

# The Broad Way to Hell

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 7:13  
**Preached on:** Sunday, February 18, 2018

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I invite you to turn to the Gospel of Matthew 7 for a most significant text that we are going to consider here this morning. To call it most significant is to underestimate its weight and its importance. Matthew 7, beginning at verses 13 and 14, our Lord Jesus said,

13 Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

We spent the past couple of weeks kind of addressing this text in an introductory way, you might say. We said that the command "enter" is a command of love; it's a loving gracious command from our Lord that he gives for our well-being. We talked about the fact that what the significance of the narrow gate was. We haven't exhausted that yet and we won't today either, but we made mark of the fact that over 85% of the world does not even make any claim whatsoever to biblical Christianity, and then the remaining 15% are not all believers. We looked and we saw that the nature of biblical salvation is that there are few who are saved; that they were eight people who went into the ark before destruction came upon the whole world; that there were three people who escaped from Sodom and Gomorrah with their lives; and on it goes. This is a searching sermon that Jesus has given us in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, the Sermon on the Mount, and he is now bringing it to a close and what he is doing here in verses 13 and 14 is this: he is impressing upon us the soberness, the seriousness, the urgency of responding to what he has said. He has laid forth the reality of life in his kingdom, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He opens up on the theme of the kingdom and he goes through a number of things about the character of the one who truly belongs to the kingdom, his relationship to the world, his relationship to the law of God, his relationship to the Father, his relationship to other men, and having described everything about his kingdom to his audience, he comes to this evangelistic call in verse 13 and he says, "Enter"; the implication being that you are outside this kingdom from where you are standing, come from where you are at and enter into the kingdom.

We made a big point of the fact that it is the nature of man to rebel against the commands of God. It is the nature of man to resist and want his autonomy, to cast suspicions on why

God would make commands like he does and to, therefore, dismiss his commands to avoid them and to, frankly, disobey them. That's endemic to the nature of man in Adam. And we made the extensive point to show us that that is an entirely wrong and treasonous way to think about God. God's commands are given from his holy, gracious, loving nature. God when he commands us, is seeking our well-being. He is seeking our good. He is not trying to restrict the freedom and enjoyment we would get out of life any more than a child who is running to the street hears the command from his father, "Stop! Don't go into the street!" "But dad, you're restricting my freedom. I shall go into the street as I wish." That would be foolish. We all understand the foolishness bound up in the heart of a child that would reject the command of his father meant for his protection. We are not as quick to see the fact that God gives us commands and the Lord Jesus Christ gives us commands for our own well-being, for our own eternal good.

So what we are hoping that the Lord is doing in our hearts as we've studied these things over the past couple of weeks and come back to it today, is that the Lord has worked in us a sensitivity, a tenderness, a receptivity to what God would say to us understanding that the one who gave his life for sinners on the cross of Calvary could only be concerned for their well-being; to do them good and not to do them ill; to give them blessing, not to give them cursing by the things that he says. So we approach the text here today with that spirit in mind. Jesus has turned a final corner in the Sermon on the Mount as we come to verse 13, and now he is giving a command, he is giving some caution, and he is showing the consequences of the call. The command: enter through the narrow gate. The caution: beware of false prophets who would distract you and turn you away from the narrow gate. And the consequences: you're going to either have a house that you've built on my word and it will stand the storms of judgment, or you will reject my words, you will not act upon them, you will go on your own way and when judgment comes, the wind and the rain will hit your house and it will collapse and you won't survive the judgment. Jesus says these things not just to frighten us; to instill, yes, a fear of God in us that we would respond to it, but he gives these things for our well-being.

And surrounding this final section, verses 13 to 29, is a great sense of urgency. There is a great sense of importance. There is a high sense of emphasis that is given into what Jesus says here, and what he does, I want to show you this by way of introduction, Jesus here at the end of chapter 7 uses a series of paired contrasts. He makes a series of contrasts to establish the urgency of his message and to press upon us, to press upon you, the fact that you're on either one path or the other. There aren't multiple paths. There are only two paths here and to press upon us the urgency of considering where you're at and considering the outcome that those paths lead to.

