

**Scripture Reading:**

Please go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Matthew 7, Matthew 7:12-14 for our scripture reading today... We are in Matthew 7:12-14 for ...And I will ask you to please stand if you are able to do so for the reading of God's Word...

**Matthew 7:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

<sup>13</sup>“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. <sup>14</sup>For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Please be seated...”

**Introduce Yourself:**

Good Morning...It is an honor to be here with you all this morning...My name is Byron Bradshaw and I am privileged to be the pastor here at Calvary Bible Church...

If you are interested in becoming a member then see me in the hallway to point you in the right direction **AND** also if you are a younger couple or younger family we will soon be announcing the start of a new ministry targeted to your needs and demographic...

If you are interested in knowing more or if I have not met you before then I'd love to greet you in the hallway following today's service...

**Reformation**

You may or may not know that October 31<sup>st</sup> is a special day, No... not because of Halloween...October 31<sup>st</sup> is a special day for completely another reason...

I was in staff meeting this week and someone reminded me that October 31<sup>st</sup> is one of the most important days to modern Christianity...

On October 31, 1517...Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses onto the All Saints Church door in Wittenberg Germany thus launching the Protestant Reformation...On that day, Protestant churches were launched throughout Europe and eventually throughout the world...

I bet everyone of us in here today know that Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to a door...But I bet many of us have never actually read any of His 95 points or theses...85 or so of them are directly against the authority of the pope and the use of indulgences...But there are a hand full that have solid insights...

I do not have the time to read all the 95 theses but I do want to highlight a few...

- \* When Jesus said "repent" he meant that believers should live a whole life repenting
- \* Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all the blessings of Christ and the Church; and this is granted him by God
- \* Christians are to be exhorted that they be diligent in following Christ, their Head,
- \* Let Christians experience problems if they must – and overcome them – rather than live a false life based on present false teaching.
- \* Only God can give salvation – not a priest.
- \* Inwards penitence must be accompanied with a suitable change in lifestyle.

Martin Luther's bravery and conviction to stand upon the truth of God's Word and fight against the perverted truth inspired other men such as Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, to stand upon the authority of the Word of God and look into the scriptures for themselves and put them into practice...

Martin Luther was not a perfect man but one that changed the world because of His conviction to follow Christ through the instruction of the Word...

Before we enter the Bible today...Let us pray and ask the Lord to be with our time this morning...

### **(Let us Pray)**

#### **Introduce the subject:**

This morning we are talking about a decision we each make daily...We are discussing the decision we make to either do things the easy way or the hard way...

It is in our human nature to seek the easy way of doing things...easy convenient food- 3 minute meals/McDonalds (maybe not), easy weight loss- Weight Watchers or P90X, we seek easy ways to do our taxes (if there is such a thing), easy ways to make money, or even an easy vacation such as to Disneyworld or a beach trip...

#### **Switzerland...**

One of the easiest vacations Laurel and I ever took was our trip to Switzerland...Switzerland is one of the most beautiful places on earth...I kid you not (here is a picture)...Laurel and I visited a small beautiful town called Lauterbrunnen Switzerland...Lauterbrunnen is in a beautiful valley surrounded by 2000 foot granite cliffs and over a 100 waterfalls at peak season...The most relaxing part of Lauterbrunnen is that you can take a chair lift or train ride to literally anywhere in the valley...You can take a chair lift up a 2000' granite cliff hop off then ride a train overlooking the entire valley...

But the climax of the entire trip was taking a train to Jungfrauoch...which is a 5 story train station inside the mountain at 12000' mountain pass overlooking the valley...You literally get off the train inside the mountain ride an elevator to the top and get out and walk on snow at 12000' feet...

**Transition:** Yet thinking of this easy vacation also makes me contrast one of the hardest most terrifying vacations of my life...If you ever want death defying tour guides then I recommend you book my in-laws...

Several years ago we took a trip to Rocky Mountain National Park...I can't describe all of the death defying activities...But one of the scariest and most difficult hikes of my life was walking to the top of a 14000' mountain...Longs Peak...

The day before we set out on Long's Peak there was a journal in our rented cabin...My wife and her sister decided to open up this journal and read the entries...There was one entry that

disturbed my wife and her sister to the core...

One entry described meeting a man named Peter while hiking up Longs... They traveled with this stranger up a portion of the hike got to know him and his family... Then they recorded that Peter then slipped on a piece of ice and fell to his death...right there in front of them...I remember the entry said, "I guess my boys learned a valuable lesson on the mortality of life..."

