

**The Narrow Gate**  
Matthew 7:13-14  
*Halifax: 26 September 2004*

**Introduction**

Bad choices!

- There are so many bad choices we can make in this world!
  - When you go out to eat, you have to decide which restaurant to go to—
    - A bad choice will mean an unpleasant meal...
  - When you purchase a new couch, you have to make choices—
    - Do you get a new one or a used one? a cheap one or an expensive one? What colour and fabric should you choose?
    - A bad choice will involve discomfort, wasted time and money, an unattractive atmosphere in your home.
  - Many choices are much more significant than these...
    - Whom will I marry?
    - Where will I live?
    - What will I choose for my life's work?
    - A bad choice in these matters can mean years of misery...
      - The polish and slick salesmanship that attracted Susan when she married Tom, soon became a constant irritation.
      - The poor souls that moved to Russia to join in the communist revolution in the days of Lenin were sadly disappointed after things developed a little.
- But even these choices are of very little moment compared to the great choice that Jesus presents to us at the end of the Sermon on the Mount!
  - It is a choice between:
    - two gates—
      - the broad gate or the narrow gate...
    - two ways—
      - the broad way or the narrow way...
    - two destinations—
      - destruction or life
    - two sorts of prophets—
      - bad ones or good ones;  
non-fruit-bearing ones or fruit-bearing ones.

- two responses to His sermon—
  - hearing-and-not-doing or hearing-and-doing
- two foundations—
  - a house on the sand or a house on the rock.
- These are essentially all about the same choice—
  - What will you do with the things that Jesus has presented in this sermon?
  - Will you hear and do, or will you hear and not do?
- This week, and for the next several weeks, I plan to preach about these two choices.
  - Every one of you should examine yourself before these choices.
    - Which choice will you make?
    - Which way will you go?
    - What will you do with the words of the Lord?

This week, I want to begin with Matthew 7:13-14.

- In these verses, Jesus commands you to enter by the narrow gate.
- Look at the first part of verse 13.
  - He simply says,
    - **“Enter by the narrow gate.”**
    - It is a simple command to take a simple action...
- It is something you either **do** or **don’t do**...
  1. A gate is not something you can sort of enter...
    - It is like an exit ramp on the highway—
      - either you take it or you don’t.
    - Either you go through this narrow gate, or you don’t.
      - Either you are in the way to which this gate opens...
      - Or you are taking another way.
  2. Nor can you enter by this narrow gate as well as another gate.
    - You have to choose between one and the other...
      - You can’t send your legs through one gate and your arms through another...
      - You either go through the narrow gate only or another gate only.

TRANS> Jesus commands you to enter by the narrow gate.

- I want to begin this morning with a question about this...

**I. What is Jesus calling you to do when He says: “Enter by the narrow gate?”**

**A. What is it that you are supposed to enter?**

1. He is talking about entering into the kingdom of God.
  - a. This whole sermon is about the kingdom of God.
    - You will remember that back in Matthew 4:23,
      - Matthew told us that Jesus went all about Galilee preaching the kingdom of God.
    - Then Matthew presents this Sermon on the Mount as an example of His preaching—and indeed, it is about the kingdom of God.
      - First, Jesus tells about the blessings of this kingdom in the Beatitudes...
      - Then He tells about the high standards that are upheld for all the members of this kingdom...
      - But from start to finish, it is about the kingdom.
  - b. So now, when He gets to the end of His sermons,
    - It only makes sense that He should urge His hearers to enter it in the proper way!
    - It is as if He says, “There... there is the kingdom of God.”
      - “Enter it by the narrow gate.”
      - “Be sure to enter it in the right way.”
2. From the beginning of His gospel, Matthew presents Jesus as the King or the Messiah...
  - a. He is the anointed One whom God promised to His people through the ages...
    - He is the King who would come to establish God’s kingdom forever and ever...
      - a kingdom of righteousness and truth that would never pass away!
      - A kingdom in which God was truly served and honoured and obeyed!
  - b. The marvellous thing about this kingdom is the fact that it is established in a sinful world!
    - 1) It is a kingdom of righteousness established in a place where there is no righteousness!

