

# The Sermon On The Mount

*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.  
2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: (Matthew 5:1-2 ESV)*

## **The Narrow Way**

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**

**Matthew 7:12-14**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 7.

We're officially in the home stretch – the conclusion – of the Sermon on the Mount. I would argue that it began with the passage that we studied last Sunday. Last week we were reminded that we have the resources of heaven at our disposal. After calling us to what feels like an IMPOSSIBLE standard of righteousness, Jesus leans in close and reminds that our Father in heaven will give us everything we need for life and godliness. We simply need to 'ask, seek and knock'.

Here now, in verse 12, we come to what is affectionately known as 'the Golden Rule'. I had originally planned to dedicate an entire sermon to this verse but, as I sat down to write that sermon, it felt a bit redundant. Because – having walked through the Sermon on the Mount so carefully over this past year – I recognize now that the golden rule is not a *new* development in Jesus' sermon; it's the *summary*.

And it leads to a call to response.

That's what we will find in our passage for this morning. Look with me to Matthew 7:12-14. Hear now God's holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today.

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

<sup>13</sup> “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. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:12-14 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

This morning, we're going to take this passage in two parts. First, let's focus on verse 12 where we find a summary statement: The Golden Rule.

### A Summary: The Golden Rule

The opening word of this passage – 'so' – is a translation of the Greek word 'ouv'. This is the same word that we translate as 'therefore'. It is a *summarizing* word – a word that signals that what we are reading is the *natural conclusion* of what came before it. The question we need to ask, therefore, is *what* are we meant to be summarizing here? Is he summarizing the previous paragraph? The whole chapter? How does this fit together?

Thankfully, Jesus is very clear about what he is summarizing. Look again at verse 12:

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

He is summarizing his teaching on the Law and the Prophets. This is a *conclusion* to the argument that began *all the way back* in chapter 5 where Jesus said:

Do not think that I have come to abolish **the Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Matthew 5:17 ESV)

From Matthew 5:17 through to our text this morning, Jesus went on to explain the righteousness that God truly requires of us as citizens of His kingdom. Remember, the Pharisees were accusing Jesus of a form of *lawlessness*. They thought that he was calling his disciples *away* from righteousness. But, they had it all wrong! Jesus wasn't calling us *away* from the law – he was inviting us *further in!*

The Pharisees never understood it. They treated it like it was merely external: 'Do this, don't do that, say this, don't say that, eat this, don't eat that.' What they didn't realize is that the righteousness that God requires of us needs to first be applied *internally*. God's plan for your life is not simply to restrain your bad behaviour – His plan for your life is to *reorder* your *affections!*

God's chief concern is not simply *what you do*. The Pharisees seemingly did all the right things, but Jesus said of them:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. (Matthew 23:27 ESV)

It is possible to do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. Which is why, God looks *past* our actions to assess what matters most: Our hearts. As the Pharisees demonstrated, anybody can *do* the right thing. But God calls us to more than that. He calls us to *do* the right thing because we *love* the right thing.

The Pharisees never truly understood the Law. We catch a glimpse into this misunderstanding when we compare Jesus' summary in verse 12 with the summary that was widely known by the Pharisees of Jesus' day. About ten years before Jesus' ministry, Rabbi Hillel – one of the most influential Jewish Rabbis – was asked to give a summary of the law. It is recorded that he said:

“What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it” (b Shabbath 31a).<sup>1</sup>

Look closely at Rabbi Hillel's summary of the law, and compare it to Jesus' summary here in verse 12:

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

Can you spot the difference? The summary that was famous with the Pharisees put all the emphasis on *restraint*. ‘If you don't want someone to do something to you, then don't do it to them. *This is the whole Law.*’ But Jesus' statement is *positive*: ‘Do to others what you wish they would do to you. *This is the Law.*’

That's a fundamental difference! So, who was right? Was the Law simply about *restraining* evil? Or was it about *commending* love? Jesus – being himself the Author of the Law – is teaching us here that the Pharisees had it all wrong. And this isn't Jesus *changing* the Law. No, he's simply

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Matthew-Luke)*, ed. Frank A. Gaebelin, vol. 8, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 187.

