

Two Roads

Matthew 7:12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

- "So," Jesus said as He summed up what He'd been teaching. Most believe this takes us back to **Matthew 5:17**, and I agree. It's worth our attention because it sets up the following verse. Generally speaking, Jesus taught the audience to love others the way they would want to be loved.
- **That's the way to go.**
- It's been called "The Golden Rule," as you know. Did you know there's another called "The Silver Rule" because it's close to Jesus' teaching but not on par? It's the negative aspect of the Golden Rule.
 - Confucius (6th BCE Chinese philosopher) supposedly said, "Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself."
 - Tobit 4:15 (*Tobit is part of what is considered the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical scripture and appears in the Old Testament of Catholic Bibles*) says, "Do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate."
 - Jewish rabbi Hillel said, "What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is only commentary" (*Shabbath*, 31a).
 - This is called the Silver Rule. It's the negative rule of the Golden rule.
- Yet, not hating someone doesn't mean you've done anything for anyone. Jesus' standard is higher. Do to others what you wish they would do to you. "We can do nothing and still completely satisfy the demands of the Silver Rule." The Golden Rule doesn't allow us to weasel our way out of love.

Matthew 7:13–14 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

- The truth is that Jesus was already paving the road to life. He was giving a picture of the road, the way of life, that leads to the Kingdom gate, if you will. That's what we're talking about today. **What road are you on? What's your life about? Where are you headed? Why have you chosen that road?**
- I always appreciate the honesty behind Jesus' teachings because though it's difficult to hear, it prepares you for the real world. Here's the reality: the way that leads to heaven's gate is hard. "Wait! What about all the passages that say the opposite?"
 - **1 John 5:3** "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."
 - **Matthew 11:28–30** "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
 - **Acts 15:10** Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

- **Galatians 5:1** For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.
- **Matthew 23:4** They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.
- **Galatians 6:2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- **2 Corinthians 1:8-9** For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.
 - **2 Corinthians 4:8** We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;
 - In fact, let's read **2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18**. It's all about perspective. If you don't have a realistic idea of what's ahead, you'll choose the easy path. You're not crazy because you're going through something difficult. "It shouldn't be this difficult!" Don't say that. It's probably evidence that you're on the right road. It means you're sacrificing. It means you're fighting against the flesh. It means you're suffering for righteousness. It means you're carrying your cross.
- We know this road is hard. Sometimes you're going strong, and nothing seems to distract you. The other road and all those on it are out of sight, out of mind. However, as one of you told me this week, "Sometimes it feels like you're on the side street running parallel to the main highway. You can see everyone on it, and they seem to be living life with ease and happiness. They're all laughing and waving. Just look at them! However, we all know better than that, don't we? We know they encounter trials and tribulations. Even if they seem to experience more happiness or ease (in a way, they do at times), we know where the road leads and how it all ends. You either believe this, or you don't!"
- **What it really means?** Yet, there's something else we need to face head-on: it's not all about us. In fact, that's why others find themselves on the other road. It's not about life's comforts right now. It's not about a lack of tribulation right now. It's about choosing God over ourselves. That's what the other road ultimately represents. It's choosing yourself over God. Is this not God's real problem with His people of old? Remember **Jeremiah 2:2-7, 12-13**? Remember **Jeremiah 6:16** *Thus says the Lord: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'* Have we forgotten **Jeremiah 10:23**, *"I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps."* They were choosing themselves over God. They believed it was in themselves to get it right and find life. Perhaps we turn to passions, pleasures, and entertainment because we've not found joy?

How do you stay on the path?

- **We should continually speak to God.** Last week we discussed the importance of prayer. We're not bothering God. He wants to hear from us, but we must remember the principle behind James 1 & 4: Ask God and do it in faith. James confirms that we are often without because we simply do not ask and/or don't ask in faith.

- **Count your blessings.** We tend to focus on the negative. It's what we think and talk about. However, Paul also told us to think about what is pure, lovely, worthy of praise, etc. We allow ourselves off the hook when Paul is really commanding it for our own good. Not feeling content is difficult when you're purposely focusing on the good. But, we have to do it, brethren. Not talk about it. Not try it out for a bit. Do it.
- **Walk by someone.** Recently, a friend of mine delivered a message including a great question: "Who are you the most "you" around? Those are the people you walk with. Are they helping you? Jesus is making a specific point. However, He's not saying you have to walk alone. We need godly people to walk by us, and we already struggle because our culture is so busy and independent. We often struggle with joy or energy because we feel isolated and overwhelmed.
- **Grow in love.** Jesus' illustration isn't meant to be picked apart. Obviously, as you know, we're doing more than walking down a street. We're growing in love for God and others, but this needs to come to fruition by bearing fruit. We need to actively seek God's word. We need to take the initiative and help others out. **If you're not growing in love with God and others, you're growing out of love with everyone.** This is the real reason we're struggling. Love for God is the motivator behind everything we do, brethren.

Luke 13:22–30 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

- There's much to be thankful for today. Be glad there is a road that can be followed. Be grateful there is a door to be opened. Be thankful it doesn't lead to a dead end. Be grateful that those who are faithful will be granted entrance. You know what happens when you finally reach the gate and enter? You get to rest. Like Jesus who is now seated having accomplished the Father's will (Heb. 4), so will you take rest as Jesus promised. You'll recline at the table and feast!