- Jesus did not just come and call all the righteous people of the world together to form a kingdom...
  - There weren't any righteous people to be found!
  - The Bible says plainly:
    - "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God!"
    - "There is none righteous, no not one."
- Jesus came to do something far more wonderful than that!
  - He came to make sinful people righteous!
  - That is what is so wonderful about His kingdom!

2) The Old Testament told how He would do this...

- a) It says that He would take sinful people who hate God and change them into people that love God...
  - And it says that He will bear their sins so that they can be reconciled with God...
- b) And that is exactly what Jesus does for all that enter His kingdom!
  - He changes our hearts by baptising us with the Holy Spirit who enables us obey His word...
  - He gives us His righteousness,
    - which He secured for us by living a life of perfect obedience and by giving Himself to die on the cross for the remission of our sins...
    - He is the great sacrifice that was promised again and again in the Old Testament that takes away our sin!

TRANS> And so you see what a wonderful kingdom this is because it is a **righteous** kingdom that Jesus creates out of **sinful** people!

- This is the kingdom Jesus calls you to enter when He says,
  - "Enter by the narrow gate."
  - He is telling you to enter the kingdom of God.

B. But what is this narrow gate that He tells you to enter it by?

1. Jesus does not come right out and say it here, but I will say it—

- **Jesus Himself is the gate** by which we are to enter into the kingdom of God!
- a. Jesus does not say it here because it is the early stages of His ministry and it was not yet time for Him to declare it...

- 1) But later on He will say:
    - “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture (John 10:9)
    - And “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)
  - 2) And then He will send His apostles forth with this message so that we will hear them say to those who crucified Jesus:
    - “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11-12)
  - b. And so based on the testimony of God’s word, I can say with assurance that Jesus Christ is the gate and the way by which we must enter into God’s kingdom.
    - He is the narrow gate that is spoken of here and He is telling you that you must enter God’s kingdom through Him.
2. But how does one do this? How do we enter Christ, the narrow gate?
- a. Jesus has told us that already in His Sermon...
    - In fact, He began and ended with it!
  - 1) He began by showing us that the ones who are blessed in God’s kingdom are the ones who are poor in Spirit.
    - They are the ones who realise they have nothing to offer to God...
      - They mourn and become very meek...
      - They hunger and thirst for righteousness.
    - These are the ones who are blessed in His kingdom,
      - and you must become like this if you would be blessed.
      - You have to see that you need righteousness from outside of yourself—
        - that you don’t have it except by the way that God has promised.
  - 2) And I have told you in previous sermons what Jesus did to bring us to this place...
    - a) In Matthew 5:17 all the way to 7:12,
      - Jesus presents to us the standard of righteousness that God requires of us!

- He presents to us the true interpretation of the Law and the Prophets over against the twisted interpretation that was current in His day.
- He presents a standard that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees!
  - It is a standard that prohibits murder and adultery not only in the action, but also in the heart!
  - It is a standard that prohibits all ways that we go about breaking up our marriages...
  - It is a standard that requires us to speak nothing but truth and to reverence God's name...
  - It is a standard that requires us to go the second mile and to love our enemies!
  - It is a standard that requires a purity of motive in our giving and our praying and our fasting.
  - It is a standard that forbids worry and anxiety about our life in this world—all forms of covetousness...
  - It is a standard that commands us not to set ourselves up as judges, but to always recognise God as the only Judge!

b) And if you have really heard Jesus setting out this standard,

- you **will** be poor in spirit and you **will** mourning because you will see how deficient you are...
- And you **will** become meek because you will not feel competent to govern yourself...
- And you **will** be hunger and thirst for righteousness because you will see how much you need it!

c) And when you are in this condition, Jesus tells you what to do...

- In Matthew 7:7-11, He tells you to come to God asking and seeking and knocking!
- And He gives you the promises:
  - Ask and you will receive
  - Seek and you will find
  - Knock and it will be opened to you!

b. This is how you enter Christ the narrow gate and His glorious kingdom!

- You come as a beggar with nothing.
- You come with faith, looking to Christ to do what God has promised He would do...