So look at verse 13 and 14 with me again. He speaks of two gates: one that leads to destruction, the other that leads to life. He says in verse 13, "the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction." That's one gate. It contrasts with a second gate in verse 14, "the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life." Broad gate going to destruction; narrow gate going to life. Think, choose wisely how you respond.

He speaks of two trees, one with good fruit, one with bad fruit. Look at verse 17 with me, which we will look at in future weeks. He says,

17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18  
A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good  
fruit.

We all understand that. He uses sometimes the simplest, and I mean this in a reverent, high and exalted way, he uses some of the most homely examples, homely in the sense that they are so simple and obvious that anyone can understand them. A good tree produces good fruit, a bad tree produces rotten fruit, and he draws another contrast for us to consider, for us to be thinking about. One gate versus another. One tree versus another.

He goes on in verse 21 and he describes two groups of people at judgment: one which called him Lord with their lips, the other which actually did his will. Look at verse 21, he says,

21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of  
heaven, but [a particle of contrast] he who does the will of My Father who  
is in heaven will enter.

You have some, you have others of different quality.

He goes on in a very famous aspect of this text of the Sermon on the Mount and describes two houses, one built on a rock, another built on sand. Look at verse 24 with me and, again, notice the contrast that he is making. He says, verse 24,

24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them,  
may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And  
the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed  
against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the  
rock.

A wise man, a house built on the rock. Verse 26 by contrast,

26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them,  
will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell,  
and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house;  
and it fell--and great was its fall.

A wise man, a foolish man. A house on rock, a house built on sand.

Do you see the contrasts? Jesus is painting in black and white tones. He is speaking of mutually exclusive groups here. Those that enter the narrow gate are distinct from, separate from, those who enter through the broad gate. A good tree, a bad tree. Those who call me Lord and those who actually do my will. A wise man, a foolish man. A

house on a rock, a house on sand. There is no intermediate ground. This isn't a Venn diagram where there are overlapping circles and you can find portions that belong to both circles. It's not like that. These two circles of people and these two circles of judgment and these two circles of future outcome are separate and cannot be joined together.

So, therefore, these are matters of urgency and here's what I would have you to see, beloved, is that as Jesus establishes these contrasts, he is addressing your soul directly to consider which path you are on, which realm you are belonging to, which kind of house you are building. You see, this is urgent and there are great great consequences to your answer. There are great consequences, beloved, to your choices in response to his word here. And when I say great, you know, we've watered down the word "great" so much that it's really not of very great adjective anymore, is it? "That was a great hamburger. That was a great game. That was a great so and so. It was great to see him." All referring and attached to things that are a very passing, temporary, inconsequential things of reference. When I use the word "great" with you here this morning, we mean great in the sense of transcendent. We mean great in the sense of that which has eternal consequences. We mean great in the sense that it establishes a chasm between your eternal well-being and your eternal destruction. The consequences are great. They are vast and it is so urgent for you to consider them.

Now last time, as I said, we saw that biblical Christianity is a narrow way. It belongs to a distinct minority of the world population and now we come to this text in verse 13 that talks about the broad gate, the broad gate that accommodates many people. Let's look at it once more. We are only going to look at verse 13 in the sense that will become clear. Let's look at it once more, and I would ask you, each one of you, to do this for me today, if you would. I don't know, I know that many of you turn to the texts when I point out texts, I would ask each one of you to please do that today because it is so very important for you to see these things in black and white. We're going to be speaking of lofty and incredibly important themes and I'm going to try to restrain myself so that the text is what speaks with power to your heart today, to not be overly emotional in what I say, and so looking at the text is going to be very important for you today.

Verse 13 with that in mind, each one looking to his Bible or device. Chapter 7, verse 13. Jesus says,

13 Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

This first gate of which he speaks is wide. It is broad. In other words, it accommodates many many people but, beloved, here's what you need to see in light of everything that we've been talking about: there is no safety in numbers. It does not do anyone any good at all to look at a Gallup poll and see what the majority believes about God or about salvation. There is no safety in that at all because the masses don't understand, the masses don't know. Jesus said it's a broad gate and there are many who enter through it. Friend, you cannot rely on public opinion. You can't rely on what your circle of acquaintances tell you about the nature of salvation. You have to come straight back to the words of

Jesus. That's the only place where there is safety. And this gate of which Jesus speaks in verse 13 is a gate that leads to eternal destruction. The people who enter through this gate are not troubled by things like the authority of the Bible; they are not troubled by the exclusive claims of Christ when he says, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me." They don't take that seriously. They cast it aside. They go on with their life untroubled by what the implications might be, and at times, they also encourage others to follow them in their indifference and careless approach to spiritual life. But friends, what we need to do is we need to contemplate what this means.

