

# The Narrow Way (That Finds You)

Matthew 7:7-14

*The Living Law (no. 18 in the series)*

July 26, 2020

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*Video and audio versions available online:*

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-narrow-way-that-finds-you/>

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*This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!*

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## Prayer

And so, Father, we pray that you would feed us with your Word. You're the air that we breathe. (And we thought it was oxygen!) It's just so cool, Father, the things that people are discovering now—things that you've told us all along—when you really get down to the heart of an oxygen molecule, nobody's even really sure that it's there...just intention, or reason, or information. So, God, maybe you really are the air that we breathe. Thank you, Lord, for loving us, for creating us, for revealing yourself to us. Jesus, I pray that you would reveal yourself to us now. This is the eighteenth message, Lord, from the Sermon on the Mount. I think I used to think what I was told—what the higher critics said—that's just a bunch of stuff kind of slapped together, 'cause I couldn't quite put all the pieces together. But Lord, the more time I spend in it, the more I'm just amazed. I think you knew what you were talking about, Jesus...and I pray that you would help us to see what you see. It's in your name that we pray. Amen.

## Message

This is our eighteenth message on the Sermon on the Mount. Hopefully you remember:

- Jesus came preaching, "Repent [change your mind]! The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."
- Then he went up on a hill and began telling folks about the Kingdom.
- He told us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come..."
- And he just told us to "Seek first the kingdom."

When you were a kid, or maybe now, do you or did you ever dream of a magic kingdom or another world, and maybe some magical way or special gate through which you would enter that other world?

- In *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, the children enter other worlds through a *tesseract*—like an extra dimension or a fold in space-time.
- In *The Lord of the Rings*, the entire earth enters into the Third Age, when Frodo throws the Ring of Power into Mt. Doom.
- In *The Chronicles of Narnia*—the children enter through a wardrobe, a picture frame, and a stable, with an inside bigger than all the outside. --Only children can enter, and the animals talk.

- In *Lilith* by George McDonald, Mr. Vain walks through a mirror.
- In *Alice in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll, Alice falls down a rabbit hole and finds a little door behind a curtain... it's the entrance to Wonderland.

I learned this week that Lewis Carroll studied for the ministry and was a good friend with George MacDonald.<sup>i</sup> C. S. Lewis, who was great friends with J. R. R. Tolkien, referred to George MacDonald as his mentor. Madeline L'Engle was considered something of an American C. S. Lewis, and was also heavily influenced by George MacDonald. And she believed that our Father in Heaven would redeem all his children, just as George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll believed.

And some would say, “So what? They wrote fairy tales, and Scripture teaches that ‘the gate is narrow... and the way is hard, and few are those that find it.’ I’m not interested in fairy tales written for children!”

“The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales,” wrote G. K. Chesterton. “They seem to me to be the entirely reasonable things.”

“The world of fairy tale, fantasy, myth, is inimical [hostile] to the secular world, and in total opposition to it, for it is interested not in limited laboratory proofs but in truth,” wrote Madeline L'Engle.

Truth and reason are not things that can be comprehended in this world, even if we can only comprehend things in this world in light of truth and reason—that is “*the Logos*.”

When Tolkien was asked if his fantasies were “escapist,” in that they shifted attention away from the “real world,” he replied, “Everything depends on that from which one is escaping.”

What if this world isn’t truly real?  
What if we haven’t even yet begun to live?  
What if there is a world, or an age, in which everything is good... and alive?

When my son Jonathan was little, we would have to stop and talk to all the VW Bugs in the grocery store parking lot—it seemed perfectly reasonable to Jon, and his world was filled with wonder.

So, one day, I said, “Jon, let me explain: There’s a chemical reaction that occurs in four cylinders that turn a crankshaft which transfers power through a transmission to the drive shaft and the wheels.... Now you know about VW Bugs.”

He used to talk to animals, but we sent him to school and they told him, “Winnie the Pooh can’t talk; a bear is an Ursidae, Caniformia, Carnivora. And a person is a Primate... specifically a Homo sapiens.”

Now, Jon has an advanced degree in helping people talk in the hope that they might restore a sense of lost wonder.

C. S. Lewis wrote: “When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I’m fifty, I read them openly. When I became a man, I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.”<sup>ii</sup>

So anyway, Jesus just told us, “*Seek first the Kingdom*” ...the one that’s “coming,” that is “at hand.”

