

# Two Gates

by J. Glyn Owen

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*Jesus teaches that entering through the narrow gate is essential for achieving life and avoiding destruction.*

**Duration:** 46:50

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 14:12, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:13-14, John 10:9, John 14:6, Acts 4:12

**Topics:** "Narrow Way"

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## Description

In this sermon on the Sermon on the Mount, the speaker emphasizes the importance and relevance of Jesus' teachings. The authority of Jesus as the incarnate Lord is highlighted, making his words profoundly challenging. As the sermon concludes, Jesus urges his listeners to respond to his teachings and enter through the narrow gate that leads to life. He warns that the wide gate and broad road lead to destruction, and only a few find the narrow road to life. The speaker urges the audience to heed the urgency and call of Jesus' words and enter into the desired destination of life.

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## Transcript

Will you kindly turn with me to the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew chapter 7, where we're at at the moment, and we read as the basis of our meditation this morning the very crucial and challenging words of verses 13 and 14. Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

But small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Two gates. This dissertation, which we call the Sermon on the Mount, is truly remarkable.

The profundity of its teaching, with its pointed and its very personal relevance, is even highlighted, of course, by the fact that we recognize the authority of the Teacher. He who speaks is none other than the Incarnate Lord, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. And if we can envision the Incarnate Lord as the Speaker, and hear these words as proceeding over His lips and coming directly to us this morning, I believe we shall have a very real sense of the importance and the relevance of these words of His.

Jesus' ability to communicate truth with such evidently divine authority marks out His precepts as essentially challenging at every point. As He draws this sermon to a conclusion, however, demanding individual response, summoning those who have heard what He has been teaching now to respond to it, His words assume a most compelling character, and I trust that none of us here this morning will resist the implications of the message or indeed turn a deaf ear to the call of these words now before us. See then

the Divine Evangelist.

I love to think of our Lord Jesus here as the Evangelist. That's what He is. He's been teaching throughout.

Now He is still the Teacher plus the Evangelist. And here He is with a profound sense of urgency, as well as of the propriety of what He's doing, ushering His hearers toward the one gateway that He knows and His knowledge is complete, the only one gateway known to Him that leads to life and away from the other gateway that leads to death and destruction. He is indeed very much the Shepherd.

And I guess the Shepherd image should be in our minds if you've seen the Shepherd gathering His sheep together to bring them through some narrow gateway into some pen or other. So is our Lord Jesus Christ here, gathering His sheep and warning them and calling them and beckoning them and urging them with all the power and persuasiveness at His disposal to get in through this narrow, narrow gate, giving two reasons for that. The only other gate leads to destruction whilst this one and only alternative to the other leads to life.

I cannot help feeling a sense of awesome responsibility as I try to elucidate our Lord's words today. Because there may be among us in Knox those who know the Sermon on the Mount from beginning to end and you might very well be able to quote the text and thereby think that you have done everything required of anyone to enter the kingdom of God and to know His salvation. There is one crucial step at any rate that you have not taken yet.

It is to enter in through the narrow, wicked gate, severing association with the masses and the multitudes that go through the other gate and aligning yourselves unashamedly with those of the narrow gate that lead on to the narrow way, that leads on to the expansive life eternal at the end of the narrow way. As I read these words, there are, it seems to me, two main wedges of truth that co-mingle here and they're woven together into the tapestry of our Lord's message. In the first place, we must look at the desired destination that is stated by Jesus.

Where does He want people to go? What does He want for people? Why did He preach the Sermon on the Mount? Well, of course, it comes right out here. Enter through the narrow gate, He says. But why? He answers the question.

Because, or for as the NIV puts it, wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it. And I want you to enter that way.

That's the point. I wonder whether you can really take this in. Can I take it in this morning? That the blessed Son of God, speaking to us through these, His ancient words, wants us to enter life.

There's no need for you to try to persuade Him to save you. He is the persuader. He wants you, my friend.

He wants you to enter the wicked gate to life. And that's where we start this morning. But what is life? What is this life that He wants us to enter? And He bids us enter through this narrow wicked gate which is rather confining and apparently difficult to negotiate.

What is this life? Life is one of the great words of the Bible, especially of the New Testament and of the New Testament especially of the Gospels and of the Gospels particularly the Gospel of John. That is one of the big words of the Bible. The Bible stands for life.

Life that knows no end. Life that is divine. Life that is eternal.

