

Matthew 7:13-29

Two Ways to Live

Jesus has been teaching his disciples (and anybody who wants to follow him) about the way of true righteousness that God calls us to if we want to belong to his Kingdom and live as his holy children. In this final passage, Jesus now emphasises the importance of how we respond to his teaching.

He begins with three related warnings, which highlight the very real danger of finding yourself outside the kingdom. Jesus then concludes with a parable (or metaphor) that highlights the consequences of our response to him and his teaching.

Verses 13-14

Jesus contrasts the path to destruction with the path to life. The path to destruction is a *broad*, easy road with a *wide* gate, and *many* take this path. In contrast, the path to life is a *difficult* road, accessed through a *narrow* gate, and *few* find it.

→ If we are saved by grace through faith alone (which we are!) and Christ's yoke is light and easy (which it is!), **why is the path to life difficult, narrow and rarely found?** (*Think about how this statement relates to Jesus' teaching in Chapters 5-7*)

→ How does this statement challenge cultural ideas such as:

- 'You just need to be true to yourself'
- 'Each person's faith is an equally valid path to God'
- 'Avoid extremes and find a middle way'

→ What do the broad and narrow roads look like in your context?

Verses 15-20

→ What does Jesus warn against in these verses, and how does it relate to the first warning (in verses 13-14)?

→ What does Jesus mean when he says we will 'recognise them by their fruit'?

Is Jesus talking about their behaviour? Or their teaching? Or the results of their ministry? Or some or all of the above? Why?

→ What should you be looking for in a Christian leader or teacher?

→ What implications does this have for the growing trend of Christians listening to many hours of teaching and social commentary from online sources?

Verses 21-23

→ Note down the characteristics, according to Jesus, of the person who:

- Will enter the kingdom of heaven:
- Will *not* enter the kingdom of heaven:

→ What is surprising about what Jesus says here?

→ What does this passage reveal about what it means (and doesn't mean) to be a Christian?

Verses 24-29

Jesus uses a powerful metaphor to contrast two different kinds of people.

→ What do the different elements of the metaphor (or parable) represent?

Consider: the rain, rivers and winds, the house, the process of building, the rock or the sand as the foundation, the crashing or lack of crashing...

→ What is the essential difference between the two people represented by the wise and foolish builders? (Consider how they might actually look quite similar, and then also what differentiates them)

→ How does this passage personally affect you?

Reflect and Pray

→ What are some of the key things you've learnt or been challenged by through Jesus' teaching in the sermon on the mount about what it means to be a Christian?

→ How does today's passage inspire you to pray:

- For yourself?
- For people around you who are (or at least claim to be!) following Jesus?
- For Chatswood Baptist Church?
- For the non-Christian people you interact with in world week-by-week?