**Matthew 7: 7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.** [That's easy! Right?] 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

**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.**

*How few? How hard? How narrow? ...Gosh! That started out so well, and then just got scary... huh?*

People love to quote that last line when I suggest that God will make all things new—and that this might just include his children. “Yeah,” they say, “but ‘*the gate is narrow and hard is the way and few are those who find it.*’”

I think we’re supposed to ask: “*How narrow? How hard? How few?*”

But we assume: “Pretty narrow, fairly hard, and out of 7 billion folks, relatively few—so we obviously just need a little more knowledge, and effort—we need to try harder and learn more.”

I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve gone forward at some church camp to say “The Sinner’s Prayer” (as if I could pray another kind) or some other new prayer, because I wanted to make sure I got it right and tried a little harder... because *the gate is narrow.*

I was baptized *three times*—first by my dad as an infant. I was baptized again in college when guys on campus said that the first baptism didn’t count—so I had my dad do it again, and I gave him detailed instructions so that I went all the way under... And then the guys at CU told me it didn’t count because my dad wasn’t in the Apostolic Succession... and you know, *the gate is narrow.*

I was baptized a third time by an Arab Christian in the River Jordan. In Seminary, I learned that during the reformation—anabaptists—people baptized more than once--would be sentenced to death because they obviously didn’t have faith in God’s power to be saved and so needed to be damned... because you know, *the gate is narrow.*

I read all sorts of books about faith, because I figured I needed more knowledge to have faith, and *the way is hard* and *the gate is narrow.* I went to seminary to gain more knowledge about God, but I got a few B’s, and to be honest, those that got only A’s didn’t always seem so wonder-full... or even alive. *So maybe the gate is super narrow?*

I’ve learned that faith without works is dead, and so I’ve been neurotic about sin and sometimes proud of my righteousness, thinking: *I found the way!* But then I’ve asked: *How few? How hard? How narrow is the gate?*

Jesus just told us at the start of the Sermon on the Mount, "*Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*" No one had more knowledge, in Jesus's day than the Scribes. And no one worked harder at "doing the Law" than the Pharisees.

Jesus says: "Do not think I've come to abolish the law and the prophets..." Then he says, "Whoever says 'you fool' is liable to the hell of fire... whoever looks on a woman with lust has committed adultery... if anyone slaps you on one cheek turn the other... love your enemies... you must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect ... and do it unconsciously, without your right hand knowing what your left hand is doing."

*That's a pretty narrow door!*

In our text today, he says, "**Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**"

That's nice... until you really stop to think about it. I mean, I want everyone to love me just like I love myself... unconsciously, freely, and without trying. But I don't even come close to loving everyone else just like myself... unconsciously, freely, and without trying.

If I did that, I'd end up dirt poor, with no place to lay my head, or maybe crucified on a tree. If I did that, I'd have to literally consider everyone to be my own body; I'd no longer think "me" so much as "we;" no longer "mine," but "ours."

"This is the law and the prophets..." "Do not think I've come to abolish the law and the prophets..." Israel had just spent 1500 years trying to obey the law and the prophets.

Remember that God gave the law to Moses on a mountain. And now Jesus is expositing the Law on a mountain at the start of his ministry, as if to say, "*You wanted the knowledge of Good and evil? I'll give you some knowledge of good and evil: This is the Law.*"

In the Old Testament, it's the terms of the Old Covenant—the Covenant of Law: Basically, God says, "*Observe the terms of the covenant and I'll bless you, disobey and be cursed.*" Israel doesn't obey, and all of Israel dies in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb—which literally translated means "Jesus and the dog." (Remember from last week, Jesus gave dogs what is holy?)

But even then, as they enter the land, they encounter a God-man with a flaming sword. And they don't occupy as they were commanded to occupy. The Prophets prophecy that Jerusalem, Judah, Israel, and all the world will be devoted to destruction: That's *the Law and the Prophets.*<sup>iii</sup>

The Law was kept in a coffin, called an Ark, in the Holy of Holies, guarded by a curtain and bunch of priests with flames and swords. The top of the ark was the presence of the age to come, the throne of God on earth, the judgment seat—the judgment between good and evil. It was guarded by two cherubim, just like those that guarded the way to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden.

