17:12 uses that word when Jesus said this concerning

Judas, *"While I was with them (the Disciples) in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."*

The strong warning is this: Only a few find the narrow way, many continue on the broad way which leads to destruction!

The Parable of the Two Plants

The second parable Jesus taught them is known as the parable of the two plants.



Jesus said, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every*



good tree bears good fruit, but every bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good

fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them."

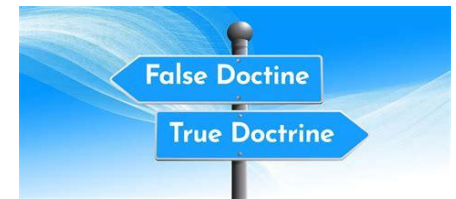
Jesus has a word for those that are searching to determine which gate we are to go into. There are many churches within driving or walking distance from here. Some of you probably drove past several in order to come here today. How can you know which voice to listen to today? Jesus tells us to examine the lives, the fruit if you will, of those leading and those participating.

The world is judging this church by its pastor and its members. People are inspecting our language, the places we go, the people we associate with, the things we do. They want to know if we are for real. What are they seeing in you?



In attempting to find the right gate, you must be aware of those who might mislead you. Matthew Henry once said, "Every hypocrite is a goat in sheep's clothing, but a false prophet is a wolf in sheep's clothing. A false prophet may dress like a prophet or in some religious garb, but this is not enough. A false prophet may talk like a prophet, but this is not enough. He may claim to speak for God, but does not do so."

The Apostle Paul encountered people that were leading the members of churches astray with false doctrine. Many of you take time throughout the week to listen to various television preachers. Some of them are



theologically sound, while others may not be. That is why it is so important for you to know the Word of God for yourself and reject anyone or anything that is taught that does not match up with the Word of God.

Jesus used the illustration of trees and the fruit they bear. The type of tree determines the type of fruit it produces. The illustration applies to false prophets. Eventually the quality of the fruit will determine the type of tree. If the pastor/teacher/evangelist/ Sunday school teacher/ deacon is watched over a period of time, you can inspect the fruit of their work and life and determine what kind of person they really are.

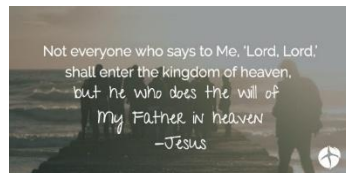
We are reminded in Galatians 5:22, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”* If these fruit are not evident in your life, then I suggest you do some soul searching and determine if you are really a Christian.



Jesus doesn't mince words or beat around the bush. Trees that are not producing fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Here is the strong warning: “People that do not have the Spirit of God in them will be cast into the Lake of Fire at the end of the age.”

The Parable of Two Professions

Jesus did not stop with false prophets, he continued to address those who claim to have professed Jesus Christ as their Savior.

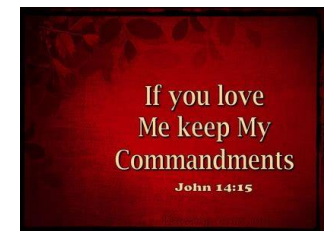


In the third parable, Jesus said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me you who practice lawlessness!’”*



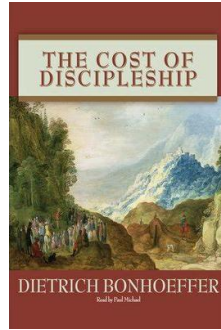
The test is Christian character. The question of that test is, “Are you doing the will of God?” It is not enough to say words.

Jesus said in John 14:15, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* He went on to say in verse 21, *“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”*



It is so easy to say, “I love God.” “I love Jesus.” The culture we live in here in Eastern North Carolina is one where many know about Jesus but they really know very little about what He taught and even fewer actually practice what they do know. They identify themselves as Christians because that is what is culturally appropriate. They are not a Muslim or an atheist. They simply assume they are Christians. Not everyone that says “Lord, Lord” will enter into Heaven.

One of my favorite Christian Pastors from the past is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. One of the most comprehensive biographies was written by Erick Metaxas. It is a massively thick book that tells the whole life of one person that took the idea of discipleship to the very end. I would encourage you to find a copy of Bonhoeffer's small book *The Cost of Discipleship*, which was written while he was in jail. His life was taken in a German concentration camp just a few days prior to the defeat of Germany at the end of World War II.



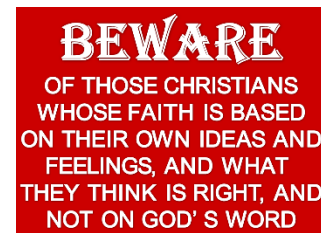
What stands out to me as the author peels away the layers of the events between World War I and World War II are how even the churches were swayed by the language of God to promote something as ungodly as destroying the Jewish people. Most people today would say Hitler was far from being a Christian. But many were deceived in that day because he used the language of the church to promote a godless evil.

He actually believed he was doing the work of God by systematically destroying the Jewish people. Adolph Hitler wrote the following in *Against the Jews*.



“I say: my feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to the man who once lonely and with only a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were, and called men to fight them, and who, so help me, was greatest not as a sufferer but as a fighter. With boundless love, as a Christian and as a man, I read the

passage which relates how the Lord finally gathered his strength and made use of the whip to drive the usurers and cheats from the temple. Today, 2000 years later, I recognize with deep emotion Christ's tremendous fight for this world against the Jewish poison. I recognize it most profoundly by the fact that he had to shed his blood on the cross for this fight. As a Christian it is not my duty to permit myself to be cheated but it is my duty to be a champion of duty and right. (Spoken in Munich, April 12, 1922).



Hitler saw himself as a Christian doing the work of God. What scares me about what Jesus illustrated in this passage are not people like Hitler, but it is people that are actually doing the work of God – they are teaching, casting out demons, and doing great wonders – those are the ones you would think are definitely “in.” But Jesus lets them know they are actually judged lacking and cast into everlasting judgment. Jesus rejected them because He said, “*I never knew you!*”

Jesus welcomes all that call upon the name of the Lord to be saved. He has never turned away a sincere believer. He wants to begin a relationship with you. You only have a relationship with someone when you spend time with them. Jesus welcomes all that repent from their sins and enters into the strait gate. We must make an intentional decision to turn, repent, and point our life in a manner that reflects our love for God. We cannot be careless and haphazard as we live out the life of faith. Broad is the way for the undisciplined and the way therein leads to condemnation, rejection, and eternal alienation from God.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ involves discipline and dedication. It involves putting feet to your faith. It involves loving your enemies. It involves forgiving those that spitefully use you. It involves turning the other cheek and going the extra mile. The only way this is possible is for the Spirit of God to live in us.



One day when we have completed our life here on earth, we will have to stand before God and give an account for our life. What will you say?

The better question is, “What will Jesus say?”

LET US PRAY



Today, I want to challenge you to make sure you are on the right path with God. Confess Christ and be saved. Many people intend to start out on the Godly path, but the lure of the world pulls them away.

I want you to examine the fruit of your life, if it is not good fruit; I pray you will allow God to make you a new creature in Christ, thereby producing Godly fruit worthy of acceptance and not rejection.

I want to challenge you to examine your work for God. Does it represent a natural outflowing of the Spirit of God or are you doing the work of the church through your own self will? The only work that will be preserved is the work done in the power and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Make sure your works are not works of the flesh!



Notes:

¹ Outline from Ray K. Hodge notes on Matthew 7:13-29

² Mikey's Funnies, A Diagnosis Funny, July 29, 2021