Why is this gate so broad? Jesus obviously is speaking about the gate that leads into his kingdom. Why is the gate so broad? Well, there are so many ways to go through it, for one thing. You know, some people walk in false religion. We saw numbers of 6.5 billion out of 7.6 billion identified with the major religions of the day that have nothing to do with Christ. Many people walk that way. So you've got some who are religious in some manner of speaking, you have some who deny the existence of God altogether. You have some who would hear of Christ and deliberately defiantly reject him, "I will not have that man reign over me!" You have others who are passively indifferent, "Eh, I'm glad that works for you. I'm not interested." You have some that go to liberal churches and hear all about social justice. You have some that go to Bible churches and hear the Bible taught, but never respond in faith. You have some men who are moral, outwardly righteous, inwardly uninterested in Christ. You have those that are outwardly immoral, profligate sinners, promiscuous, drunken, all other manner of immorality marking their lives. You have some who are brilliant academics with multiple doctorates attached to their last name. You have some who are ignorant pagans living in jungles with no thread of spiritual life brought to them. All of them, all of them going through a broad gate, neglecting the narrow gate of Christ, and Jesus says all of them going to a place that leads to destruction. They go to a realm of destruction.

Look at verse 13 with me again. Matthew 7:13. We want to keep this clear and front and center in our mind. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it." Do you know what, beloved? Do you know what this means? It means that because it is broad, because it is a wide way, it means that it is easy to go to destruction. It is not difficult to go to hell at all. You just keep going and doing what you're doing and thinking what you're thinking, keeping your Bible closed, indifferent to Christ. It's easy to go to hell. The way is so broad there is room for lots of people. There is room, literally, there is literally room for billions of people to go elbow locked in elbow plunging off the cliff.

They go to a realm of destruction and what is that realm of destruction, we should say, we should ask, we should answer? You know, this concept of destruction in the totality of Matthew's Gospel is a dominant theme and I want you to see this. You know, let's back up for just a moment and acknowledge something. Jesus has been reduced in many sections of the popular mind, and even in the realm of the so-called professing church, to something not much more than a fuzzy teddy bear that you can go and cuddle up to and he will make you feel better, he will make life better for you, and the idea that he might actually be a personal threat to you never crosses anyone's mind. Well, you know, you

can only have that kind of benign concept of Jesus if you never read the Gospels, if you never read the Bible, because as we're going to see in just a moment, we're going to see as many people have pointed out, that there is no one in the Bible that says more about hell and eternal judgment than the Lord Jesus does, and I want to show you that and show you that this is a dominant theme. When Jesus says destruction in Matthew 7:13, what is he talking about? Well, we can look at the totality of the Gospel of Matthew and have our understanding informed not by me giving you a definition out of a dictionary, you can see it for yourself as you read the text that I'm going to point to you, and that's why it is so important for you to turn and see it in black and white with your own eyes.

Go back to Matthew 3, if you would. John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Messiah, of course, said in verse 11 of Matthew 3:11, speaking to those that were listening to him teach. He said,

11 As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Even John the Baptist was speaking by way of these contrasts, the wheat and the chaff, that off product of dust of the harvest that is just blown out, gathered up and burned. John the Baptist said there is one coming after me, as he was pointing to Christ, saying he is going to have a ministry that will separate the sheep from the goats, another biblical contrast, and there will be judgment upon those that disbelieve. Those that belong to him, he will gather into his barn, he will gather into his place of safety. So you see the concept of unquenchable fire introduced early on in the Gospel of Matthew through the words of John the Baptist.