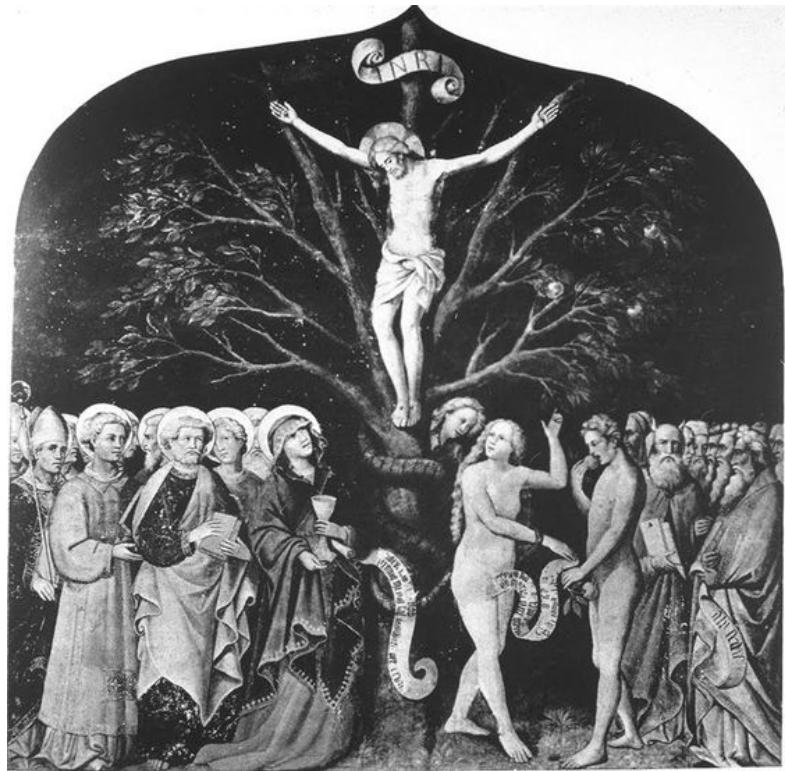


Figure 1 "Mystery of the Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena (1420)

The Tree of Life: it stood in the same spot as The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God said, "The day you eat of it, dying you will die."

The snake said, "Surely you won't die."

We ate and were exiled from the garden, the Life, and the Kingdom. And dying, we do die... and dead things don't find gates, or even seek them.

In the words of St. Paul quoting King David in the Psalms:

"None is righteous, no, not one;  
no one understands;  
no one seeks for God.

All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;  
no one does good,  
not even one"<sup>iv</sup> (Romans 3:10-12, ESV).

So, *how few find the gate and the way?* Well...none.  
And *how many are led to destruction?* Well...all.

So *how narrow is the gate?* It appears to be closed.  
And *how hard is the way?* Well, it sounds like it will kill you—you'll lose your life—your *psyche*. It will crush your psyche like a grape!

Let's take a closer look:

**Matthew 7 13** Enter by the narrow gate. [That's a command; the Word of God is speaking.] For the gate is wide and the way is easy [literally "broad"] that leads to destruction, [That's the noun *apoleia*, translated "destruction." It comes from the verb *apollumi* translated "destroy" or "lose." Jesus said that he came "to seek and save the lost, (the *aplololos*, which is the perfect participle of *apollumi*).<sup>v</sup> --And think about it: you can't be found unless you're lost.]

**Verse 13 ...The way is (broad) that leads to (being lost), and those who enter by it are many.** (*polloi*: Language scholars point out that "many" often means "all" in Biblical Greek because Hebrew and Aramaic have no specific word for "all."<sup>vi</sup> A perfect example of this is in Matthew 22. Jesus tells a story about a king who calls everyone to a wedding feast and then chooses one out of the crowd to be thrown into the outer darkness—for this friend of the king has no wedding garment. Then Jesus says, "For many (which was "all") are called and few (which was "one") are chosen.")

**Verse 14 · "For the gate is narrow..."** [In Luke, Jesus uses the word "door."]

[In John, Jesus says, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.... I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*"<sup>vii</sup> That means he'll no longer be lost but found.]

**"... the gate is narrow, and the way is hard..."**

- In John, Doubting Thomas says to Jesus the night before he's crucified, "Lord, we don't know the way to where you are going."
- And Jesus says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and (the Zoe)—the Life."
- "If we have been united with him in a death like his," writes Paul, "we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."<sup>viii</sup>

**"... the gate is narrow, and the way is hard ..."** [literally translated, this word should be something like "crushing." It was used to refer to trampling grapes as in a winepress—grapes of wrath, which turn into wine that's blood and blood that's wine. We must lose our old psyches to find them; we must exhale to inhale the Life—the Zoe, the Life that's in the blood.]

**"... the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life (Zoe), and those who find it are few..."** (and "few" can mean One.)<sup>ix</sup>

So, *how few* find the gate and *how hard* is the way? Well, Jesus is the gate, and Jesus is the way, and he came to find the people that he's talking to on that mountain that day, and *you* right here, right now.

He's the God/man with the flaming sword who cuts us down to size.  
He's the High Priest guarding the way to the coming age.  
His flesh is the torn curtain leading to The Life standing on the throne.