*revealing* what the Pharisees with their hard hearts had missed. Consider, for example, what the Law teaches in Exodus 23:4-5:

If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, **you shall bring it back to him.** <sup>5</sup>If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; **you shall rescue it with him.** (Exodus 23:4-5 ESV)

The Law was never simply about restraint! It was always meant to move us in the direction of love for others. Which is why Jesus taught us back in chapter 5:

But I say to you, **Love your enemies** and **pray for those who persecute you,** <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:44-45 ESV)

The righteousness that Jesus calls us to is so much deeper than simply, ‘Don’t treat people poorly.’ NO! He is calling us to actively LOVE and SERVE and BLESS others! Even people who mistreat us! Even people who behave like enemies!

THIS is the Law and the Prophets – that you do to others what you would have them do to you. Love others with the same protecting and preserving love that you extend to yourself.

For homework, go home today and reread the Sermon on the Mount with this summary in mind. Listen again as he calls you away from anger, lust, divorce, deceit, retaliation, hatred, hypocrisy, unforgiveness, worldliness, and judgementalism.

Resemble Jesus to the world! Reach out in love, even to the people who treat you like garbage. Be salt! Be light! It’s going to feel impossible at times to love the people who hate you, but that’s why Jesus just invited you to ask, seek, and knock. Your Father in heaven is committed to providing you with everything that you need for life and godliness.

If you would follow Jesus, then this is the life that you have been called and empowered to live.

Having summarized the Sermon, Jesus now concludes with application. He looks out over his would-be disciples – people like you and me – and he sets a choice before them. Look with me again at verses 13-14:

<sup>13</sup>“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. <sup>14</sup>For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV)

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been telling us about his Kingdom. It is a kingdom that is unlike the world – a kingdom where humility and love reign and where pride and contempt are laid low. It is a kingdom that calls forth the *best* in you! A kingdom that demands that you leave behind your sin, and that you finally become who it is that God made you to be!

But not everyone wants that kingdom. According to Jesus, many will choose to go another way.

I want to make sure that you understand what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is calling you to make a decision. Some of us don't like making decisions. We like to spend our lives sitting on the fence. We like to drag our feet, mull our options, and avoid commitment. But I need you to understand this morning that Jesus is not leaving that option open to you. Right now, in this moment, two gates are set before you.

## Two Gates

First, Jesus describes:

### 1. The wide gate with the easy road

We see this in verse 13:

For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (Matthew 7:13 ESV)

Unfortunately, some people just want easy.

And – while a life lived with Jesus is many things – ‘easy’ is not one of them. As one old pastor said:

It is too glorious and wonderful to be easy.<sup>2</sup>

Listen: The gate is *wide* that leads to easy. You don't need to leave *anything* behind to go that way.

Teenagers, if you choose the wide gate, you can go to all the parties and chase after all the girls. That gate is *wide open* for you today, and it would be so easy for you to jump into the crowd that's headed down that road.

Men, if you choose the wide gate, you can keep spending all your money on yourself. You can keep that secret addiction and lean into that anger problem. It would be easy.

Women, if you choose the wide gate, you can keep harbouring that unforgiveness and resentment. You can listen to your discontentment and go out and find take for yourself a better life. You can live for YOU! It's easy.

You can bring everything with you on the easy road! All your greed! All your selfishness! All your ego! Pride, lust, hatred – you can literally fit *anything* through the wide gate!

That's why so many people are on that easy road! It's the road you take when you've decided that God doesn't get to tell you what to do. Everyone on the easy road has chosen to be the lord of their own kingdom. In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul describes them. He writes:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:21-22 ESV)

One problem with the easy road is that it can be a chaotic road at times. Take one honest look at the world and you can see that. Sometimes people decide that they are entitled to steal your country. Other times, they decide they are entitled to steal your spouse. The easy road is a chaotic

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<sup>2</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 483.

road, but that's the price of freedom! Better to live in anarchy than to surrender to the Lordship of another. The motto on the easy road is the same as it was in the days of the judges:

In those days there was no king in Israel. **Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**  
(Judges 21:25 ESV)

You can take that road. Perhaps you're already on it.

But Jesus is challenging you here to ask an important question: Have you given any thought as to where this road leads? As Martyn Lloyd-Jones warns:

The man who does not consider his destination is a fool.<sup>3</sup>

Have you ever stopped to consider where the easy road leads? It's not a mystery. Jesus tells us:

For the gate is wide and the way is easy **that leads to destruction** (Matthew 7:13b ESV)

The wide gate that makes no demands upon you – the easy road that allows you indulge sin and selfishness – is *leading to a destination*. And Jesus warns here that the destination is destruction. In Revelation, we catch a terrifying glimpse of the final destruction that comes at the end of the easy road:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15 ESV)

