

Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey



Sermon on the Mount

Week 29

The Narrow Gate

Matthew 7:13 - 14

Opening Prayer:

The Call

The call to us at a time when great pieces of the future crumble in life is not so much to faith as it is to hope. Depression is the seedbed of hopelessness, the loss of surety that life must still somehow be full of good, however impossible it is to remember it, to see it, to trust it at this moment.

Hope does not tell us that soon life will be the same again as it was before the loss. No, hope tells us that the pieces are there for us to put together, if only we will give ourselves to the doing of it.

When Jesus dies on the cross something entirely different rises. And that something is the call to us to make the best in life live again.

The 12th station of the cross brings us face to face with the finality of defeat. Some things don't have a happy ending in life. They just grind on until loss becomes the new normal.

Sometimes we fail...

Sometimes we're beaten...

Sometimes we're lost...

Sometimes we're abandoned by the very people we love most in life and
who we thought also loved us...

Sometimes we learn that there's no going back to things that once were,
but are no more.

The question with which the 12th station confronts us is an awesome one. Am I able to accept the daily deaths of life, both the great ones and the small, knowing that death is not the end of life, only it's passing over to something new in me? Hopefully, I learn from Jesus who gave up himself, his mission, his life in ways that all seemed totally wrong, that the deaths I died may bring new life to the world around me as well.

When we take hold of life with all its deaths and all its resurrections, life becomes an eternal hotbed of creation given into the hands of the creature so that creation can go on creating.

Reflection

As we begin to come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes for us how to apply all this teaching into our lives.

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few.

Matthew 7:13 - 14

Several times throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has confronted us with a choice; here it is phrased in terms of a narrow gate and a constricted road. Living with the restrictions imposed by the current health crisis, this passage seems very real, very relevant. In so many ways, life has narrowed and become more and more constricted; perhaps this helps us understand this choice that Jesus once again puts before us.

Jesus wants us to choose life, but He recognizes that it is difficult, that the Christian way of life means living like Christ Himself which is not easy. It means coming face-to-face with judgment, face-to-face with God, face-to-face with the big questions of life, of our souls and our eternal destiny – the narrow gate. These are really hard questions to face and sometimes it feels as if a part of us is being left behind. To some extent that is true, for as Jesus tells us, *unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit* (John 12:24). We have to leave our old 'self' outside to pass through this gate.

If we are willing to enter into that hard, soul-searching work, Jesus assures us we are not alone, there is Someone on that road ahead of us. While there are few that seek this gate and this path, there are those that join us along the way to help us surrender what needs to be surrendered and embrace the richer life He offers.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is something that demands a decision and a committal. Jesus came across a man like Matthew, and said to him, 'Follow me', and Matthew got up and followed Him. Jesus doesn't say: 'Consider Me; admire Me'. He says, 'Follow Me; believe Me'. He always calls for a decision, for a commitment, but always with the promise that we are not alone, that He is there with us every step of the way.

Reflection Question: On Palm Sunday, Jesus passed through the gate into Jerusalem. What do I need to examine and change in order to "choose life" and leave my "old self" behind, so I can walk through the narrow gate with Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Speak to Jesus about what is on your heart, then rest in silence for a few moments listening for His response.