Even within the context of the Sermon on the Mount, we see that Jesus was speaking about these themes in ways that are unmistakable and cannot be missed. Matthew 5:22, if you would turn there with me. Matthew 5:22, Jesus said,

22 ... I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Look at verse 29 where he says,

29 If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

He is speaking about a place of eternal judgment, a fiery place of eternal condemnation. He's not mincing words, and as I've said so many times, he's teaching for keeps. Jesus is not bluffing as he says these things. He is uttering words of sober truth and so he is teaching us and he is warning us about an unseen realm that still belongs to the future for those of us that are living in the flesh today, to realize that there is a realm of judgment that awaits the outcome of our lives, and he says that this realm of judgment is a place where many are going, and it is a place of destruction, he says, and therefore he says, "Enter into my kingdom." He says, "As I have taught you, as you have been made aware of this realm of destruction, understand that if you do not belong to me, you are on the path that leads there." And he whistles, as it were, "Come away. Come out of that and enter into my kingdom. Come to me and enter through me into a place where alone you can find safety."

Look at Matthew 10:28. Jesus says,

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

He says, "You're afraid of men, you're afraid of the opinions of men, you are afraid of what men say about you or what men can do to you," and he says, "You are fearing the wrong thing. Your focus is wrong and your affections are set on the wrong things, and what you fear is all messed up. You're afraid of a man and the worse that a man can do is to kill your body." Jesus says, "Think differently. Realize that there is something that transcends this earthly life and your physical existence." He says, "Don't consume yourself with fear about what man can do to you, your great fear for your own well-being should be at the hands of the God who is able and willing to destroy men body and soul in hell for their sin."

Look at it there. Look at it again with verse 28. We have to get over these superficial views of God that do not provoke a proper sense of fear in our hearts. Jesus says, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Look beyond this life. Look beyond man. Look to God. Look to him in his holiness. Look to him in his judgment and there find the proper place of fear for your heart and soul, and in that proper place of fear, find your response which is what we're seeing in verses 13 and 14.

We're not done yet. The weight of the many passages, the sheer number of them even in the Gospel of Matthew, helps instruct us about the prominence that Jesus gave to this in his teaching. Look at chapter 18 with me. Matthew 18, beginning in verse 8. He says,

8 If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.

Weigh out the consequences. How much do you love sin? Do you love it enough to go full bodied into hell? Or do you fear God properly enough to repent, to leave behind the things that your sinful heart loves and cherishes enough to receive Christ? To repent, to come to him for eternal life? To come to him for forgiveness? You know, there are billions of people who love their sin and love their false religion so much so that they will cling to it even at the gracious invitation of Christ to come out of it. And what happens? They go to hell clinging to their idols, clinging to their false religion. They have what they wanted in life, it carries them like a torrent into destruction.

In verse 9 he says there in chapter 18,

9 If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

Weigh out what really matters, in other words. Consider the path that you are on. Consider what you are doing and, beloved, do what very few people will do: contemplate the outcome of the path that you are on. Contemplate the outcome of a life of unrepentant sin and you'll see that you are trading away eternity for the sake of your passing lusts and pleasures when you refuse to come to Christ, when you refuse to repent, and you have traded a momentary sliver of a second for your intoxicating desires; you are preferring that over the benefits of his kingdom. Don't you see how good Jesus is? How loving and gracious he is to instruct us, to inform us, to show us these things in a way that is undeniable and easy to understand so that we would not continue on our foolish paths, our foolish self-will, bowing down to the idols of our sin and our false gods and our false philosophies? Jesus has made it so plain that there are consequences to that and he stands, as it were, on the side of that broad way and says, "Over here. Come through this gate. Come this narrow way. Don't go with the rest."

Beloved, beloved, the only way that you are going to escape from that broad way that leads to destruction is if you are willing to step out from the crowd and go to the Lord on your own. There is nothing in this world, there is nothing in unregenerate man's thinking that is pushing you in the direction of Christ. You cannot rely on the unsaved people around you to give you sound advice about eternity. You can only trust what the Lord Jesus says and Christ says, "You have to come out of that. You have to come out of the world. You have to come to me and enter my kingdom through me alone, otherwise the consequences are so great and so vast and so unthinkable." But he has told us. He has told us again and again and again and again. "This is the outcome," and he minces no words as he speaks about destruction and fiery hell.