- You look to Him to bring you to God!
    - To bring you into His righteous kingdom!
    - To give you His Spirit to change you and make you holy!
    - To cleanse you from all your sin by His blood that was shed on the cross!
- c. Now my friends, if there is some other gate into this kingdom besides Jesus I would like you tell me what it is!
- 1) The Scribes and the Pharisees have no way to make sinners righteous!
    - A Roman Catholic Priest has no have to make you righteous!
    - Mohammed has no way to make sinners righteous!
    - Your own works and sacrifices cannot make you righteous!
    - A guru in the desert has no way to make you righteous!
    - Sentimentalism and sweetness cannot make you righteous!
  - 2) Jesus and Jesus only is our access to God.
    - He is the gate of righteousness by which every sinner must come!
      - There is not way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus!
      - This is the stone that was rejected by the builders and there is salvation in no other.
      - Whoever believes in Him will have everlasting life, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because He has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
    - If you know where there is other blood that has been shed to atone for our sins...
      - Or of some other way besides the new birth where our wicked hearts can be transformed, tell me about it!
      - You can't do it, because the word of God declares that Jesus is the only way.
  - 3) When you boil it all down, there are only two ways to take—
    - There is God's way...
      - And there is everybody else's way.
      - There is divine way and there is a human way.

TRANS> Jesus commands us to take God's way...

- He commands us to come into God's kingdom through Him!
- That is what He means when He says:
  - "Enter by the narrow gate."

## II. But why is this gate called the *narrow gate* and this way called the *narrow way*?

A. Well it is quite simple— Jesus tells us...

1. It is called the narrow way because “there are few who find it.”
  - a. Look at the end of verse 14:
    - He says, “and there are few who find it.”
    - He is contrasting it with the broad way about which He says:
      - “there are many who go in by it.”
  - b. There is something I want you to notice here that is very important!
    - In both cases, Jesus says that persons “go in”
      - 1) He says that those who take the broad way “go in” by the broad way.
        - “Go in” where?
        - The few are entering into God’s kingdom by the narrow way,
          - but what are the many entering by the broad way?
      - 2) Well I would suggest to you that they are also entering God’s kingdom.
        - They are entering in to God’s kingdom by another way!
          - a) You see, Jesus is not talking here about people who choose to ignore God...
            - He is not speaking of those who claim to be too busy to seek God and who say:
              - “I have very little time for religion.”
                - He is not talking about those who sell their souls to the pursuit of riches or honour in the world...
                - He is not talking about those who give themselves over to impurity (sexual immorality or a life of drunkenness).

TRANS> No! Jesus is not talking about persons who ignore God!

- b) He is talking about those who enter God’s kingdom their own way!
  - Jesus was not preaching here to people who were rejecters of God’s kingdom
    - He was preaching to those who claimed to be seeking God’s kingdom and to be a part of it!
    - And there is a sense in which they were a part of it!

- They had indeed entered into God's covenant.
  - They had been circumcised and were more or less keeping God's ordinances of worship.
    - Just like the multitudes today who have been baptised and more or less keep God's ordinances of worship.
  - Outwardly, they had entered the Kingdom of God!
    - They had entered the visible church.
- 3) But Jesus is telling His hearers that most people come into the kingdom by the wrong gate!
- a) He is telling us that the great majority persons come into God's kingdom by the broad gate instead of by the narrow gate!
- Those who enter by the broad gate He refers to elsewhere as
    - "the sons of the kingdom who will be cast out."
  - They are the tares that are there with the wheat until the end when they are separated out.
  - They are the branches that are in Him, but that are cut off in the end because they bare no fruit.
  - They are the ones who drink from the rock and eat the manna but are destroyed in the wilderness because of their unbelief.
  - They are the ones on the stony ground that...
    - "immediately receive the word with gladness" but stumble as soon as persecution comes because they have no root...
    - or those that are choked out by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.
- b) These are the persons that enter the kingdom, but who do not inherit the kingdom...
- There is a sense in which they enter and sense in which they don't enter:
    - They enter in now, in this world, by the broad way...
      - But on the day of judgement they will not be allowed to enter, but will be cut off...
  - This is what Jesus points out in the parallel passage in Luke 13:
    - He says:
      - Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

