

14th June 2017.

THE WAY TO LIFE VS THE WAY TO DESTRUCTION.

Matthew 7:21-29.

Tonight we'll take on our continuation of the study of the Gospel of Matthew, more or less where we left off in Chapter 7:21-29, but for the purpose of getting the context of the message recap from verse 13, which reads from the Amp.....

I take it as a great grace to be closing Jesus' great Sermon on the mount, which we started to learn from on the 18th of January, learning from the Beatitudes, and Pastor Kenny taking us through Christ's teachings of true righteousness, here as He was closing His exhortation to the disciples and followers that were listening, Christ is drawing the line as clearly as possible between the way that leads to destruction and the way that leads to life.

The same was the case with the great men of old in the Bible, that as the end drew near for Moses, he spoke to the Israelites "See, I have set before you this day life and good , as well as death and evil...Therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live".(Deut. 30:15 -20).....

Joshua too when he was laying down his reigns of the people he had gotten into the promised land, charged them "Choose this day whom you will serve".(Josh.24:15) Yes, even though the Jews then swore to obey the Lord and chose to serve Him alone, many years later they had failed to do so and their cup had filled up for the lord to judge them, yet even then in Jeremiah 21:8, God told the prophet to tell them still to choose either to live or to die.....

Likewise, this closing section of the most recounted of Jesus' sermons calls for application. It's more like "Life at the crossroads". Demanding a choice, as of necessity for continuance. Here are two gates, two ways, two destinations, and two groups of people; two kinds of trees and two kinds of fruit; two groups at the judgment; and two kinds of builders, building on two kinds of foundations. And interestingly noteworthy, The Lord is so gracious and wise that our multiple choice tests aren't confusing at all. [Its not a, b, c, d, either or, both a & d, or even none of the above!] It is Left or Right, with no middle (not even the fence) and it is White or Black with no 'grey'I hear these days there are about 'fifty shades of grey'!

We were taught to enter the narrow gate, by the strait (righteous & strict) way because that is what leads to life; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction [Then no wonder one place is called 'Broadway']. Listen, nobody sells hell. Everybody sells heaven. But the broad road, though marked heaven, is a straight line to hell. So the command comes very clearly. "Enter by the narrow gate." However that the way that leads to life is difficult while that that leads to death is easy! Reason why few find the former and travel along it while many are on the latter.

Because since the fall, in this life, real life is 'going against the grain', it's swimming against the current, as it is, a fall tends to destruction/down/death.

Even Jesus continually emphasized the difficulties of following Him (Matt.10:38; 11:12).

In Luke 13:24, Jesus said, "Strive to enter by the narrow door." What an amazing statement. Strive is agonize. Agonize to enter by the narrow door. You say, "Wait a minute. If this is the way to heaven, if the sign says heaven, whoa, I finally found it. I found somebody to show me the true way through Jesus Christ in him alone. And I'm there. Well, why is it so hard? Why do I have to agonize?"

Jesus went on to say in that same verse, "Many, many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." They'll get there. They'll find it. They'll understand it. They will seek to enter and never be able to enter. Wow. It's hard to get in. It's difficult. Even when you've heard the truth, it's difficult to embrace that truth to make a commitment to that truth.

We were also taught to be aware of false prophets, teachers and their doctrines. That even though they come in all manner of disguises, their fruits will reveal them. Unfortunately many these days are falling for the 'poisoned apples' that these ravenous wolves are having, easily disregarding the self-interest, the prestige, the gain, the transmission of personal ideas, observance of practices, the prohibitions, the separation of religion from life, the arrogance and the weirdness they have.[Saw a man in Miami calling himself the Antichrist, whose sect tattooed themselves with 666 to honor him, as that for them they are in heaven following him!]

The real test of any teaching is; does it strengthen a man to bear the burdens of life and walk the way wherein he ought to go?

So often we confess God with our lips and deny Him with our lives. It is not difficult to recite a creed, but it is difficult to live the Christian life. Faith without practice is a contradiction in terms, and love without obedience is an impossibility.

That's what gets us to today's text in focus, verses 21 – 27... there two great permanent truths in this passage. There is only one way in which a man's sincerity can be proved, and that is by his practice, by obedience in choosing the right against the wrong.

Then there is the idea of judgment. All through it there runs the certainty that the day of reckoning comes. A man may succeed for long in maintaining the pretenses and disguises, but there comes a day when all are stripped away. We may deceive men, even our very selves but we cannot deceive God. (Ps. 139, Gal.6)

Yes if by deceit and falsehood even in the name of Jesus, prophecies are made and demons exorcised, it is lawlessness before Jesus, who weighs the heart's intents and motives.

This scene plays out Proverbs 16:2-5 "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes; but the LORD weighs the spirits. Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts shall be established. The LORD has made all for himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; though they join forces, none will go unpunished."

In closing, by pointing out the practicality of life, where by only a house whose foundations are firm can withstand the storm and therefore only a life whose foundations are sure can stand the test, Jesus demanded two things; One that men/women should listen to Him clearly.... Listen to Jesus, not to "men of God", the world (Broadway), even yourself, but listen to Jesus.... It is His words that bring eternal life as the disciples said in John 6:68.

But more than that, secondly that we should do.... Knowledge only becomes relevant when it is translated into action. It's useless going to a doctor and not take the prescription, it's no point consulting an expert yet you won't take his advice. Yet many of us listen to Jesus every Sunday, and some on Wednesday, and some every day, but aren't ready to put into simple practice his instructions, cautions, rebukes, etc , we are told that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” And still wonder what is or is not happening in my life?

Have you checked the ‘total obedience’ icon of your life?

Proverbs 10:25 says, “When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, But the righteous has an everlasting foundation.”

Upon both houses the rain descends, the floods come, and the winds beat against, yet one stands, while the other has a great fall! Dear God have mercy that we may be wise and be willing to listen and obey you....that our houses may stand and not fall, yet even when there are leakages, please help us seal them up by your Word, may the cracks too be mended we pray, by your Holy Spirit.

And then after he was done, the people were astonished at His teaching, for as the Amp. Puts it, “He was teaching as One Who had [and was] authority, and not as did the scribes.” To impress them that truly it was His Kingdom that He had been referring them to and about, and as Eccl. 8:4 says “Where the Word of a king is, there is power; And who may say to Him, “What are you doing?”.