One more, Matthew 25:41. We won't take time to go into all the context. He says, speaking of himself, he says,

41 ... He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;



And in verse 46 he says,

46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Oh beloved, don't you see? Don't you see where we are standing right now at this moment is we are standing on the precipice of hell. We are peering over the edge and looking into the consequences that the vast majority of humanity will feel for their sin, their rebellion and their false religion. We are standing right on the edge. Jesus has brought us right up to the edge and says, "Look down. Consider what is there and then step away. Turn around and come to me and enter into my kingdom through me lest that pit of destruction be your lot forever." He's not messing around, is he? Everyone in here, every one of us, how many are here, 200, are heading toward a time of separation. Those that belong to Christ, into eternal life. Those of you that do not, into this place called destruction. And what is this destruction? Let's define it more particularly. This destruction of which Jesus speaks is immediate conscious punishment for your sins. It is immediate conscious punishment for your sins that lasts forever.

Look over at the Gospel of Luke 16 with me. Luke 16, beginning in verse 19. Jesus says,

19 Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20 And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22 Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

Notice that his punishment is conscious, it is severe, and he describes himself as being in agony and he is asking for mercy, but mercy is denied.

Verse 25,

25 ... Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things [we keep seeing the contrast, don't we?]; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

He says, "My friend, this is permanent. This is sealed. There is no second chance. You had your life. You absorbed, you enjoyed your good things without regard to the things of God. You had it the way you wanted it, this is the outcome." And there is no promise of hope to him in that miserable condition, and it seems as though the rich man accepts that and is thinking beyond, and in verse 27 he said,

27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house-- 28 for I have five brothers--in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 But he said, 'No, father Abraham,

Isn't it amazing that even in the midst of conscious torment and punishment he's still objecting to the word of God? He is still seeking to instruct Abraham from his torment? Hell brings people and solidifies them even more in their rebellion.

29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'

Do you know what sinners need contrary to the claims of our charismatic friends, using that term broadly? They don't need to see miracles. They don't need to see people raised from the dead. They don't need to see signs and wonders because you can see those things and still not believe. In fact, Scripture says that that won't persuade them. The miracles won't persuade them. What they need to do is hear the word of God, and if they won't hear the word of God, they are sealing off hope from their souls. Hear Moses, hear Old Testament, hear the revelation of God. That's why we teach God's word here at Truth Community Church. That's why we put it on such prominent display, why it's the center of everything that we do when we gather together, it's because the power and the change and the invitation comes from the word and this other stuff is a distraction which only leads people further into their self-deception and hardens them in their sin. This is a great tragedy that Scripture speaks so clearly to.

You can go onto the internet, I won't send you to the site, you can go onto the internet and find people who are saying they have a ministry of resurrection, that they are actually raising people from the dead, as if that were true, which it's not. Don't ever fall for that kind of deception, beloved. But even in the clear words of Scripture, that has nothing to do with saving someone's soul. It is the word of God that produces the change in a heart. Hearing – listen – in Romans 10 it says "faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ," and so that shapes what we do.

Here we've seen the outcome, what this destruction looks like. We've seen a personal illustration of it in the rich man. Hades refers to the miserable abode of the unsaved dead and what happens there? What happens in this miserable realm? Well, you have the

picture of physical suffering, of accusing memories, and of conscious separation from God and the blessings of the righteous with no second chance. What is destruction? There is conscious suffering. There are accusing memories. There is conscious separation from God and there is an utter loss of hope. To enter into that realm at the end of your life is to enter into a realm where there is no hope ever, and to be aware of it, to be aware of your sufferings, to be aware of the consequences of sin, and to realize that there is no way out. The dungeon, as it were speaking metaphorically, has been locked and you are there forever. If you're not a Christian, death will seal your punishment. It will consign you to that realm never to leave it, and eventually you will experience a bodily resurrection that will bring about an assignment of a state so that you are fit for eternal punishment never to end.

