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The Golden Rule and the Narrow Gate; Matt 7:12-14
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Introduction – Jesus is now drawing the Sermon on the Mount to a close with a few more illustrations and final instructions. As the sermon moves to its end, the contrast between false faith and true faith could not be any sharper. The sharpest point being final destinations. There is a final destination for those who hold to a false faith throughout this life, and there is an entirely different final destination for those who embrace true faith in this life.

As with all good sermons, and this is the best sermon ever preached, sermons built on the Word of God causes the listener to seriously self-evaluate his/her own life and heart and then calls on the listener to respond in true faith, to embrace Christ and the gospel of Christ, to relinquish our hold on this world and on ourselves and to cling to the only source of life and salvation.

That's what all of us are to do today. Take the Word of God, apply it honestly to our lives, and if our hearts and lives do not reflect true faith, embrace Christ. We begin by a brief look at what is commonly called the Golden Rule.

- I. A Rule of Prayer for the Rule of Life (v12)
 - a. As I studied v12 this week, it became clear that it really belongs to the previous passage on prayer. It's somewhat of a life application to the lesson on prayer.
 - b. Jesus' concluding words on prayer highlights the goodness of God. That's one reason we can pray fervently and constantly and with great faith and trust in God – He is good and therefore He always gives good things to those who ask.
 - c. That truth is meant to spur us on in our prayer lives. We should pray and pray often because we know our heavenly Father is good and gives us good things. It's not in His nature to give us what is not good for us.
 - d. Now as an application of the point, Jesus us saying, "By the way, since your Father is always good to you, do good to others."
 - e. We know that God always does good to us and we want others to treat us the same way, so – here's where the word "so" enters – so, if

that's how you wish to be treated, treat others that way, do good to them.

- f. Now others do not always do good to us and we have not always done good to others, but our actions toward others is not based on their actions toward us. Our actions toward others is based on God's actions toward us! He is always good to us. May we always be good to others, for that is a mark of a child of God.
 - g. Two observations.
 - i. Note the relation between this point of application and Jesus' statement earlier in 5:17. This is just one example of teaching and applying the gospel is not contrary to the law of God but actually upholds and fulfills it.
 - ii. How does this particular application fulfill the Law and the Prophets? Remember in Matt 22 Jesus said the two greatest commandments are love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself and on these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.
 - iii. That means everything that is written in the Law, the first 5 books of the Bible, and everything spoken by God to His people contained in all the prophets of the OT basically boil down to these two things – the people of God, the people of true faith are known by these two things – they love God and they love others!
 - 1. Many of us are reading through the Bible this year, and what we will discover over and over again from all the narratives and commandments and laws and poetry and promises and warnings is that faith reveals itself in actual, practical, visible, demonstrable acts of love toward God and toward others.
 - iv. The Golden Rule is how we live out the second greatest commandment.
 - h. What makes the Golden Rule so golden is that it is based on God's actions toward us and it fulfills the Law and the Prophets.
- II. Examining the Gates (vv13-14)
- a. There are only two.
 - i. There is the narrow gate and there is the gate that is wide.

- ii. The Bible is so abundantly clear that there are only two paths of life. That truth and message is counter to everything else we hear in the world.
 - iii. In fact, the message of the world is utterly confusing because it has many different messages!
 1. Some say that all paths of religious beliefs lead to the same place. No matter which path you choose, as long as you walk faithfully on that path, in the end, they are all various paths up the same mountain. The Bible says there are really only two paths. The Gospel path of Christ and all other paths are really the same path.
 2. Some say you choose your own path. You go your own way. You live life on your own terms. You do what pleases you and don't let anybody stand in your way. After all, truth is relative. What's good for you is for you and what's good for me is for me. The Bible says there are only two paths. The Gospel path of Christ and any other paths are the really the same path.
 3. Some say, you can't really know, just do your best. The Bible says you can know. There are only two paths.
 - iv. We are either walking with the Lord on the way to the Lord or we are walking away from the Lord on the way to eternal separation from the Lord.
- b. The beginning.
- i. One gate is wide. There are many entry points. It's easy to enter. It's easy to follow. It feels natural and feels right to our senses and pleasures and self-interest. It makes sense. It's the path of least resistance. It's wide and welcoming and all inclusive. You don't have to change, you don't have to think, you don't have to fight or wrestle or push against it. You can just go with the flow and do what everybody is doing. You don't have to stand out. You don't have to be criticized or shunned or unfriended. This gate is wide.
 - ii. One gate is narrow. It's not so easy to enter. It doesn't feel so good at times to go this way. It's not natural. You have to do things like deny yourself, count the cost, lay down your ambitions, pick up a cross, consider the pleasures of sin and

comforts of this life as fleeting and incomparable to this way. You have to consider any price you have to pay to enter as being worth it to go down this road. This gate is narrow.

c. The middle.

i. The wide gate is inviting because the way is easy. It's easy to live this way because the world lives this way. It's easy to go along with what everybody else does and how everybody else thinks. This way promises popularity, acceptance, pleasures. This way allows you and celebrates you living your life your way.

ii. But the way of the narrow gate is hard. It's not easy to go against the grain. It's not easy to live this life in light of the next life. It's not easy to daily reject our selfishness and submit our lives to another. It's not easy to give up what looks like makes others so happy. It's not easy to walk a life that others will make fun of, reject you, and even hate you for the way you live and what you believe.

d. The destination.

i. The wide gate that is so welcoming and so easy to follow leads straightway to destruction. What seems to make you so happy and fulfilled and satisfied will first leave you empty, then it will destroy your life, and then finally it will destroy your soul.

ii. But that narrow gate that seemed so difficult to enter and so hard to follow leads straightway to life. What seemed to be so difficult at first, what felt like such a sacrifice at first, becomes the joy and contentment and peace that your soul so desperately longs for. As it turns out, going against the grain is where life and salvation and eternal life is found.

e. The followers.

i. Those that enter the wide gate stumble along in blindness until they eventually lost it all.

ii. Those that enter the narrow gate walk in the grace of the Lord until they eventually step into everlasting glory and joy.

Conclusion – What is this narrow gate and this hard path that leads to life? Jesus states it so clearly in John 14:6 doesn't He? I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.