- They will not be able to enter the final eternal glorious state of His kingdom...
  - He goes on...
    - Luke 13:26: When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'
  - In other words, they will claim a right to Him because they were part of the covenant people...
    - Luke 13:27-28 But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' 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, and yourselves thrust out.
2. What this means practically is that many people who are members of the church will be cut off in the end.
- a. And the reason is because they have come in by the broad way instead of the narrow way!
    - Instead of giving up on themselves and looking to Jesus alone, they have sought some other way to find acceptance with God.
  - b. The broad gate has a great deal of variety...
    - It is broad because it includes all the different ways that people wrongly enter into God's kingdom...
    - 1) The moralist says,
      - "I am a good person, I do the best I can, I try not to hurt other people..."
      - Does that sound like someone who is poor in spirit and who is hungering and thirsting for righteousness?
      - That is someone who has come in by the wide gate.
    - 2) Another person goes the sentimental route,
      - "I believe that God is love and that He would never reject anybody..."
      - That sounds sweet and nice, but it is not true.
        - Think of what an insult that is to a holy God who considered it necessary that His own Son should die to satisfy justice if sinners were to be saved!

- Persons who say that will themselves be rejected.
- 3) Then the ritualist comes along and says,
- “I go to church and say my prayers, I have been baptised and I take the Lord’s Supper, so I am sure that God will accept me.”
  - Those are all good things to do, but you do not gain acceptance with God by them unless you come through the narrow gate of faith in Jesus Christ.
- 4) Yet another says,
- “I am a Presbyterian. I have read Calvin’s institutes and I can refute every Arminian and every Romanist that comes my way.”
  - Very well, if you are trusting in your own orthodoxy instead of the One orthodoxy points us to, you are as lost as the heretics you refute...
    - The broad way can make a righteousness out of anything—anything except Christ!
- 5) Then the enthusiast comes along and says,
- “I have cast out demons and I have heard God speak to me, and I have spoken in tongues.”
  - Jesus says that many will come to Him with such claims to whom He will declare:
    - “I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”
    - Spiritual gifts do not prove that someone is a believer!
      - King Saul and the High Priest Caiaphas both prophesied, but neither was a true believer...
      - Judas performed miracles and he was not a believer...
      - Even Balaam’s donkey prophesied, but she will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- 6) And then the experientialist comes along and says:
- “I know I will go to heaven because I went to front and got down on my knees and asked Jesus to come into my heart.”
  - That really makes very little difference. The question is, are you trusting in the Lord Jesus and looking to Him for your righteousness!
    - Did you want Him for a friend, or for a saviour from sin?
    - Do you want to be holy, or do you only want to escape judgement?
- c. You see that there are many who have entered in by the broad gate!

- Jesus is calling you to come in by narrow gate!
- He is calling you to come in by Him as He is presented in the gospel.

B. What is wrong with this narrow way that so few take it?

- Why is it so despised?
- Well here are three things that people don't like about it the narrow way...
  1. First, the narrow way is despised because it is the way of humiliation.
    - a. Every son and daughter of Adam is full of pride.
      - We desperately want to think that we are worthy of everyone's acceptance...
        - And when we are rejected by anyone, we want to put the blame on that person instead of on ourselves.
        - The greatest problem with this is that we even carry it over into our relationship with God!
          - We are so proud that we think He should accept us on our own terms!
          - We are like Cain...
            - We want to bring something good to God instead of coming by faith.
    - b. But I have already reminded you that Jesus pronounces His blessing on those who are poor in spirit...
      - on those who realise that they have nothing worthwhile to bring to God...
      - Only beggars come through the narrow gate...
        - those who ask and seek and knock because they have nothing apart from Christ.
        - But no one wants to be reduced to a beggar!
          - We may beg for worldly goods without too much trouble...
          - But to come to the place where you say,
            - "I have nothing good to offer as a person—
              - nothing that God would accept...
              - nothing that God would be pleased with...
              - That is very repulsive and unnatural to a son of Adam!
              - That is why we naturally prefer the broad way!
              - This is why there are always two systems of religion in the world:

- The narrow way is God's system of divine accomplishment...
- The broad way is man's system of human accomplishment.
- The narrow way is the religion of God's grace.
- The broad way is the religion of the flesh.
- The narrow way is rooted in sincerity and purity of heart that humble a man.
- The broad way is based on hypocrisy and external appearance the exalt a man.