**"Many are called and few (like, One) is chosen."**

"[God] chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world" writes Paul.<sup>x</sup> "As in Adam all die (that's many), so in Christ (that's one) will all be made alive."

So anyway, maybe “the few” is none... or one—for Jesus is the Way and the Gate. And that does make the Gate awfully narrow. As narrow as a baby in a manger, as narrow as the arms of a cross, as narrow as a coffin, or the tomb in the garden where Jesus was crucified.

Jesus said to Thomas, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by me.”<sup>xi</sup> The Way is narrow, but He seems to get around...

Religious folks love to quote that verse and say, “*See? Jesus is the only way...*” Well, Jesus *is* the only way.

But then they say things like, “*That means joining our church, or saying this prayer, or being baptized this way, or having the right doctrine...*” They talk as if Jesus was dead, and they kept him in a box, or a coffin. They talk as if Jesus was dead, like knowledge of good and evil—dead law used to justify themselves, rather than living Lord, who justifies us. They spout knowledge. We all spout knowledge.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 · “We know that all of us possess knowledge,” writes Paul. “This knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God (and remember “love” fulfills the Law and the Prophets) ... if anyone loves God, he is known by God.”<sup>xii</sup>

Wow! There is a reformation waiting to happen in just those verses!

But my point right now is that Jesus still commands us to “*enter by the gate,*” and if the gate is that narrow, the last thing we want to do is puff ourselves up with knowledge build up our old psyches, our egos.

So, as we were saying, maybe “*the few* that find the way” is really none. Or maybe “*the few*” is really the One, who is the Way and the way to life, that is The Truth. (Being honest—the Truth in you) Or maybe “*the few*” is “*the small.*”

I was surprised to learn that “many” can be translated “large.” And “few” is often translated, “little” or “small.” *Small are those who find it.* And that reminds me of Alice, and Frodo, and every child in every fairy tale.

I would play the original movie clip from the Disney classic, but we don’t have time, and we don’t want to run the risk of having our live stream shut down by Facebook—But you may remember that Alice was bored with her world, when she saw a white rabbit, followed it—and fell down the rabbit hole.

[Image: Alice about to enter the rabbit hole, from the Disney movie *Alice in Wonderland*]

As she’s falling:

- She turns on a light... and Jesus is the light.
- She looks in a mirror... and we look into the law of liberty, the Downside-Up.
- She reads a book... and Jesus is the Word.
- She hears a clock... and Jesus is the beginning and end of time.
- She lands in a rocking chair... and we enter his rest.
- Past a fire, she spies a little door or gate behind a drawn curtain.
- Through the keyhole she sees a garden.

She thinks it's *impossible*, but the door speaks and tells her it's not *impossible*, it's only *impassible*, for she's just too large. The door tells her to look on the table. She drinks from a bottle that says: "*Drink me*" and she shrinks. But then, she has to eat cakes that say: "*Eat me*," in order to grow up and get the key that's on the table.

The Body and Blood of our Lord is the key. It shrinks our ego to nearly nothing, for we crucified our Lord. And yet it makes us greater than we can possibly imagine, for we are the body of Christ and the beloved for whom he died.<sup>xiii</sup>

Grace does that to people; it cuts away the Ego, and at the same time transforms them into something utterly divine.<sup>xiv</sup> Grace is the angel with a flaming sword that cuts us down to size; Grace is the High Priest in the temple. Grace liberates us from the prison that is our selves and unites us to reality.

In the words of Karl Barth, "*It burns [us] right down to faith.*"<sup>xv</sup> And faith is a seed that grows into a kingdom.

Alice eats and drinks, gets small and large and then small again, and floats through the keyhole on a river of tears. In the words of G. K. Chesterton: "*Alice must grow small if she is to be Alice in Wonderland.*"

If you are the king of your kingdom, you cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven. And if you know everything in your world, then you certainly don't know any wonder, for you cannot be known by anything larger than you. Love is larger than you. God is Love and any real Love is God. Anyone who loves has been known by God. And loving Love is Life. But if you're the king of your kingdom, everything is dead, none of the animals talk, not even the people... and you are alone.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, all of Middle Earth passes from one age into the next; the whole world enters "Wonder Land" when the Ring of Power is cast into the fires of Mount Doom and the works of the Evil One are destroyed.

"*The only measure that he (the Evil One) knows is desire,*" says Gandalf, "*--desire for power; and so, he judges all hearts. Into his heart, the thought will not enter that having the Ring, we may seek to destroy it.*" But neither Gandalf-- the Great Wizard, nor Aragorn-- the King of Men, nor Elrond or Galadriel-- the rulers of the Elves, can bear the Ring, for it's too great a temptation to them.

