**Hard Way to Heaven**

Matthew 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easythat leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. **14**For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (ESV)

We now come to a place where Jesus begins to wind down His Sermon on the Mount. We go from commands about ethics and morals to warnings and exhortations regarding approaching the kingdom of God. We approach the Kingdom of God through a gate. A lot of people speak of the narrow path but forget the narrow gate. The narrow gate is significant because you have to go through it to get to the narrow path.

But why is the gate narrow? The gate is narrow because you can’t take certain things with you. To enter through the narrow gate you have to leave some things behind. You can’t take your stuff to heaven. You can’t take your money. You can’t take your pride or your accomplishments or your awards. You cannot even take yourself. Wait, what? “I can’t take myself to heaven?” NO! Your soul will enter heaven one day if you are saved, but who you are as a person must change. The Bible speaks much on the old self and new self.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (ESV)

Ephesians 4:22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23**and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24**and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (ESV)

Before we knew Jesus we were different people. We did not know Jesus and we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We cannot be that person when we enter through the narrow gate. We have to be the new person God has made us. Martin Lloyd Jones sums it up best as to why that is:

*“There is no room for two men to go through this gate together, so the old man must be left behind.” – Martin Lloyd Jones*

But it is not just a narrow gate Jesus speaks of, but a narrow path too. The second man cannot fit on the path with you either. There is a journey to be walked and it must be walked alone. No ties to the past self can be present on the narrow road to eternal life. Here is the other thing about narrow roads: they are hard to walk. Jesus is as up front as possible about the kingdom of God and the cost of following Him. He is as clear as can be that this road is a hard one:

Luke 14:27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. **28**For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? **29**Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, **30**saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ **31**Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? **32**And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. **33**So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. (ESV)

By all modern standards, Jesus was a terrible salesman. Too many people have tried to act as God’s salesman. They package the Gospel in such a way that they attempt to sell it. They attempt to make it appealing and pleasurable to hear about. They make it look like something to be desired. But the gospel is not meant to appear flashy and wonderful. It is not some religion to “try”. We don’t “try” the gospel. The gospel is not an item to be marketed or sold, but a message to be preached and proclaimed.

The marketing strategy of Jesus is to share the most difficult aspects of the gospel up front. Why would Jesus do this? Because Jesus wants those who are loyal and not those who are lazy. Most people walk away from God when they realize the cost of following Him is great. They are too lazy and there are too many things they don’t want to give up, to follow Him. I’m not talking about giving up TV or fun or pleasure in this life. Sometimes those things have to be let go, but ultimately it is our sin that must be left behind, and many do not want to leave that in the past, so they walk away from Him. And when you walk away from God there is only one path open to take: the wide road.

There are even many self-professed Christians walking the wide path. The people walking the wide path are deceived into believing they are doing just right. They can live in sin and live offended at those who expose sin and still believe they are on the right path. We probably all know people like this. They are the kind of people that get offended when their sin is called out. They are the kind of people that say “You can’t judge me” when confronted for their blatant sin. They are deceived. There is no one on the wide path that is not deceived. They carry their sin with them all the way down the road to hell.

But at the end of the road all these things are burned in the fire, unable to enter hell with you. No money, no fame, no fun can enter into hell with you. Sin cannot enter the eternal life with you either. In fact, it instead leads you down the wide path. The wide path is littered with sin and pleasure. The deception is that you think they can because you are able to carry them along the wide road with you.

Don’t be deceived into believing that you can live the way you want and somehow remain on the narrow path. It is narrow because it requires you to let go of things. The narrow path—the true gospel—requires you to downsize on sin and worldliness.

Choose this day which path you will walk. The one that your sin leads you through or the one that leads you to Christ.