



Part 44: Jesus and the Narrow Way
Matthew 7:13-23

We are called by Jesus into a relationship of loyal love, empowered by the Spirit, in which we desire to express our trust and love through obedience to his teachings and way.

I. Challenging Teaching

“...It was Matthew’s gospel which created the climate of ordinary Christianity.” – R.T. France

We are approaching the end of Jesus’ famous sermon, and Jesus sounds very soberminded. He closes his sermon – not with a great story or pep talk – but with a series of warnings.

II. Jesus and the Narrow Way

A. There are Two Ways (Matthew 7:13-14)

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14



There is a wide gate leading to a broad road that leads to “destruction.” The Greek *apoleia* means destruction = a complete loss of well-being. It speaks of a condition in which a thing or person is ruined or wasted. When referring to people, it refers to their eternal spiritual condition.

This is the way of the world (kingdom of this world). It is the way of self-determination. In our secular culture, it is gospel of human progress without God or the “Kingdom without the King.”

There is a narrow gate leading to a narrow road that leads to “life.” Zoe is the eternal life in God, which is both quality and duration. Jesus is the gate (John 10:9).

This is way of King Jesus and his beautiful Kingdom. This is the way to human flourishing and shalom by God’s Presence under His gracious rule.

Note: The early Church was called “the Way” or “followers of the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:23; 24:14).

B. There are True & False Prophets (Matthew 7:15)

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” Matthew 7:15

A prophet is anyone claiming to speak for God or claiming to speak about reality. There are prophets/teachers inside and outside the Church.

False prophets preach a false gospel. In our culture, they usually preach the “secular gospel.” Essentially the secular gospel is the belief that man can create utopia on earth without God through human power (science & technology) – the “Kingdom without the King.”

On a personal level, it is the pursuit of radical individualism, which preaches rediscovering your authentic self and identity through looking within. All external authorities are rejected as inherently oppressive.

“The pursuit of self-awareness, self-esteem, wholeness and wellbeing is paramount. One who fails at the project of self must gaze into the mirror and confess ‘against you alone have I sinned.’ The only sin of the 21st century is the failure of self-actualization.” – Jon Tyson

Note: There is often a soft, Eastern spirituality infused with the secular gospel to give it a flavor of spirituality (Western Buddhism, mindfulness, yoga etc).

“It isn’t until you come to a spiritual understanding of who you are – not necessarily a religious feeling, but deep down, the spirit within – that you begin to take control.” – Oprah Winfrey

True prophets or teachers point people to the real Jesus. The real Jesus calls people to repent and believe the good news of the Kingdom. The call is to “deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus.” Jesus, not self, is our ultimate authority and teacher.

The goal of the narrow way is God's glory by becoming like Jesus.

C. Jesus' Test of Discernment (Matthew 7:16-23)

"By their fruit you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will know them."

Matthew 7:16-20

Jesus uses a fruit analogy for our test of discernment. But what is the "good fruit" we are looking for?

"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.'" Matthew 7:21

Note: In the Greek, the verb "doing" (*poieo*) is translated five times as "bears" [fruit] (Matt. 7:17-20). In v. 21 *poieo* is translated as "does" [the will of my Father]>' In v. 24-27, *poieo* is translated as "put them into practice" (referring to Jesus' teachings).

The "good fruit" is a life committed to obeying Jesus' teachings, and we can add the teaching that calls people to obey Jesus.

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." 1 Timothy 4:16

III. Clarity About the Call

"I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" Matthew 7:23

Jesus is speaking about a personal relationship with him.

"...union with Jesus Christ is the origin and source of all spiritual blessings and all discipleship. ...discipleship to Jesus begins at the personal level of a relationship to Jesus as the King and Lord who saves and rules. Connection to Jesus unleashes the grace of God's bounty." – Scott McKnight

We are called by Jesus into a relationship of loyal love, empowered by the Spirit, in which we desire to express our trust and love through obedience to his teachings and way.

"The greatest issue facing the world today with all its heartbreaking needs is whether those who are identified as Christians will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence. That's it. Jesus is not looking for converts to Christianity. He is looking for apprentices to the Kingdom of God." – Dallas Willard