**MATT. 7:13-20 THE LIFE OF CHRIST 3/29/20**

 **XXVI. NARROW IS THE WAY**

I hope this finds you all well. If you don’t have cabin fever, depression or frequent agitation, you must be doing something right. I have tried to take my own advice from last week’s lesson and spend more time reading about Christ in the gospels, spent time enjoying family, prayed specifically and gave voice to my thankfulness. However, after a couple misunderstandings, I have realized my need to be more thoughtful toward others as we deal with financial stress, continued cancellations (mission trips), and lack of social activity (church, friends, shopping, etc). On the other hand, we are eating better than we have for years. (“Eating better” means eating more).

This week I would like to return to our study in Matthew on *The Life of Christ*. We left off in verse 12, commonly known as *The Golden Rule*. Basically, we were reminded that the life of Christ, and the life of a Christian, exhibits love when we put others first. Today’s text is toward the end of His *Sermon On The Mount*. It is leading up to an invitation of sorts (vs. 21-29) – a self evaluation of your eternal destiny. In Matthew 16:26, Jesus asks, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Of all the things we could be worrying about today (the virus, groceries, safety, politics, finances, work, children) all pale in comparison to your eternal destiny. Let’s look at this text and see what we can draw from it, on our way to that invitation.

Matthew 7:13-20 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

He is challenging you to evaluate your path, your prophets, and their produce. (It probably looks like I stole this outline but I did not.) ☺

**A. YOUR PATH – vs. 13-14**

*“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate,*

**1. “Enter in”** ***= arise, come in, go in.***  This implies *action* on your part. It implies personal responsibility for our destiny.

- We know that saved believers are *elect* (1Pet. 1:2), *chosen* (Eph. 1:4), *drawn* (John 6:44) and *called* (Rom. 8:28).

- But we also know that we are commanded to *believe* (Acts 16:31), *come* (Matt. 11:29), *take* (Rev. 22:17) and here in our text to *enter*.

- So which is it, does He choose us, or do we choose Him? Yes! The Scripture teaches both! A simple illustration that helps understand this seeming contradiction is to picture the gates of heaven. From this side the sign over the gates of heaven reads, “Whosoever will may come.” As we enter in and look back, the sign displays the words of Jesus, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” It then becomes obvious it was all His doing. However, from this side of the gate, it is clear that action on our part is implied. (Luke 13:24) “Strive to enter…”

- Verse 13 implies our responsibility – action is called for. You are invited to “Enter in,” to consider your destination, to choose the right path.

**2. “Strait”** **= *obstacles standing near***. There are obstacles that will keep men from entering the

 narrow way, the strait path, the way of life. I’ll list a few – you will think of more:

 a. The offence of the cross (1Cor. 1:23)

 b. Family division (Matt. 10:34-36)

 c. The World’s hatred (John 15:18)

 d. Love of wealth (Matt. 19:16-22)

 e. Hard teachings (John 6:66)

f. The ease of travel associated with the broad way (v. 13)

 g. Disdain for the “few that find it” (v. 14)

 **3. “Wide … Broad” = *spread out, flat; spacious*.**

 *“…and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat”*

- No obstacles here! Smooth sailing. Travel with ease in comfort. “Many” will join you so you won’t feel out of place. “Everybody’s doing it!”

- Destruction is obviously not evident at the entrance, however the broad way “leadeth” ever near. All is clear and very few are headed the narrow way. “Shut up and follow the crowd,” the sign says. Destruction is inevitable, but many carelessly travel on, not knowing (or caring) what destiny holds for them. Jesus watched this procession, and “when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” (Mat. 9:36) Do you know people in that crowd? Are you “moved with compassion?”

 **4. Notice where the strait, narrow way leads: “unto life.”**

 *“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be*

 *that find it.”*

- We read in John 1 that He is the source of life. John 1:4 *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”*

- Jesus came *“that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10)

- The broad, flat road teaming with many devoted followers leads to destruction.

- The strait, narrow path that is lined with obstacles leads to a wonderful place. Life in Christ here, eternal life with Christ over there. Only one question: Have you entered?

**B. YOUR PROPHETS – v. 15**

 *“Beware of false prophets…”*

**1. “Beware” = *pay attention! Be cautious about*.** This is a warning from Jesus. You can be certain of several things:

a. False prophets do exist. “Prophet” = a pretended foreteller or religious imposter. There are many who would knowingly and unknowingly lead you from the strait, narrow path to life. Jesus accused the Pharisees of doing so in Matt. 23:15. Paul confronted Elymas the sorcerer for leading people astray in Acts 13:10.

b. False prophets are a threat. “Beware!”

 Throughout Scripture God warns his people about false prophets.

 1) Warnings for OT saints – Deut. 13:3; Jer. 23:16; Mic. 3:5;

 2) Warnings in the NT – Matt. 24:11; Acts 20:29-30; Rom. 16:17-18; 2Pet. 2:1

c. False prophets use disguise. *They “…come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”*

*-* Jesus warned that they would even deceive “the elect” (Matt. 24:24)

- Peter warned early Christians:

*-* They are “among you” (2Pet. 2:1)

*-* They bring damnable heresies in “privily” (2Pet. 2:1).

 - Many follow them (2Pet. 2:2).

 - They use “feigned words” to persuade (2Pet. 2:3)

Beware! Pay attention! Be cautious! Don’t be deceived by false teachers. Who are you listening to? Does their message align with God’s word? (Acts 17:11) Do they bear the fruits of righteousness? What do they produce? (vs. 16-20)

**C. THEIR PRODUCE – vs. 16-20**

 **1. “You shall know them” = *epiginosko = to know by some mark; to recognize.***

 a. How? “By their fruits,” their produce.

 1) Illustrations: grapes don’t grow on thorn bushes

 - figs don’t come from thistles. Very elementary. Very understandable.

 b. Good trees bring forth good fruit. Corrupt trees bring forth evil fruit. (v. 17)

 - Luke 6:43-44

 c. A good tree cannot bear evil fruit. An evil tree cannot bear good fruit. (v. 18)

 - This is a law of nature. Unsure about a leader? Look at what they produce.

- Take time to watch, investigate, compare their words, their produce with the words and produce of Christ. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” (v. 20)

 - Read this list: “the ruit of the Spirit” – Galations 5:22-23

 **2. The Produce of False Prophets – v. 19**

 a. *“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”*

 - Listen to Jesus’ words in:

Mat. 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Joh 15:6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

- Jesus warned you, be careful who you follow. Your eternal destiny could be in jeopardy if you follow the wrong leader, and thereby choose the wrong path.

**CONCLUSION:**

- I trust that my audience here has already chosen the strait, narrow path that leads to life; that you have followed the path to heaven by way of the gospel of Jesus Christ as given in the Scripture,

- I also trust that you are aware and wise with regard to the wiles and disguises of false prophets.

- Let me encourage you to use this as a topic of discussion with your spouse and or your children. *Ask, which path have you chosen? How do you spot a phony?*

- May God bless and protect each of you in the days ahead. Miss you!