



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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JUMP START #286

Matthew 7:14—“For the gate is small and the way narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Today, we look at yet another of Jesus’ radical statements. This one comes from the sermon on the mount. Our verse is linked to the verse before where the Lord describes two ways, two gates, two crowds, and two destinations. One is wide, easy, and full of people. The other, narrow, difficult, and few people. The broad way leads to destruction. The narrow road leads to life.

These simple verses are profound. Jesus is saying that most won’t make it. Most won’t find life. Most are headed for destruction. Most have taken the easy way in life. It is wide or broad. It isn’t difficult. There are many companions going this way. One can imagine someone saying, “they all can’t be wrong.” Jesus says otherwise.

We tend to crisscross these two paths. Many would like to travel thru life on the wide and easy path that is crowded with people but end up at the narrow gate and slide into eternal life. Live like a sinner, and die like a saint! That won’t work. That doesn’t happen in Jesus’ story. The wide open way has many people to associate with and to encourage you. They are oblivious to the fact that they are heading straight into disaster. The broad way allows one to take their eyes off the road. Life can be neglected when on the wide road.

The narrow path is different. It is tight and confining. I envision passing thru “fat man’s squeeze” at Tennessee’s Rock City. No one would run thru that section. The rocks stick out so close that you have to turn sideways, watch your head and advance slowly. It demands a careful walk. Look out, look up, be careful are the thoughts on the narrow journey. Why do it? It’s hard. There are few on this path. It can be lonely and discouraging. Why put up the effort that it demands? First, this is where Jesus wants us to be. This section of verses begins with Jesus saying, “Enter thru the narrow gate.....” That is where he wants us to be.

The other reason a person would put up with the narrow way is because of where it ends up—life. Life, not death. Life, not existence. Life, wonderful, wonderful life. The impression is life eternal—Heaven. The path to Heaven takes effort, concentration and diligence. It can be done, but one must be careful. One must know what they are doing. Most don’t want to go this way. That’s what Jesus said. He ought to know. How does that make you feel? Most of the people you see today, will not make it. Most don’t know it. Many do not care. This leads to two simple thoughts.

First, there is a need to tell others. They need to know the way of the Lord. It is his way, not our way. It is narrow. Truth is like that. We understand that in spelling and in simple math. There is one answer that is right but dozens of ways to get the answer wrong. That's the way truth is. People need to know. Follow Jesus is the answer. He leads thru the narrow path. It's not just about going to church on Sunday, it's about which path of life am I on. It's about following Jesus. Most won't make it. That is something as you look at all the people in an office, a school, or on the roadway. Most won't make it. It's really sad. Something ought to be done. Tell them is the answer.

We know what happens if they don't follow Jesus and his way. He has told us. They are heading towards destruction. They are racing towards the cliff. What should we do? What would you want them to do if it was you? Show them. Teach them. Invite them. Not all will hear. That's the parable of the Sower. But there are those who will. You did.

A second thought here is about being narrow. That is a definite negative in religious circles. Being inclusive, accepting, tolerant and open, now that is the theme of the month. But it doesn't describe the way Jesus wants you to be on. It's the narrow path, the narrow gate that he wants us to be on. The narrow way is often called legalism—and those that say that, don't understand that word. It's not. It's following Jesus. The narrow way is called prejudice by some. It's not. It's following Jesus. He's not prejudice. Even the religious community has accepted the broad and wide road as the best road to take in life. How sad.

Following Jesus can be lonely because there are not a lot of people who want to do that. Jesus is there. Righteous people are there. What else do you need?

Two roads, two gates, two crowds, and two destinations...but you get to make one choice. Go with the flow, or go with Jesus? Do what your heart says, or do what the Bible says? Do what worked for your parents, or do what the Lord wants? It's a choice and not to choose becomes a choice.

Follow Jesus.

Roger Shouse