

## Reading: Matthew 7:13-14

<sup>13</sup> “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad *and* easy to travel is the path that leads the way to destruction *and* eternal loss, and there are many who enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow *and* difficult to travel is the path that leads the way to [everlasting] life, and there are few who find it.

Amplifies Bible (AMP)

### Preaching notes:

“Where we end up depends on which road we take”. It may seem such an obvious statement to make but clearly for Jesus, at this point of his teaching, it was essential to point out that there is a now a choice to make. He has unfolded precisely for each one of us in the preceding two chapters (Matthew 5 and 6) the characteristics of the true Christian life, concerning prayer, concerning anger, concerning giving etc. and now summing up: “this is what it means to be one of His followers”.

Many sermons preached and ink used to write about these two short verses yet they continue to be a cause for disagreement, misunderstanding, misrepresentation or just ignored as being too challenging and too exclusive. As with “ask, seek and knock” from the previous week’s teaching, the word “enter” (from the Greek *eisérchomai*) has an imperative to it, a sense of urgency, a question that begs to be answered: “which way will you go”? Jesus very helpfully tells us the consequence of the decision.

These two verses in particular, like much of chapter 7, can be seen as a bridge between the characteristics of being a true Christian and the actions that must be taken by us as individuals in accepting and living out these characteristics as true Christians. Modern terminology would say: “this is where the rubber meets the road”, or “from the drawing board into full production”, we have heard the teaching now it’s time to “jump right in and live it”.

J. C. Ryle, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century Bible expositor and Bishop of Liverpool: “These are fearful truths! They ought to raise great searchings of heart in the minds of all who hear them. “Which way am I going? By what road am I traveling?” In one or other of the two ways here described, every one of us may be found”. He suggests prayer, the revelation of the Holy Spirit in our lives and a deep and honest look at our lives (Psalm 139 “O Lord search me...lead me in the way everlasting).

The companion verses to Matthew 7:13,14 is found in Luke 13:24 where an even greater emphasis is placed on the importance of entering through the narrow gate with the addition of “strive”. One commentator says: “we do not just find ourselves at the narrow gate, we arrive there as a choice reminiscent of Christian in the John Bunyan classic Pilgrims Progress: “Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder Wicket Gate? The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder Shining Light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that Light in your eye, and go directly thereto, so shalt thou see the Gate”. See John 10:9 Jesus speaking: “I am the gate, whoever enters by me will be saved”. Jesus is both the good shepherd and the gate (offering the way to salvation).

In summary: the narrow gate is not hard to find when illuminated by God's Light. Following Jesus as a disciple involves choices that have consequences for our eternal destination. An abundant life in the now and the eternal is available to all who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and follow Him (John 10:10)– how can that be anything other than fully inclusive?  
**Amen.**