Life that is God-like. For God so loved the world, says St. John. In a verse we all love and probably all remember and could quote.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, that's the negative, but have eternal life. God wants that. Or think of Jesus in John 10.10 as quoted by John, the writer of the Gospel.

He quotes Jesus as saying, I have come that they might have life and have it to the full. But what does the word really mean? What is life? Now I believe that we are to understand the usage of the word life here in its immediate context. I could go further afield in order to add to it, to expand and deepen the concept, but I won't do that this morning.

I believe that the term life as used by Jesus here is to be understood as He refers to it in the Sermon on the Mount. And I think there are three aspects to it. First of all, let's look at it on its inner side.

What is life on the inside? If you could look into the inside of a man who has life, this life, what would you see going on in his soul? Well, I think Jesus has told us. We would see a man or a woman who is poor in spirit. No bragging, no arrogance, no suggesting that we have a claim to this and a right to that, but poor in spirit.

That's the first thing you'd see. That's life on the inside. Then you'd also see a mournful spirit.

A mournful spirit, of course, on account of the fact that one is not right with God, is wrong with God, is contrary to the purposes and the will of God, and is spoilt and marred by sin. A mourning, a sadness on account of that. That's life on the inside.

Then again, as Jesus tells us, you would see a meekness. I've not time to enlarge on that. And you would see a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness.

And then you would see a merciful spirit, someone who finds that he or she wants to forgive and wants to forget, and wants to get on with life in all its glory, and in all its sanctity, and with all its divine purpose. Merciful. Indeed, you would find a pure heart.

And you would find inside there the spirit of a peacemaker, rather than that of a rabble-rouser. That's life on the inside. The Beatitudes take us, you see, right inside.

Now, my friend, it's important. Have you got this life? Then we must look at it on its outer side. What's it look like from the outside? Assuming that these qualities are found inside, what's it look like on the outside? Well, Jesus has already told us in the Sermon on the Mount.

On its external side, its horizontal side, life may be described as having the following qualities. In the first place, it's a matter of accepting our being unjustly persecuted for righteousness' sake. And this is something quite strange to the carnal and to the worldly man.

It is a quality of being. This life on the inside is a quality of life that infuriates the world and the man of the world. And he gets angry.

And he says things and does things which hurt and wound the believer, the man with life. But the man with life has the capacity to receive these false accusations for Jesus' sake. For Jesus' sake.

Again, life on its outer side is a matter of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Moreover, it is a matter of keeping the law of God and producing, in Jesus' words, a righteousness that far surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees. Or again, life on its outer side is to be able to manifest such a mastery over temptation to sin that you nip murder at the bud in the form of hatred.

And you nip adultery at the bud in the form of a desire for a woman or a man that doesn't belong to you but to someone else. And this is life. It nips sin at the bud.

This is life. Such is life and its opposite is nothing but death. There is one other aspect of it.

Life on its Godward side. On its Godward side, life expresses itself in the following way as we have seen in our study of the preceding chapters. It's a sharing with the needy, you say.

That's a manward side. Yes, that's true. But it has a Godward side first.

In the context here. It shares with the needy but it doesn't do it to be seen of men. The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.

Well, who knows then? Oh, our Heavenly Father. He loves the needy. It doesn't matter the color of his skin.

It doesn't matter who he is. It doesn't matter where he is. It doesn't matter what he's done.

My Heavenly Father loves the needy. And the life He has given me is a life that has communion with Him. And because He loves the needy, He imparts that love to me and it acts through me.

So that first of all, meeting the needs of the needy is something Godward. Secondly, manward. Again, life on its Godward side is a matter of living in communion and communication with God.

In which His person, His will, and His kingdom are our main concerns. You see, the man who's got this life prays like this. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your name. May it be separated from every other. Sanctified, set apart for honor and glory and worship.

As no other. Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

Nations and leaders of the nations are battling for domination. Piling up their armament piles because they want the upper hand. But the man with this life says supremely, Your kingdom come.

He yearns to see God rule first. And Your will be done right here on earth as it is being done in heaven. That's how this man prays on the inside.

This is life on the inside. Moreover, this life expresses itself from time to time in a fasting. You say, this is manward again.

Well, yes, it has a manward side, but its basic character is Godward. The fasting of this man is not just a matter of going without food for a day or two or three. But it's a matter of going without food in order to give himself or herself undistractedly to the worship of God and the communion that is possible with God and

the communication which is our privilege to have with Him and to give oneself wholly to Him.

Forget food, forget everything. Be alone with God with no distractions. That's the life.