TRANS> You see, the natural man is too swollen up with pride to squeeze through the narrow gate...

- The first reason so few take this way is because all people are naturally adverse to humiliation.
  - The second reason grows out of the first...
2. This way is despised because it is the way of persecution and rejection.
- a. Since people are naturally adverse to humility and self-denial, they are understandably opposed to anyone who chooses this way.
- 1) Remember that the person who is truly poor in spirit no longer governs himself, but submits to God's word.
- There is nothing more irritating to a wide gate person than to have someone around who is following Christ and all the while claiming that He has no righteousness of his own!
    - It is a constant testimony against the wide gate person that all his righteousness is filthy rags...
  - But everyone who takes the narrow gate follows Christ instead of the crowd...
    - You go out independently of what everyone thinks and what is popular and start living and believing according to God's word.
- 2) Just do this and see if it does not lead to persecution!
- Bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and do not send them to the government schools and see how your relatives respond...
  - Keep the Lord's day and see what even religious people think of you...
  - Tell others that you believe what we are talking about today—that Jesus is **the only way** to heaven—and see what they say!

- Tell people that you believe in there really is a Hell where people suffer forever and ever on account of God's wrath and justice and that all who are not in Christ will go there.
  - Live in the biblical calling of a husband and wife in your marriage relationship, not just because you want to or think it is best, but because God says it, and see what people think.
  - Try worshipping God according to His commandments and see if you are praised for it by other Christians.
  - Claim that God is sovereign and has mercy on whom He will and hardens whom He will and see what the religious people on the broad way think about that!
- b. Now if you are following Christ, or thinking about taking the narrow way, you know that there will be a lot of people that won't like it.
- 1) Jesus says you will have to hate them all to be His true disciple...
    - Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.
    - By "hating them" He means that you will have to choose no longer to live to please them.
    - You have to stop seeking to gain their approval and start doing things that displease them.
  - 2) That is a very hard thing to do because everybody naturally wants to please the people around them.
    - With the exception of those who are hard and cynical, we naturally want to modify ourselves so that we will blend in with the people we love.
    - This is actually a good thing to do, only the one you ought to love and seek to please ought to be Jesus...
    - And that is what is hard—when you have to go against your own mother or father or children or husband or wife for Jesus' sake.
  - 3) And this is the problem...
    - There are many who take the wide gate to avoid the persecution that comes when you take the narrow gate.
    - Persecution and fear of rejection is the second reason that many people avoid the narrow gate.

TRANS> The third reason a lot of people avoid this gate is closely related to the first two...

3. It is because the way of Christ is the way of self-denial...
  - a. Not only because of the humiliation and the persecution that I have already spoken about,
    - but because following Christ involves turning against your sin—going to war against the lusts that war against your soul.
    - We have to put off the old man—
      - turn the other cheek
      - root out all the malice and bitterness from our hearts
      - not only talk about loving our enemies, but actually do it.
      - we have take on the responsibility of training our children and leading our homes that we would rather shrug off...
      - we have to be active in loving our neighbour and doing to others as we would have them do to us.
      - We must give up our love of riches and learn to give...
      - we have to look into our hearts and see how we rejoice in the faults of others and learn to weep about their faults.
  - b. If you have taken this way, you know that the roots of sin are deep...
    - God often has to get out the steel wool to scrub away all the corruption that is in us.
    - We have to go through affliction like Job did before we will really confess His majesty and submit to His Lordship...
      - as Jesus—even to the point of death on the cross!
  - c. When the Psalmist looked at his life compared to those who had taken the broad way,
    - He saw that he was afflicted and they were at ease...
      - And He concluded at first:
        - Psalm 73:13-14: Surely I have cleansed my heart *in vain*, And washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.