Look at the Gospel of John 5:25, Jesus said,

25 Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life [and for our consideration for this morning], those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

They will be called from the dead one day and consigned to a final judgment and we read about that in Revelation 20. Turn there with me, please. Revelation 20:11, the Bible says, recording the vision of the Apostle John of this future time of this final calamity and end for unsaved men. He says in verse 11,

11 ... I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

It's an august and holy scene, isn't it? There is a sense of silence that falls upon this because of the magnitude of what we're reading about, and so holy and so fearsome is it, that earth and heaven would flee away if they could. We have no trivialization of God here. We have no trivialization of judgment. We have no promise that we'll all go to some place green and we'll all be happy and in a better place. Scripture speaks to something diametrically opposed to that. It says in verse 12

12 ... I saw the dead, the great and the small,

The brilliant academics and the ignorant pagan, to recall what we said earlier. Kings and peasants,

standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the

things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Beloved, remember in the context of Jesus speaking about the narrow gate and the broad way that leads to destruction, that leads to hell, this is the outcome for most of humanity. This is fearsome. This is tragic. This is revealed truth.

One final verse, chapter 21, verse 8 of Revelation. Interesting that the group, the realm of sin that is described here is far more than just those of the mass murderers and things like that. It's all manner of sin, even socially acceptable sins that are described ending up in this lake of fire. Verse 8,

8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

I think Scripture has made its point, don't you, that judgment is real? That judgment is eternal? That it is severe? That is final? That it is for many? God will judge unforgiven sinners in a body for the sins that they have done in the body. God will bring sinners individually before his Great White Throne and evaluate them by the standard of his character, of his law, of his revealed truth. If you go to Romans 1 you will find that they will even be judged if they didn't have the word of God. People say, "Well, what about those that never heard?" He will judge them by the standards of their own conscience and that will be enough to condemn them because everyone violates their own conscience, their own internal principle of right and wrong. All the world guilty before God. All the world heading toward judgment fit for their sins. He will bring them, he will evaluate them, he will find them as he already knew, he will find them wanting. He will find them short of the mark. He will find them rebels and he will say, "You have no part here. Depart from me into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." You will go and you will spend eternity where you spent your life, willingly under the reign of your father the devil, the father of lies, the father of murder. You will go where you were pleased to live your entire life, with them. He will declare them guilty. Punishment must follow and they will be given bodies that are fit to receive that punishment in hell. Matthew 25:46, "these will go away into eternal punishment."

My friend, as we said in our series of Catholicism, don't comfort yourself and take refuge in a false doctrine called purgatory that says, "Well, even if it takes millions of years, eventually this stuff will all burn off and I'll end up okay in the end." No, if that was the case, then it would be temporary punishment, it would not be eternal. Don't comfort yourself with the doctrine called annihilationism which is the teaching that God will

extinguish life and you will cease to exist. That's not what Scripture teaches. That would not be eternal punishment. And my friend, my friend, I would have you think about it in this sense. I like to say this to kind of help illustrate it: an eternal holy God has revealed his eternal holy character and he has revealed an eternal holy law; those who violate that character, those who violate that law, are subject to an eternal punishment because only eternal punishment could be a fit response for violating eternal holiness.

You know, this punishment is almost too horrible to contemplate, isn't it? Almost, I say almost because we have to contemplate everything that our Lord said. We have to contemplate what God has revealed in his word. It would almost, it is so fearsome it's like seeing a really bad house fire and you just kind of turn away, "Oh, I can't look." I see an injured person lying dying on the pavement, "Oh, I can't look." But God says, "No. Into this, you must look. This you must contemplate. You must fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." You must look. You must contemplate this or you have not dealt with the first principle of life, what happens to you when you die. Yes, the punishment is almost too horrible to contemplate but, beloved, I would say this: only a fool would avoid what God has revealed. Only a fool would reject and refuse to consider what God says is in his future. Yes, the punishment is almost too horrible to contemplate but we must.

Do you know what is even more horrible to contemplate? What we've been saying all along: the vast majority of humanity is on a broad way that leads to this exact destruction. Billions upon billions, a vast majority. This is the outcome for fallen humanity.

That's even more horrible to contemplate but do you know what's even still more horrible to contemplate, especially for me as I stand here? Some of you are on that broad path that leads to destruction. Some of you are on that broad way to destruction. This could be your lot, what we've just seen.