Or to go further, life on its Godward side is a matter of laying up treasure in heaven that you will discover there waiting you when you get there by investing your life and your treasures and your all in the here and now in expanding the kingdom of God. And such a life on its Godward side is a refusal to worry. Oh, I'm quoting Jesus.

It's a refusal to worry because we have a heavenly Father who cares for us and hears us and listens to us. And not even the sparrow falls without His knowing it and doing something about it. How much more of much more value are you than many sparrows, says Jesus.

And that's the life where He would lead us. With dimensions that are to be experienced within the here and now and our capacity for it in the here and now is limited. With its total and ultimate fulfillment in the there and then when we see our Savior face to face and He gathers us out of a world of sin and Satan into His immediate presence.

That's the life. And He tells His people, now look, fellows, He says, there may be women there too, sorry, I don't know. Look, you people, enter in through the narrow gate.

I know it's narrow. You probably have to get down on your knees and get your hands a little dusty, if not dirty, and your clothes. But you've got to get down on your knees and it's worth it to come in through that narrow gate onto the narrow way because this is the way of life.

My friend, I make no apology this morning for asking you here in Knox to do exactly that. I don't know how high a castle you have built for yourself and what your estimation is and how far down you've got to come to the valley of penitence. But I bid you come down for the narrow gate is the only way to life.

Now that's the one threat, the desired destination stated. And you've got to get that clear in your mind when you come to the next. The appropriate action for those who seek life.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.

Excuse me. Now this is the burden of our Lord in the verses before us. He is, as we've indicated, concerned that we should get right through that narrow gate.

The concern of Jesus is aggravated, you will notice, by the fact that there is another gate or gateway. Only one other, but there is another one. It's so large that perhaps it shouldn't be called a gateway, but that's what it is.

It's so wide, you might not call it a gate, but that's what it is. And it leads to an extremely populous company because the multitudes are on this other road that you enter via this wide, wide gate. The tragedy is that that road only leads in the opposite way and to the opposite destiny.

And Jesus describes that as destruction, destruction. Now that's an ominous note and more so when it is sounded forth so clearly by none other than the Son of God, the Christ of Calvary, the friend of publicans and sinners. We have to take it seriously because of the preacher, because of the Lord Jesus Christ and his authority.

Even so, the notion of destruction as enunciated by God's own Son is here. And if we are sensitive to the realities that he announces, it should be stabbing our consciences with greater alarm because we know him to be the Son of God. If he foresees such a peril and it so concerns him as to warn us about it, it must be not only real but terrible.

If he urges us to bend the neck and bend the knee and squeeze at any pain to ourselves through the narrow wicket gate onto the narrow road, then surely he is wanting us to avoid something that he deems to be painful. Elsewhere he asks this question, What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world and lose or forfeit his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? Now, Jesus did not define that word destruction and I'm not going to attempt to define it now. But you see, the fact that it is the very antithesis of life and that it is worthy of our costliest efforts to avoid it makes it clear that it is something horrifying to consider.

And you may add to that, if it necessitated a calvary to make it possible for us to avoid it, surely, surely, surely we should take it seriously. Enter through the narrow gate. Because wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction.

You see, the fact that you need do nothing to be lost, save only coast along with a crowd until you arrive at that awful end, is one good and valid reason why you should do something. Wake up and shake yourself and do what is necessary in the sight of God to enter this narrow way. Now, can I take it then that you are prepared for that? Can I take it that the whole of the congregation in Knox this morning wants to walk the way of life? Then I want to tell you how to do it.

First of all, we must concentrate on the discovery of the narrow gate. Who says someone, we know what that is well enough? Well, you may, but listen. Enter through the narrow gate.

Only a few find it. How come? How come? Well, it may be that it's so small that everybody misses it. It may be that there's such a clutter around it that men have tried to hide it and obscure it that it's not to be seen by the casual eye.

Oh, I could give you many, many reasons why people may be in danger of missing it. But Jesus says, only a few find it. And because he says that, I think it is good reason for you and for me to put all energies under harness to seek it and make sure we've got it.

Because he has promised, hasn't he? He who seeks, finds. And he who knocks to him, it will be opened. And the door will be opened to him.

You see, the fact is that the gateway to the only road to the life of the kingdom of God and of heaven is not generally a subject of concern or interest to those involved in life on the broad road. Now, allow me to speak very frankly. You'll not hear much about this in your business circles.

Business is necessary. It's part of life. But generally speaking, you see, your business companions, they're not concerned as to whether you're going in through the narrow gate that leads to life.

