

Sunday, January 8, 2017

Pastor Doug Phillips

Introduction to Matthew 7:13-14

One of the greatest tragedies of our current cultural climate is that we don't think seriously about many things. Sure, there are occasional serious moments (the death of a loved one, a national crisis, etc.) or perhaps we will even take in a dramatic movie or read a book that will cause us to think more deeply for a brief time. Yet our default is typically to inoculate ourselves from the more serious things in life. We devour entertainment the same way we devour our bounteous food—neither of which have been the experience of most humans throughout most of history.

The Bible, though, is characteristically serious with sparse moments of levity thrown in. The Bible speaks about God and humanity, about life and death, about Heaven and Hell. We cannot know God except in the Bible. Thus we know that God is a serious God. And we know that He has told us about the serious condition we are in: either we are headed for eternal bliss in His presence, or eternity under His righteous wrath.

Context

This passage comes at the end of what is known as the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5:1-7:27). Jesus has already introduced the idea of the “kingdom of Heaven” (4:17), but this sermon explains what life is like in that kingdom. In large part, Jesus explains how the value system of the world is completely opposite of the value system of His kingdom. He also explains how even the religious law-keeping of the day was counter to the kingdom of Heaven. The present passage then begins a section (7:13-27) where Jesus draws a contrast between those who are truly citizens of this kingdom and those who are not.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Matthew 7:13-14 and Luke 13:22-30

Key Ideas

- There are only two ways to live.
- Every person will live forever.
- Life without God does not go anywhere, but it is not static. It is increasingly obstinate and wicked.
- Life with God and the goodness of Heaven should completely enthrall us.
- We should make every effort to know for certain that we are on the road that leads to Heaven.
- The way we habitually relate to the word of God (found only in the Bible) *is* the way we relate to God Himself.
- Life with God means “walking” (thinking, doing, living) in love, in wisdom, and in the Spirit according to the word of God.

Discuss

- 1) What is life like on the broad road that leads to destruction?
Or, in what ways have you seen godlessness corrupt your own life or the lives of people around you? Give specific examples, but no need to use names if referring to others.

- 2) What are some lies about God and eternity that people you know have embraced?

- 3) Pastor Doug said, “we should make every effort to know for certain we are on the road that leads to Heaven.” How do you know if you are on the “narrow road” (Matt. 7:13-14)?

- 4) How should knowing that we are already living forever affect the way we make decisions in the “here-and-now”? How should it affect the way we view other people?

- 5) Who are some people in your life that you are pretty sure are on the broad road leading to destruction? How are you working towards making them aware of that and of the way of salvation in Christ?

Go Deeper (*This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting*)

Gospel Connections: That there are only two ways to live is central to the gospel message. If one had to boil down the gospel into a brief statement it could be this: God saves sinners. That statement has much to be unpacked, of course, but it suffices to point out how it illustrates these two ways. 1) There are sinners in need of saving. This means that sinners are destined for something terrible and God Himself, knowing what that something is and how terrible it is, has seen fit to save. Yet by virtue of our sinfulness, apart from Christ, there is only one way: the way that leads to death and destruction. 2) That God has made a way to save sinners. This is the other way to live: as sinners saved by God. This salvation is only authoritatively spoken by God in the Bible. And we know, from the Bible, that because it is *God* who saves sinners, that that life is truly happy and filled with eternal bliss.

Whole Bible Connections: Since God is unchanging, neither is His word. The Old Testament testifies to these two statuses. Psalm 1 illustrates this dynamic well. There are two people in that psalm: the blessed and the wicked. Each of them has a way in which they walk. The blessed walks according to the word of God on which he meditates frequently. The wicked chooses not to do that. It could be that the wicked person has actively set himself against God and follows after idols. It could also be that the wicked person is indifferent to God, in which case he does not actively oppose God, but as a result of his lack of obedience, is equally condemned. So the people of Israel have always known there are only two ways to live.

Historical Theological Connections: John Wesley: "I want to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end He came from heaven. He has written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be [a man of one book]. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven...."