

# WEEKEND Edition 21/22 May 2022 "Life Road" (Matt. 7:13,14)

Good weekend to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

I wonder if you remember the days when a road trip required a paper map, perhaps you even used an Atlas? And then, along came something called GPS, and now even the newest versions can alert you of a traffic delay up ahead and give you an alternate route! *So, what would a **Spiritual GPS** be like for you and me?* A GPS identifies where you are and guides you to where you'd like to go. *So where would a **Spiritual GPS** tell you and me that we are right now and where we are heading in life... **spiritually**?*

We're walking with Matthew these days as he leads us through the first big message Jesus gave. Jesus said: ***"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*** (Matt. 7:13,14) What do you suppose the people understood Jesus was saying that day? Everyone knew about corals and narrow gates for animals, especially sheep, and they knew about the large heavy gates at the entrance to big cities. Everyone knew what it was like to walk the dusty, winding roads of Palestine in the first century, some large, some small. Many people had courtyards around their homes with high walls for protection, and narrow gates for entrance from the road into their courtyard.

I think it's safe to assume people understood *Jesus was talking about life being like a road and each day of life involves taking STEPS on our life road. Sometimes steps just maintain the journey, but often the CHOICES we make determine the steps we take on the road of our lives. Can you look back over your life and see how many times YOU have made the choices which have determined the direction of the life road you've traveled? Do you see how you have arrived to where you are today, my friends?* Here's an important question... **What would you say are the 5 most significant decisions you've made in your life which have contributed to where you are in life today?**

*And how would you describe WHERE you think your life road is heading in May of 2022? Will you be satisfied with your life when you arrive at the destination your life road is taking you?*

So, my friends, can WE understand what Jesus was saying to the people that day, in that context? Do we understand the importance of gates and walls and roads? Do we see the difference between large, well-traveled roads, and small lanes with few people on them? *Most importantly, can we understand Jesus' warning in His comparison between wide, well-traveled roads leading through large gates to destruction, and small roads, much less traveled, leading through very small gates, to life?*

I invite you to look at the life roads people are traveling where you live THROUGH the lenses of what you understand to be God's design and desire for our human race. What do you see? Can you apply Jesus' warning to yourself and the people in your city?

And here's another question... **WHY?** *Why is it then and now, that far more people are walking the wide, well-traveled road to disaster and self-destruction, than the few people who are walking a narrow road of living a God honoring life which will lead to eternal life with Jesus in heaven?*

Here's another WHY question? *If we can easily see the pain and suffering of the crowds on the wide, well-traveled road that is leading to disaster and self-destruction, WHY are not more of the crowd getting off that painful road and choosing the narrow road Jesus offers?*

Are these some possible reasons? Is it possible Jesus and the true story of Easter is largely unknown where you live or around the world? Is it possible Bibles are very scarce, hard to find and very, very expensive if you can find one? Is it possible that pursuing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is against the laws of most places? Could it be that many people think God charges a high price for a person to come to God, to have a conversation with God, to pay for God's forgiveness for their sin? Do some people believe the price is simply so outrageously high that only a few very wealthy people can afford to approach God? Do some people believe that God is so complex and the road to God requires such a high education that only the most intelligent among us have any chance to approach God? Perhaps many people believe God is so busy with 8 billion people, you'd have to wait an entire lifetime for only a few minutes with God? Or what excuse can you think of my friends? *WHY is the wide road to self-destruction and disaster so overcrowded?*

May I give you three reasons among many that I believe explain it?

### **First, Selfishness.**

We human beings naturally prize and prioritize ourselves above everyone or everything else. The most important person to each of us is the person we see in the mirror, and whatever my needs and desires are will always take priority over anything else... that's human nature, isn't it? That's why marriage is such a challenge for most people, because when I say "I DO" at the marriage altar, I'm placing my spouse ahead of myself! I'm committing myself to SERVE my spouse rather than myself! *So, the wide road is filled with many selfish people pursuing their self-serving life agenda and not ready to believe God might have a better life plan for them!* Is that harsh or if you'll ponder it a moment, do you see it's true?

## Second is Self-Satisfaction.

We want to be happy in life and we will pursue whatever we think will satisfy us, even if it's wrong or illegal or we have to do it in secret so no one else knows! Jesus spoke about that when He said: **"This is the verdict: Light [Jesus] has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil."** (John 3:19) While there are many wonderfully satisfying, healthy, helpful things we can pursue, our human appetites are continually tempted by things which may satisfy at first but so easily can draw us to self-destructive addictions. Do you know anyone on the crowded wide road that would like to get off that road, but they are so deeply entangled, they can't see how they could ever find freedom?

**Third is Pride.** *We want to always be right... even when we know we are wrong!*

We hate considering we might need to say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong"! We have a distorted perspective of ourselves. Almost always we see ourselves much better than we really are! Oh, the Bible and especially the book of Proverbs is filled with wisdom and warnings about pride, isn't it? How about this one: **"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."** (Prov. 16:18) Or this: **"Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who accept advice."** (Prov. 13:10) Or how about this nugget of truth: **"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom."** (Prov. 11:1)

I wonder if from the hillside where Jesus spoke what Matthew has recorded for us, the people were able to look out over the landscape toward the town of Capernaum and see the busy roads and small paths which led to that bustling town on the shore of Lake Galilee? *I wonder if every person on that hillside thought what you and I are thinking right now?* If my life is like a road, from the time of my birth to the time of my death, am I on some predetermined road I can't choose to leave? There is no going back, I can't change anything about my past. **Can I change anything about my future?**

*Yes! Consider this my friends. With each day of my life, each choice, each step, I am actually charting the course of my life. I'm not following some predetermined six lane highway with no off ramps. **I am navigating my way through life.** I am not a robot. My next step is NOT predetermined. While I can't change the past, I determine each new step I take. I'm not forced to travel any particular road in life. I'm not a child any longer. *As an adult, with a mind to think, at any time I can choose to chart a new course, cut a new path, bend the road of my life in a new direction!**

So, if each step I take on my life road is determined by the choices I make in life... am I on a good path... good for me, good for my family and friends? And where is my life road taking me? What do I expect will be my experience at the end of the road? And here's a big question... *since I'm the one choosing my life path with every step I take, am I willing to accept FULL responsibility for WHERE I am in life today, WHERE my life road is taking me and HOW it is affecting the people who are traveling life with me, especially my family and close friends?*

The statement Jesus made that day is brief, only really a few words, but oh so powerful! The night He was with His disciples, before Jesus went to the cross, He said **"I am the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE no one comes to the Father except by Me."** (John 14:6) Can you see how these two powerful statements of Jesus fit together?

In closing today, may I invite you to take a blank piece of paper... *and put your name at the top. Then, in one corner put the name of the place where you were born and the date.* Then began drawing a meandering line which symbolizes the road of your life. Mark when there were significant events in your life and perhaps make a turn in your life road there, indicating the impact that event had on you. Along the way if people joined your life journey through marriage or children, I urge you to put their names & dates on your life road map. You get the idea, right?

*Did Jesus join your life journey at some point? Can you identify when and what impact that day had on you?* And one more thing... at some point your earthly life road will come to an end. And then what? What are you anticipating life will be like for you then? Oh my, so much to ponder today my friends... so let's each find a piece of paper and start drawing. And ask Jesus, as you draw, to help you understand it from His perspective!

**Today's Scripture is Matthew 7:13, 14.**