The concern of business is something quite different from this. I don't need to enter into that. But you don't hear this there.

Neither is it generally discussed in the halls of entertainment, save perhaps by way of a jibe or caricature. Joviality and gratification predominate there. The same goes for the realm of sport.

Or you may have a sportsman who is a Christian from time to time and we make a lot about his testimony. Well, bless God. But sportsmen and sportspeople are concerned about another gate.

They're concerned about the takings and the winnings. You don't hear anything about this. Still more serious as far as I am concerned, and I believe as far as our God is concerned, in the halls of learning, where allegedly we are seeking for truth, you'll hear very little of this.

A bulk of our professors and teachers in our universities would count this to be beneath their dignity. I'm sorry to say it would even be so in some theological colleges and in many churches. You will hear a lot about religion.

You will hear a lot about this and about that and about the other. But how many will be sitting in their pews this morning and will not know there is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain and an only one gate to life. And I tell you, because of the silence of men in sin, it is necessary for the faithful to Christ to raise their voices and harness their efforts and with grace and compassion try to draw men and women to the narrow gate that leads to life.

Of course, those of you who have the Scriptures in your hands and are in earnest about this do not have to search long and far. You'll find it all right. One writer, a quaint writer of years ago, put it very well, it seems to me, when he said that Jesus put up the two posts of the narrow gate at the very beginning of this sermon.

And he thinks of the gate hinging on two posts. And the two posts, he says, are blessed are the poor in spirit and blessed are they that mourn. And the narrow gate is there between those two posts.

And that's the narrow way in. Now that may be a graphic way of saying it, but it is essentially true. If you would enter the narrow road that leads to life, you must discover a poverty of spirit that makes you mourn for your condition before God.

That is the narrow gate, the point of entry into the kingdom of God and all that it stands for. And only a few find it. Of course, we've got to put this in context.

Do remember that the book of Revelation does say also, and Jesus was well aware of this, that when at last the role is called up yonder, we will meet a great multitude that no man can number out of every kindred and tribe and people and nation who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But in any congregation, in any community, few there be that find it. See that you find the one and only gate.

Second thing is this. The discovery of the narrow gate must be followed by personal entry through its portals and thus on to a narrow road. See, it's not enough to see the gate and stand before it and say, ah, I found you at last.

You've got to go through, right through. The challenge to search for the one gate to life leads to another, to squeeze through its contracted and restrictive portals. You see, the narrow gate is wide enough to let every humble, mournful person through, whilst at the same time it is sufficiently narrow to forbid access to anything and anyone who is so blotted by pride or with contagious sin that he would damage the fellowship of the way and of heaven itself.

So much of the luggage we carry with us in life, you know, simply has to be left aside if we enter the narrow way. It is therefore, it is contraband there. It has to be put on one side.

Oh yes, this is a very challenging passage. And on many counts, you see, this is not a popular way. The majority of people are on the other road.

They're on the other route. They're going in the opposite direction. And we love to be with the crowd.

We yearn for the crowd. There's a sense of safety with the crowd. It's false, of course, but you feel you're going with the crowd, so all will be well.

And they're all moving in the opposite direction, it would seem. And you and your few companions are alone. Almost.

So moving in through this narrow gate onto the narrow way means, or will probably mean, the severance of ties of friendship, even of business partnerships in many cases, in order to enter the narrow gate and walk the narrow way to life in all its fullness. And that's a hard pill to bite, you see. The self in us loves to be popular and to win the approval of our fellows.

The partnership of faith with Christ, crucified and risen to be Lord of His people, doesn't get on very well with the carnalities of this world. And we've got to go on without them. We must therefore determine between the relative value of popularity with the folk on the Broadway here and now, and the experience of destruction hereafter, on the one hand, and the acceptance of our Lord's assurance that the narrow way is the way to life, on the other hand.

We've got to weigh them and choose whether we will or whether we won't. This is not a popular way, this is not a liberal way. I'm not speaking politically, I'm speaking morally.

On the broad road, you see, you can do your own thing at any old time just as you like. Every man, every woman can do just that which is right in his own eyes. Never mind if you want it.

Do you want it? Get it, man. Get it, woman. Be liberated.

That's the way of the broad road. If you want it, just get it. Never mind about other people.

Just satisfy yourself. Every person decides very much what he or she wants. Not so on the narrow road.

This road matches the gate at which you enter it for its narrowness. Here your behavior is limited by the rule of the king. And there's only one king here.