Is that where your road is leading? Are you so enamored with your sin – so in love with your *freedom* to ignore God – that you would cast yourself into the pit rather than bow to the God who made you and loves you? Jesus is calling you away from destruction. For the glory of God, and for

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<sup>3</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 492.

the salvation of your eternal soul, please don't ignore this warning. One old puritan captures the tragedy when he writes:

This will be the hell of hell, when men shall think that they have loved their sins more than their souls; when they shall think what love and mercy has been almost enforced upon them, and yet they would perish... Then they shall acknowledge Christ to be without any blame, themselves without any excuse.<sup>4</sup>

If that's you, then get OFF the easy road! Run back through the wide gate! Push against the crowd that is pulling you along in the wrong direction and choose today to enter:

## 2. The narrow gate with the hard road

Jesus is issuing an invitation to you today. Look again:

<sup>13</sup> **“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. <sup>14</sup> **For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.** (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV)

LIFE is being offered to you today! But, if you would receive this life, then you first need to enter through the narrow gate. That 'gate' is none other than Jesus himself. He tells us:

**I am the door.** If anyone enters by me, he will be saved (John 10:9a ESV)

And again:

**I am the way,** and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6b ESV)

Jesus is the narrow gate. The only way to the Father is through him.

In order to enter the narrow gate, you need to bow down. You need to repent for attempting to be the lord of your own life, and you need to surrender in faith to the rightful King. As you do that,

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1630, 1998), 77.

Jesus will take all that sin that kept you from fitting through the gate, and he will remove it from you as far as the east is from the west. As Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9 ESV)

Unlike the wide gate that leads to death; in order to enter through this narrow gate, you can't bring your sin with you. If you would follow Jesus – if you would be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven – then you need to renounce the ways of the kingdom of the world. You need to renounce the anger, lust, deceit, retaliation, hatred, hypocrisy, unforgiveness, worldliness, and judgementalism that Jesus has called us away from in this sermon. That garbage doesn't belong in his kingdom. If you try to bring that sin with you, then you won't fit through the narrow gate.

But if you confess it to him – if you lay it at the foot of the cross right now – if you look in faith to Jesus and ask him to be the Lord of your life – then you can enter in.

We haven't finished with this passage – however – until we note that not only is the gate *narrow* but the way is also *hard*. There's a reason why this invitation comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. This whole Sermon is describing the *supernatural, countercultural, otherworldly* life of righteousness that we are called to live as followers of Jesus. If you are considering stepping off of the easy road, then make no mistake – a life following Jesus is a hard life. The Apostle Paul reminded the churches in Galatia:

**through many tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22b ESV)

He told them this after he had been stoned and left for dead! He stood before the church a few weeks after his attempted execution – still bruised and broken – and he said: 'THIS is the road that leads to the kingdom.' Paul didn't tell the church to turn back! He didn't tell them that they had chosen the wrong path! No, he told them to press forward, and he reminded them that the road that leads to life is HARD! It is! But – and hear this – IT IS WORTH IT!

Paul was experiencing exactly what Jesus said he would experience. Do you remember what Jesus said at the start of the Sermon on the Mount?

**“Blessed are those who are persecuted** for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.<sup>12</sup> **Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,** for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12 ESV)

Listen: Jesus is offering you everlasting life! Your reward is GREAT in heaven!

But in order to lay hold of that reward, you must follow in his steps. This is the clear and consistent message of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul told the church in Rome:

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.** (Romans 8:16-17 ESV)

Suffering today. Glory tomorrow.

A cross today. A crown tomorrow.

Persecution and rejection today. Commendation and acceptance tomorrow.

That’s the invitation. Die to yourself. Take up your cross. Turn away from your old life and resolve to follow Jesus, wherever he leads. Enter the narrow gate. Walk the hard road. And you will LIVE!

In Revelation 21, we catch an incredible glimpse into the destination that awaits us at the end of the hard road. We read:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

<sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”  
(Revelation 21:1-5a ESV)

Have you entered through the narrow gate?

Nowhere is this more vividly and powerfully portrayed than through Christian baptism. In Christian baptism, you forsake the easy road and walk against the crowd. You stand alone before the world, and you announce that you are taking a different path. The old you has died. The old life you knew has been left behind. You have become united with Christ. His death is your death. His life is your life. You go into the water because you have chosen the narrow gate. You come out as one resolved to walk the hard way.

Some of you have been deferring and delaying for too long. When life and death hang in the balance, fence sitting is simply not an option. Choose today who you will serve.

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. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.