TRANS> The narrow way is the way of humility and persecution and self-denial...

- No wonder there are so few that take this way!
- Why would anyone want to take it?
  - That is the last question I want to explore.

### III. Why would anyone want to take this narrow way?

A. Jesus tells you very simply—because it leads to life!

1. First, because it leads to life as opposed to destruction.
  - a. Jesus says very plainly that the broad way that many go on leads to destruction!
    - 1) It may seem like the person on the broad religious path is getting on quite well...
      - whether he is the moralist or the sentimentalist or the ritualist or the doctrinialist or the enthusiast or the experientialist...
      - He may be boasting and living a life of ease and prosperity.
      - But in every case, the broad way leads to destruction!
    - 2) The person who says that he is going the way of many others—
      - that he is worshipping as they worship and hopes at last to do as well as they...
      - That person might just as well have pronounced his own condemnation...
      - He has just stated that he is on the broad path, and that is the way that leads to destruction.
  - b. And this destruction is no trivial thing!
    - 1) The word that Jesus used speaks of utter ruin—even perdition!
      - And the thing that is worst of all about it is it is a never ending destruction.
      - Not annihilation, but everlasting torment...
    - 2) There are some who quibble about the doctrine of eternal punishment,
      - but Jesus frequently talks about the unquenchable fire...
      - And the Holy Spirit makes it clear beyond any doubt that this perdition is everlasting in the book of Revelation...
        - In Rev. 17:8, the beast is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to **perdition**.
        - The word perdition is the very same word in the Greek that is used in Matthew 7:13 and translated **destruction**.
        - Rev. 17 tells us that this perdition or destruction is what is going to happen to the beast, and Revelation 20:10 shows us what this destruction is:

- Rev. 20:10: “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”
  - “Tormented day and night forever and ever”... that is not annihilation!
    - That is where all those who take the broad way are headed—
    - According to Matthew 25:41, Jesus will say to them:
      - Matthew 25:41: "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:
      - no matter how religious they may be...
      - no matter how sweet they may be...
      - They are headed for this terrible destruction unless they turn back and go through the narrow gate.
- 3) And it is to avoid this destruction that Jesus calls you enter the narrow gate.
- a) He could just tell us to do it and not give us any reason...
    - Hell is not just a threat to get us to turn to Him...
    - It is the place we deserve to go for our sins.
  - b) We should know that without even being told...
    - If we were clear about God’s holiness and majesty and clear about who we are...
      - We would know that without Jesus, eternal destruction surely awaits us...
      - But Jesus uses this to urge us to consider the seriousness of the way we choose!
      - Yes, the narrow way is difficult, but it leads to life!

TRANS> Not only does it lead to life instead of death...

## 2. It leads to life as the image of God.

- a. The life that Jesus is talking about is the wholeness of life!
  - The narrow gate brings us into the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.
  - Jesus baptises us with Him and He immediately changes the entire direction of our lives...
    - And following that, He leads us into greater and greater holiness....

- He makes us more and more like Jesus Christ...
  - More and more in conformity to God's will...
  - More and more a reflection of His wisdom and love and purity.
- b. This makes all that self-denial and affliction worthwhile!
- God uses the steel wool I spoke about before not to kill us, but to give us life!
    - He renews us into all that He has called us to be!
    - It is not a fruitless suffering, but a suffering that is necessary when wretched sinners are being transformed for glory!
  - Do not avoid the narrow gate because of this affliction, but come and glory in it...
    - for it brings about patience and patience brings about character and character brings about hope!
    - 2 Cor 4:16-17: Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,
    - It is only a light affliction compared to what it is producing!

TRANS> So you see that the narrow gate is very desirable because it

- not only leads to life instead of destruction...
  - but also leads to life as the image of God...
    - and there is more...
3. The narrow way also leads to life in communion with God.
- a. It brings us into eternal fellowship with the Father from whom we were estranged by sin!
- Jesus is the gate that leads us to the Father, and there is nothing better, nothing more excellent than to delightfully behold His glory and be in His serve for ever and ever!
- b. What should it matter if friends and relations all forsake you if you obtain this most excellent fellowship!
- What is a little rejection now if you gain the everlasting acceptance of the Father?
  - You must learn to say with the psalmist:

- Psalm 73:25-26: Whom have I in heaven *but You*? And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; *But God is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

TRANS> Ah what an excellent way this narrow way!

