

Learning from the Sermon on the Mount #37 “The Meaning of ‘Enter through the Narrow Gate’”

Message Notes, October 31, 2021

- *Strait is the Gate (La Porte Étroite)* by French author André Gide
- Used to refer to entrance examination—“the narrow way”
- Endo Shusaku and Miura Ayako: the *weakling* and *stalwart* of the faith

Matthew 7:12-14 NIV ¹³“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

The Meaning of “Enter Through the Narrow Gate”

■ Urged to Choose

- *Enter*: the indefinite past tense is used, and its meaning is that Jesus commands us to “enter” after deeply contemplating and reaching a firm decision.
- No one else can make the decision for us; each must decide for himself, just as Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah and others have done before us.
Deuteronomy 30:19 “This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”
Joshua 24:15 “But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”
Jeremiah 21:8 “Furthermore, tell the people, ‘This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.’”
- It is not possible to enter through the narrow gate without making a deliberate decision to do so. Absent an intentional choice, a person will automatically be on the wide path, heading for the wide gate.
- The broad road is the one that is considered popular and attractive by this world. If we are not intentional, this is the way we will walk. But it is a road leading to destruction, and not a road for Christians to walk along. It is completely unfruitful.

■ Why the “Narrow Gate?”

- Why did Jesus say this to His disciples?
- What do the “narrow gate” and “narrow road” represent? Does it mean that they are difficult to find or difficult to travel on, but if a person perseveres and continues on, they will find salvation at the end? If so, Jesus would be recommending patience and hard work.
- The biblical view of life is based on the premise that life will always bring severe trials and storms (end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:25, 27). The Bible teaches us to plan our lives based on this premise.

■ What are the “Narrow Gate” and the “Narrow Road?”

- A person cannot pass through the narrow gate while carrying a lot of things. Previous teachings make it clear that one must be humble to pass through it, aware of the “poverty of one’s heart/spirit.”
- Sen no Rikyu’s tea room: Gracia Hosokawa, Saint Luke
- What experiences have taught you humility? What have you lost or had taken away? Letting go is a decision that is made daily, not just once.
Matthew 16:24-26 ²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶What good will it

be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

- “Then:” refers to the timing, after Jesus rejected Peter’s false image of the Messiah (i.e. the wide gate), which was common at the time.
- What things do you consciously avoid every day? How conscious are you of your tendency to use the wide gate instead of the narrow one? What measures do you take against the temptations you are prone to?
- Why does Jesus command us to be so careful? Are we in danger of losing eternal life?
1 Corinthians 3:10-15 ¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

■ Another meaning of the “Narrow Gate” and the “Narrow Road”

- God removes unnecessary burdens from us so that we can focus on our mission in life.
Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
- The Holy Spirit walks alongside us on the (narrow) path, so that we are not alone, and guides us in a life that fills our souls.
- This way of walking promotes the growth of our true self, rather than comparing ourselves with others or following the trendy ways of the world.
- How do you want to live your short, fleeting life here on earth? Do you want to just barely make it into heaven, or do you want to live in a way that bears fruit and has meaning that will last forever?

■ An Image of the “Narrow Gate”

Psalms 1:1-3 ¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

- Why do we start from a place of negativity or elimination? Because we do not live in a vacuum, but rather constantly experience tension with temptation, we are forced to make conscious decisions about which road we will take.
- In the midst of this tension, the psalmist emphasizes his conscious choice to look up to the Lord and strive to carry out the work of the day, through constant communion with Him.
- This way of life leads to a great harvest in the season the Lord has prepared for us.

■ Conclusion

- What narrow gate did God use to teach you humility?
- What decisions is the Lord leading you to make right now?
- What blessings has the Lord offered you so far, as you have walked through life with Him?
- What words of encouragement is the Lord giving you to stand against the temptations of the world that seek to draw you in?