That's my breaking point. I can't go on from there so come with me on a little walk, if you will. We've walked up and we've peered into what the future holds for most of humanity and for some of you, and now we walk back and we come back to Matthew 7 where we began. We come back to Matthew 7:13 and with our minds in a sense consumed with the fear that a proper understanding of the biblical doctrine of hell produces for us, now we see this command in the way in which it should be properly understood in verse 13. We have spent three weeks, three hours of preaching, to come to this very point. That's how important it is, and the truth is if I was better at it, we would have spent 30 hours, but three will be enough. Jesus says in verse 13, speaking to those who will hear him, speaking to everyone who will hear him, speaking to those who have no qualification, no deserving, he says in verse 13, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it." Jesus comes to the mass of humanity, Jesus comes with a full understanding of eternal destruction in his mind as he says this, and he gives what we have seen is an urgent command, speaking to everyone who will hear and says, "Enter through the narrow gate. Come to me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He says,

"Enter." He holds out to you a free offer and says, "That does not have to be your lot. That does not have to be your destination. Enter through me."

Do you see why "enter" is such an urgent command? Most everyone is going there and it's bad when they get there and we are also subject to what people think and the influence of those around us, and we will give ear to foolish men before we will pay heed to Christ. That's why it's urgent.

Do you see why it's urgent? The outcome is unthinkable. It's too horrible to contemplate.

Do you see why, as we said a couple of weeks ago, why "enter" is a command of love? Jesus comes and speaks to those who will hear and says, "Come. Enter into my kingdom. Enter into this realm of blessing. Enter into this realm where my love is the dominating influence in your life. Enter into this realm where there is forgiveness and safety and refuge and deliverance and help in your helpless condition." It's a command of love. He says, "Come in. Enter into the ark of my salvation before the door is closed and the reign of judgment comes."

Do you see why "enter" is a command of warning? It's a command of love, "I care for you. Don't go there." It's a command of warning, "Don't go there! This is the outcome for everyone who rejects my words." It's a command of love, it's a command of warning.

My friend, do you see why the Gospel of Jesus Christ is rightly called good news? Jesus Christ made a blood sacrifice to save sinners just like you. Buried, raised again, ascended on high, and from that position of victory and conquest over sin, conquest over death, conquest over judgment, he invites you to come to him and to share in his victory. He has won the war. He has won the battle. He has overcome death and hell. He says, "I'll share the spoils with you. Just come to me." And it all belongs to you freely without condition.

Yes, Jesus Christ made a blood sacrifice on the cross to save sinners. My friends, my friends, my friends, see to the good of your eternal soul. Rise. Go to Christ and enter in. You must enter. Repent and put your faith in him and he will receive you and the fear of eternal destruction will no longer be over your head.

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Father, we stand, as it were, between heaven and hell at this moment. We stand between judgment and blessing. We stand between Christ and the devil, as it were. I pray that you would take what we have seen from your word today and plant it deep in hearts. Father, for those that are presently on the broad way that leads to destruction, help them to see that there is an off ramp. In Christ, there is a way out. In Christ, there is a refuge. In Christ, there is salvation, deliverance and help. Work in their hearts, Father, that they might flee to Christ for salvation and be saved.*

*Father, for those of us that are in Christ, we look at what could have been ours, what should have been ours, and we step back and we see, "Ah, but I am in Christ. Ah, but I do*

*belong to him. He has saved me." Father, may the reality of that from which we have been delivered fuel us to even greater praise, greater gratitude, greater obedience, a greater sense of devotion to this loving one who came to us at some point in the past and through some manner of human instrument said, "Come out of your sin and come to me and be saved."*

*Father, for us to be in that position means that you loved us first; that you cared for our souls; that the design of salvation included us from all of eternity. And the fact that we will not receive what our sins deserve, Father, is a cause for our great thanksgiving here this morning. We thank you for the blessing of being in Christ and knowing that no one will ever pluck us out of his hand; that we belong to Christ forever. Lord Jesus, that is what you have done and accomplished for us. All glory, laud and honor and praise be to your holy name, the one crucified and risen for sinners just like us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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