- What a desirable way!

B. This is the only way that is good for fallen people in a fallen world!

1. If you have truly heard what Jesus has said in the Sermon on the Mount thus far,
  - a. If you have seen the standard of righteousness to which God calls us...
    - If you have been made poor in spirit and a mourner and meek and one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness after hearing His words...
    - Then I am sure that you can see how desirable the narrow way is!
  - b. You understand that His way is very difficult because you are being torn out of a sinful life in a sinful world...
    - Of course you must give up all your pride and self-exaltation! Look at what you are in the sight of God! Of course you can't fix this yourself!
    - Of course there will be persecution and people rejecting you—you are being set apart in a world that hates God—the world that you once were very much a part of...
    - Of course there will be the pain of self-denial and cross-bearing—for you torn apart from the sins that are so native to your soul...

TRANS> The narrow way is the only way that makes sense once you see who you are before God and what this world is before Him.

2. But I say, you can only see the beauty and the perfection of this way when God has opened your eyes to see it!
  - a. As long as you remain dead in your sins, you will despise the narrow way and take the broad way.
    - It will suit you much better because you simply do not understand the radical measures that need to be taken...
    - A little cleaning up, a few rituals, a few good works...
      - that is all that is needed!
      - That is the broad way that leads to destruction!
  - b. You come —like Asaph in Psalm 73—into the sanctuary of God!
    - And there you must see God revealed in Jesus Christ!

- It is only when you see yourself and all others before the glorious majesty of God that you will see things as they are!
    - It is only then that you will see how useless all the efforts of man are at attaining righteousness—
      - how fruitless and empty and vain they are...
      - how they all lead to destruction and ruin..
    - But how excellent and noble and desirable the narrow way is!
- c. So what is your choice?
- Have you entered the narrow gate?
  - Or are you on the wide path to destruction?
  - You might want to think about it...
    - A bad choice will be eternally regretted.

Please stand for prayer...

Gracious Heavenly Father,

- How we praise you for our gracious Lord Jesus!
- He is the narrow gate by which heaven is opened to us.
  - We thank you and praise you that He came into this wretched sinful world to take wretched sinful people and form them into a kingdom of righteousness!
  - What a marvellous glorious thing it is!
    - Open our eyes that we may see what He has done...

We pray that you would open the eyes of your people all over the world...

- For there are many that have come into your kingdom by the wide gate that leads to destruction.
  - Awaken them, raise them from the dead that they may see your glory and turn to your Son!
  - If there are any among us this morning who have taken that wide gate—
    - we ask you to open their eyes and make them see!
    - And wherever this glorious gospel is preached today, we ask that you would accompany it with power and grace so that it might impart life to the hearers!

We pray that you would forgive us for the times when we have grumbled about this narrow way...

- When we have lost sight of you the way Job did in his afflictions...

- the way the children of Israel did when they grumbled and complained in the wilderness...
- and the way Asaph did when he saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- Forgive us for not loving the narrow way...
  - for not glorying tribulation that brings about patience...
  - for not rejoicing when we are persecuted for righteousness sake because of our great reward in heaven...
  - for not counting it a very small thing to suffer for Christ.
- Forgive us for growing weary and compromising instead of following.
  - Give us more grace!
  - Keep us from temptation and deliver us from evil!
  - Show us your glory in the face of Jesus Christ!

How we thank you Lord...

- for all the sweet mercies that you have given us in this life—
  - especially when we consider what we are before you!
  - We thank you for our food and our houses and our cars and our health...
    - We thank you for our government and all the services they provide for us...
    - We thank you for our military and for the law enforcement officers who protect us.
    - We thank you for all the justice that still remains in our courts—
      - and pray that you would restore what is lacking.

All these things we ask in our Saviour's name,  
Amen.