

Connect360: The Path That Leads to Life

March 19, 2024

- *Lesson 11 in the Connect360 unit “Kingdom Power: The Sermon on the Mount” focuses on Matthew 7:13-14.*

Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matthew 6:24). As Jesus began to draw the Sermon to a conclusion, he repeated this argument with the illustrations of the two gates, two trees and two foundations. These “either/or” statements remind us there are only two choices: follow Christ and find life, or fail to follow Christ and experience destruction.

The narrow gate leading to the small path is not the most obvious choice. This is the path of those who ask, seek and knock. It is followed by individuals who acknowledge life’s most urgent questions—those who will dare contemplate origins, destinations and purpose of life.

An individual doesn’t just find himself or herself on the narrow road, Jesus said it requires a choice and an action, “Enter through the narrow gate.” The word translated enter is an aorist imperative verb in the Greek text, indicating a point in time and a command.

The narrow path is not the easier of the two, requiring a righteousness even greater than that of the law-abiding Pharisees. The ones traveling this road are called to resist anger and lust. They are those who love their enemies as well as their friends. They recognize they must deal with their own sins before attempting to help others with their sins. They are the ones who seek to treat others as they wish to be treated.

Some have said the safest place to be is in the will of God. That is not what Jesus said. He reminds us that the narrow path is costly. Jesus brings comfort to the grieving and strength to the persecuted.

The security and popularity of Christianity in the West has lured many into a false assurance with expectations of earthly rewards for living moral lives including occasional acts of charity. The cross, a symbol of our faith, has become decorative jewelry and the label Christian might easily be exploited for marketing purposes.

Yet, in many communities around the world, even a name that indicates a Christian heritage may result in children being forbidden from schools; or marking them as targets for kidnapping. Some of our trusted Nigerian friends indicate as many as 25,000 children have been kidnapped in 2022 in northern Nigeria by radical Islamist terrorists. In the Nineveh Plains in Iraq, houses marked with Christian symbols became targets for Isis as they expelled all Christians and other religious minorities from their homes and threatened them with death.

Only God knows how many Christians have recently been martyred or currently are in prison for their faith.

The narrow path is not the safest; nor is it the most popular. Jesus said only a few find it.

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