### **We read this in the cabin journal the day before hiking it...**

Longs Peak is a 15 mile round trip walking up one nautical mile and parts of it were walking on the edge of a cliff with a 2000' drop...

We made it to the top and back safe and sound (obviously)...But it was by far the most difficult physical thing I've done and one of the most terrifying...

**Transition:** Yet as I compare and contrast Switzerland and Long's Peak...I found something interesting...I personally think more fondly of the trip in Colorado...The trip was very difficult yet far more rewarding and memorable...

**Transition:** Yet I think this is true in many areas of life...Oftentimes, the more difficult way is far more rewarding than the easy way...Some of the most difficult tasks in life are some of the most rewarding...

WE:

Think about it: Think about something like exercise...Exercise is extremely difficult...that's kind of the point...But it is rewarding...It can make you look and feel good...

Raising Children: Raising children is as I heard "the toughest job on the planet..." but it is one of the most rewarding...

Marriage: Marriage can be very difficult especially when you are a bit green and starting out...Yet I look at many you 50, 60, 70 year veterans and I can tell it is very rewarding...(I idolize many of you)

**Transition:** In today's passage, Jesus describes two hurdles that we each face in the Christian life...Two hurdles that can be very difficult to jump yet very rewarding...The two hurdles He discusses today are **people and perseverance...people and perseverance...**

**Transition:** If you would please open back up your Bible to Matthew 7, Matthew 7 and we will be looking at only three verses this morning verses 12-14...and I will be providing 4 points found in the passage...And the **first hurdle** we are discussing this morning is found in verse 12...

GOD:

Let us begin with verse 12...

**Read Matthew 7:12-**

<sup>12</sup>“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Many of you may recognize this verse as the “Golden Rule” to treat others the same way you want them to treat you...But there are a few things about this particular verse that some of us may not immediately realize...

You may not have picked up on it yet, but typically in my sermons and when we enter the text, I place a special emphasis on connecting words...words such as conjunctions and prepositions...

**Notice with me the all important “first three words”... “in everything, therefore”...**

\*In the original language “oun” which is translated as a “therefore” marks that the author is arriving at a conclusion or at a final action...

In other words, A therefore is telling us that “based upon everything I just said...therefore do this...”

Now, when you Couple that with the words “In everything” which Literally in the Greek is “Therefore, in all these things...” What is the significance?

Based upon everything that Jesus has shared in the Sermon on the Mount...Based upon the **picture** of the Christian life, the principles, practices and prohibitions in the Sermon of the Mount...**Therefore Treat other as you want them to treat you...**

Verse 12 is a pop quiz...The test of how we are living the Christian life is **how we treat others...**

Many scholars believe verse 12 is actually the main ending of the sermon on the mount...That the whole point and whole conclusion to Chapters 5, 6, and 7 comes down to one question...

**How well do you treat another person?**

**Point #1: Loving Others is the Test of Christian living...**

Jesus then moves beyond the pop quiz and gives them a slight bit of instruction on how to treat others...

**Look back at verse 12...**

**Reread Matthew 7:12,** <sup>12</sup>“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

**How do we treat others? Treat them as you want them to treat you...**

I think His instruction on how to treat another has a **two-fold purpose...**

**Purpose #1: Culturally,** I believe Jesus is stepping on the toes of the Pharisees...Because the Pharisees throughout the Sermon on the Mount have been called out by Jesus for being hypocrites...They expect to be treated with respect but they do not treat others with respect...They tie heavy burdens around the necks of their countrymen but do not wish to follow the same rules...

They treat others differently than themselves...They judge and expect other people to abide by rules that they themselves do not abide by...

But then there is a second purpose...I believe it is not meant to just to point out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees but also to **provide practical instruction** to His audience...

**How do we treat other? Treat others the same way you want them to treat you...**

**Think about it: when Jesus says to treat others as they treat you then...Jesus is essentially commanding His followers and us today to trade shoes...**

**Let Me Give You An Practical Example:** When your food is taking longer than expected because you can tell that the restaurant is busy and the waiter is working hard...Instead, of getting upset, put yourself in the waiter's shoes...

**Ask yourself the question,** "If I were the waiter, what would I want from me?" Probably patience and a good tip...

**When traffic is backed up due to a wreck...**and your blood is starting to boil...Put yourself in the shoes of the one who had the wreck...Ask Yourself the question, "If I were in a car accident what would I want people to do for me?" Probably not honking and yelling but to be understanding and patient as people drove past...

**Transition:** But let us not miss the last phrase in verse 12, look at verse 12 again... <sup>12</sup> "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, **for this is the Law and the Prophets.**"

**Listen to this...One commentator adds...** "The entire 39 books of the Old Testament are summarized in 15 Greek words..."