You and I may have battles occasionally as to whether we will surrender and yield to him, but there's only one king here, and involved in our entry is the acknowledgement of that that Jesus is Lord. There's no entry into the kingdom of God short of that. We've got to come to terms with that.

Though we may have caused wonder on the way whether we can bow to his every demand or command, our issue has been resolved back at the gate. You see, Jesus is actually Lord of both courses. But the people on the broad road have decided for the time being that they will utterly rebel and go their own way.

Those on the narrow road acknowledge the lordship of Jesus and confess it. But those on the broad road will come to a point where every knee will have to bow, and every tongue will have to confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. But by that time they've gone the wrong way, and life is beyond reach.

This is not a popular way, nor a liberal way, neither is it a comfortable way. You see, salvation couldn't anyway be comfortable for men and women that have become involved in sin and the curse of God. How could it be comfortable to be saved from the ravages of indwelling sin in our thoughts, in our minds, in our spirits? How could that be comfortable? All the old ascetics, criticize them as you will, they knew that.

And it's basic to know that. There is no such thing as comfortable salvation. We have come short of the glory of God.

The devil reigns in our hearts, and our lusts run riot, and they're all against God. You cannot have a salvation that comfortably leads us out of that and transforms us into the image of God. It means the cross.

And that's what Jesus meant when he said, changing the metaphor, if anyone will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me. Well, what for? To die, of course, to self. And you see, that's the whole point.

You die at the gate, in principle, and as you go on the narrow way, it is a daily dying to self, to sin, to Satan, to the world, to the flesh, to the devil. But you say, you break my heart, I don't want a life like that. What I announce in the name of my God and my Savior is this.

That's the way to life. That's the way to life. You may brand me a heretic, but I believe I am re-echoing exactly the mind of Christ and of his apostles.

That's the way of life. I know many people who would like to go through the gate, and even through the wicked gate, narrow though it is, if only after going through the wicked gate they could have the broad road again. You see, they'd make any effort to get in, provided moving forward from there leaves them with plenty of space to bring in their contraband goods and ideas and philosophies and whatnot.

But that's not the way. Narrow is the gate and narrow is the way. For as you walk this way, you will find that your life is transformed and your tastes are transformed.

And you begin to hate the things you once loved and love the things you once hate. And you begin to see that there is value to these narrow walls on either side that keep you in dependence upon your Lord and in communion with him. Have you entered? Have you begun to walk the narrow way by going through the narrow gate? There's a lot of luggage that we have to get rid of sometimes, especially our pride and self-righteousness and self-esteem and whatnot.

And the wicked gate won't take all that luggage. You've got to leave it behind. If people sneak into the church some other way, as Jesus said, there are people who sneak into the fold some other way.

They climb over the hedge. They bring their pride with them. They frighten the sheep.

They disturb the peace. And they spoil the communion, the fellowship. Jesus won't have it.

Sooner or later, he deals with that kind of thing. Oh, brothers and sisters, I beg you in the name of my Lord this morning, seek that narrow gate. If you're not through, come to it this morning.

Seek it today. It is only in the condition of penitence and mourning for your own sin and looking to the Christ of the promises, it is only thus that you can find life that is eternal. In the words of Alexander McLaren, no man can enter unless like the German emperor whom the Pope kept standing in the snow for three days at the gate of Canossa.

He is, in McLaren's words, stripped of everything down to the hair shirt of penitence. Oh, my friend, have you been stripped down to the hair shirt of penitence? Then you can go through the gate this morning and you can begin the narrow walk on the narrow way. Life will grow larger and its dimensions are eternal and God will be with you on the way.

Let us pray. Whilst our heads are bowed and prayerful, whilst we are waiting on God, I wonder whether there are those among us this morning to whom the Lord has been speaking. I do not know.

He does. I have a feeling, if I may judge from the burden in my own soul and from one or two other tokens, I have a feeling that some of us need this word and need to obey it today, not tomorrow. Today is the day of salvation.

I think, therefore, we ought to have a moment of silent prayer and I would ask you, quietly in your hearts, if this is the Lord's summons to you and you know it by His Spirit working in your heart, bend the neck, come down from your pedestal, come under the bar, through the gate today. Will you do that now? Are you in? Have you counted the cost? Have you entered? Blessed God, who does not wish the death of the wicked, but rather that we may turn and have life, draw, draw our every heart and soul to you today. Overcome our native stubbornness and love of sin and the world and the things of time and draw us, draw us to yourself.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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