

Readings

Scripture

¹² “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

- Matthew 7:12-14 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

The path of discipleship is narrow, and it is fatally easy to miss one’s way and stray from the path, even after years of discipleship. And it is hard to find. On either side of the narrow path deep chasms yawn. To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way. To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same time to love the enemies of that truth, his enemies and ours, and to love them with the infinite love of Jesus Christ, is indeed a narrow way. To believe the promise of Jesus that his followers shall possess the earth, and at the same time to face our enemies unarmed and defenseless, preferring to incur injustice rather than to do wrong ourselves, is indeed a narrow way. To see the weakness and wrong in others, and at the same time refrain from judging them; to deliver the gospel message without casting pearls before swine, is indeed the narrow way. The way is unutterably hard, and at every moment we are in danger of straying from it. If we regard this way as one we follow in obedience to an external command, if we are afraid of ourselves all the time, it is indeed an impossible way. But if we behold Jesus Christ going on before step by step, we shall not go astray.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (p. 190)

“What is hateful to you do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.”

-Rabbi Hillel, AD 20

Sermon Outline

The Cost of Coming to Jesus
Matthew 7:12-14

And His Disciples Came to Him
Jeff Hooker

The Cost of Coming to Jesus (Matthew 7:12-14)

The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)

- You Have Heard It Said
- Where Is The Focus?

The Narrow Gate (Matthew 7:13-14)

- A Holy Tension
- An Impossible Task

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the *Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
- Jesus phrases the golden rule as a positive command (do what you want done instead of don’t do what you wouldn’t want done). How does phrasing it this way make the command more difficult to follow?
- How should this command shape our actions toward others? What do you wish others would do to you? Be specific. Do we ever need God to redeem our perspective in this area?
- How do you experience this holy tension, it being both easy and hard to come to Jesus? In what ways is it easy to come to Jesus and follow Him? In what ways is it hard?
- In what areas of your life is God calling you through the narrow gate (the difficult path) even though there might appear to be a way that would be easier for you? At work? With family? At Valley Springs?