The entire goal of the Law and Prophets, the entire goal of the Sermon on the Mount is that we as Christians treat others the way we treat ourselves...

**But let us be honest,** this is not easy...It is not easy to trade shoes with people ...

It is much easier to do our own thing...To just worry about ourselves and our schedules...But oftentimes the more difficult decision is far more rewarding...The decision of treating others properly will always be the more difficult decision but is ALWAYS the more rewarding decision...

**Transition:** So, hurdle #1: to the Christian walk is people and we see that **Point #1: Loving**

## Others is the Test of Christian Living...

**Transition:** Let us look hurdle #2 found in verses 13-14...

Read verse 13, <sup>13</sup>“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.”

### Point #2: Entrance to Christianity is Exclusive and a Choice...

There are two key observations in verse 13...

First, notice Friends that entering through the Narrow Gate is a choice that each person must make...Either they choose the Narrow Gate, Christ, or the Wide gate which is the way of the world...

We enter the Narrow Gate through faith in Jesus the Christ...Each and everyone of us must come to the point where we realize that because of our sin...We stand eternally condemned for separation from God...

Truly the only way to Heaven is entering through the Narrow Gate which is by faith in Christ...The only way to life...the only way to avoid the path of destruction is by believing in Jesus Christ...

But notice with the **second observation**...Not only is entering the gate or believing in Christ a choice but it is also **exclusive**...

Anyone that says Christianity is inclusive is lying and does not know the Bible...Jesus left no doubt that He is **the only way** to heaven...I am the way, the truth and the life no one comes to the Father but by Him...

**Jesus makes it clear in verse 13 that salvation is exclusive**...But some of you may be wondering how I came up with this...

If you notice with me, the key word “the”...In the original language the article is explicitly included every time before the word “gate”...

I believe Jesus purposefully use the word “the” to show exclusivity...**Look again at verse 13,**

<sup>13</sup>“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.”

The one and only way to heaven... is through “The” narrow Gate...which we enter through...Faith in Jesus Christ, period...

**Transition:** But notice with me the second piece of the metaphor...Not, only is the narrow gate **exclusive and a choice** but there is also a **path less traveled**... **“a narrow way...”**

Look at verse 14, “<sup>14</sup> For **THE** gate is small and **THE way is narrow** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Whereas the Gate represents salvation through Christ alone... **The narrow way** represents the life of a disciple....

The way of discipleship is narrow...the road of discipleship is dangerous, full of persecution, trouble, spiritual warfare, faith without sight, trust without immediate assurance...

**And Let's be frank**...I think everyone of us would agree that the Christian life is difficult... That if one wants to walk the path of discipleship that the road is narrow...

**I heard one of the most Godly mature Christian that I know say one time, “I've quit Christianity a dozen times...”**

Trusting God: **It is difficult to trust God**...It is difficult in the face of insurmountable tasks and unmanageable relationships to Trust God that He is in control...

**It is difficult to endure**...It is difficult to keep on keeping on...It is difficult to endure in the face of trials or conflict...

**It is difficult to Love Others**...It is difficult to love those who do not reciprocate it...It is difficult to love someone when you feel that they only take advantage of you...

**It is difficult to Resist Temptation**...It is difficult to resist sin especially when we are discouraged or exhausted

When we are tired, struggling to endure, tired of fighting temptation, and worn down, the wide way is awfully tempting...

It is much easier to quit than to persevere...It is much easier to stop being disciplined, it is much easier to stop loving others, it is much easier to stop resisting temptation, it is much easier not to trust God...But friends, endurance and perseverance is worth it...

Let us face the hurdles of perseverance and overcome it...not succumbing to the consequences of the wider path but holding onto the promises of God...

**Transition:** As I head toward closing, I'd like to address four different groups of people today...There are 4 different groups of people that are here this morning...There are two different groups on the wide road and two different groups on the narrow road...

**Group #1: For those who are on the wide road...And know it**...I believe there are people here this morning that know they are on the wide road...leading to destruction...

I believe there are people here this morning that know they have never believed in Jesus Christ

and are enjoying life in the fast lane...Or perhaps, you even know the truth but do not wish to surrender your life to Christ...

But Listen... The road that is not through Jesus Christ it is a dangerous road... The road you are walking is one to eternal separation from God... If you do not know where you stand with Christ I want you to heed this passage I am about to read... Jesus tells a story in Luke 16 to all those on the dangerous road... Listen to how Jesus describes the road to destruction...

*Luke 16: <sup>3</sup>The rich man in Hades lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and \*saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. <sup>24</sup> 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.'*

Any other road besides the one through Christ is destined for destruction...

Transition: But the second group of people today are the most difficult to address...

**Group #2: Are those who are deceived...Group #2: Are those that think they entered the narrow gate but never have...**

Listen friends, the single way... The exclusive way to heaven is through THE Way THE TRUTH and THE Life... The only way to heaven is by believing in the Jesus Christ... That's it...

**Story:** When I was the youth director here at Calvary many years ago, encountered many people in Group #2... Many people that thought they were a Christian but were deceived...

**To tell you a quick story...** One time I asked a student, "How are you saved?" He said, "Well, I was baptized as a baby..." ONK... Wrong answer... Right then and there that young man's deception fell of his eyes like scales as he realized that He wasn't a Christian and that He needed to believe in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior...

**Listen friends,** You are not saved by being baptized... as a baby or even as an adult... you are not saved because someone else told you that you were, you are not saved by doing more good than bad, you are not saved by any other way **but through faith in Jesus Christ...**

Friends, One of the scariest things to me are those that are in Group #2: That Group #2 can sit here week after week, sermon after sermon, and think they are saved but truly aren't...

Friends, we are not saved by prayer, we are not saved by good works or another religion... We are saved by faith in Christ alone...

If you think, you are in Group #1 or Group #2, then why wait to believe? Believe right where you are...

Say something like this "I believe in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior... That He died for my sins, was buried and was resurrection to pay the price for my sin so that by faith I can

attain eternal life...”

**Transition:** Now, to the two groups on the other road...To the first group of people on the narrow road...

**Group #3: To those who are tired...**To those who are walking the narrow road but are tired of putting one step in front of another...To those who are beginning to wonder if this Christian business is really all it's cracked up to be...To those who are looking at those on the **wide road** and wondering what a life like that entails...

**Friends, when you are tired and feeling heavy...**Remember that in the end...if we endure James 1:11 promises us, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.”

Remember that heaven is at the end of your road and one day you will face your Savior and He will hand you a crown which He has promised to those who endure and love Him...

**Group #4: To those who need direction...Who are on the narrow road and just needing a way to apply this message and** to you I'd like to answer the question **So What...I'd like to give us 3 practical actions to apply this passage to your life...**

**Action #1: Test the Waters For Your Love:**

The purpose of verse 12 is to give us a pop quiz...To check your progress in your spiritual growth...

Test your spirituality by your treatment of others...

**Let me illustrate this point with a personal story...**I knew a man once that came up to me and told me that he knew more about the Bible than anyone else ...Yet he was one of the grumpiest rudest meanest people I'd ever met...Friends, let us not be this way...

If you want to know your spiritual maturity...If you want to know how well you are applying the Sermon on the Mount then reflect upon how you treat others...

How do you treat the person at the grocery store? Or, the person that was rude to you at the gas station? How you treat someone that cut you off in traffic or the person that had a snarky comment at church?

**Transition: Action #1: Test the Water For Your Love...**

**Action #2: Stay the Course- Stay the Course...**Once you enter the narrow gate and start walking the narrow road...you realize something...Walking down the narrow road is difficult...It is difficult to remain faithful to Christianity and God in the face of trials and persecution, in the face of discouragement and exhaustion...

But friends Stay the Course...One day we will meet our Savior and He will make all things

right...

**Transition: Action #1: Test the Waters For Your Love, Action #2: Stay the Course**

**Action #3: Show People THE Gate: Show People THE Gate...**

One of the most important and fundamental duties of being a Christian is communicating the Gospel of Christ to all the world...Therefore Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all Christ has commanded...

Friends if you are on the narrow road and you've walked through the gate then show other people the Gate...Communicate the truth of the Gospel to all you see...

**WE:**

Friends...Two of the largest Hurdles of the Christian life are **people and perseverance...**

Let us remember to give people grace and love...Let us remember to treat them as we would want them to treat us...Loving others is the ultimate test for our spiritual maturity...Let us walk with the spiritual maturity to love others and forgive....

Let us also remember to walk the narrow path with perseverance...Let us remember to not only love other but to persevere in the face of trials and persecution...

For oftentimes, the more difficult journey is the more rewarding...I believe people and perseverance are both eternally rewarding and pleasing to the Savior that we serve...

Let us reflect upon this quote by C.S. Lewis

*God knows our situation; He will not judge us as if we had no difficulties to overcome. What matters is the sincerity and perseverance of our will to overcome them.*

*We all want progress, but if you're on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive.*

*What saves a man is to take a step. Then another step.*

(Let us pray)