[Image: Frodo with the Ring, standing at the center of the circle made up of the wizards, leaders, and Elven rulers detailed above, from *The Lord of the Ring*]

It must be born by Frodo, the humble Hobbit.

"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled," said Jesus. "And whoever humbles himself will be exalted."<sup>xvi</sup>

[Image: Aslan standing before Lucy, from *The Chronicles of Narnia* movie: *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader.*]

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, only the children can enter. Those that think they are adults can't hear Aslan's voice. It only sounds like growling<sup>xvii</sup>, and to them, the wardrobe won't open.

And I think this is the problem with all children—there is a problem with children. This is the problem: *not* that they are children, but that they insist on growing up.

Actually, that's when they're least children and most childish—when they insist on being adults. Well, maybe God will let us grow up, so we can then grow down, so we can return to the garden and "know the place for the first time."

"We shall not cease from exploration,  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, unremembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree

Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always--  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flames are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one."

That's T. S. Eliot (excerpt from "The Little Gidding").

This is how Aslan says it at the end of the Chronicles of Narnia:

"There is a way into my country from all the worlds," said the Lamb; but as he spoke his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane.

"Oh, Aslan," said Lucy. "Will you tell us how to get into your country from our world?"

"I shall be telling you all the time," said Aslan.<sup>xviii</sup>



See, I think he's saying there is treasure all around you. And the treasure is like a gate, but you have to get small, humble yourself like children, and seek in order to find.

The Gate is narrow... so it is the small, the humble, the children that enter.

"...Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven," says Jesus in Matthew 18.

But that's the rub isn't it—we're all so "childish." I mean: We all admire children, but no one wants to be one. We all want to grow up, and it's hard to grow down.

It's not easy to humble yourself... and not be immediately proud of your humility, which is the worst sort of arrogance... or ashamed that you were just humbled, which might be an even worse form of pride.

I'm saying it's hard to lose yourself—your big bad ego. It's hard to actually ask... for Life.

As Paul wrote and Isaiah prophesied: "No one seeks for God..."

It's utterly ironic, isn't it? Jesus says: "***the gate is narrow...***" And instinctually, we all try to take more knowledge of good and evil; we all try to pad our resumes and puff ourselves up with knowledge... and Jesus says, "Ask."

**"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened..."**

**Verse 11 · "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good [things] to those who ask him!"**

It's fascinating that original sin is taking "knowledge of good" from the tree in the middle of the garden.<sup>xix</sup> And it turns out that God, our Father, is longing to give Good on the tree in the middle of the garden—the tree of life.

*Ask and it will be given, seek and you will find... knock!*

In a few verses, Jesus will talk about folks that say, "Lord, Lord," and describe all their good works... and he'll answer, "I never knew you; depart from me."

In Luke's version, they knock and the Master says, "I don't know where you're from." ... and I guess they don't want to tell him, for they don't enter.

Well, Jesus is the Master, and who is it that he doesn't know? Well, he doesn't know the imposter, you're *false self*--the self that you describe on your resume; he doesn't know the puffed-up you that you seem to think you are; he doesn't know the prison in which you have imprisoned yourself.

You see, it must be the real you, the honest you, the humbled you, that knocks and asks. And so, like Paul and Isaiah write: "*no one seeks; no one asks...*" None ask,...so none find.

"The few" that find is none... or maybe it's *One*.

Paul does go on to describe *the One* who is righteous for all. *The One* who humbles himself seeks, and finds, knocks and it's opened.

Jesus came "to seek and to save the lost..." He said, "*Seek and you will find.*" Do you think He finds? He said, "*Knock and the door will be opened.*" Does he knock? ...Is it opened?

Philippians 2 · "And being found in human form, he humbled himself," writes Paul, "by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

1 Corinthians 15:45 · "Thus, it is written, 'the first man Adam became a living (*psyche*)'" writes Paul. "...The first Adam became a living (*psyche*'); the (Eschatos Adam) Last Adam became a life-giving, (a zoe-giving), spirit."

He lifted his head on the tree cried "*Father forgive*" and delivered up his Spirit.

Galatians 4:6 · "And because you are sons," writes Paul, "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"

And he not only descends into our hearts, but also the depths of the earth.

Ephesians 4:9-10 · "(In saying 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?" writes Paul. "He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)"

He descends into us and causes us to cry "*Abba! Father!*" He causes us to seek. You can only seek because you've already been sought and found.

That longing for Life in you, that Hope in you, *is* the Spirit of Christ in you. "*Christ in you, the hope of Glory.*"<sup>xx</sup> He's what causes you to get up off the couch and open the door.<sup>xxi</sup>

And who is at the door? "Behold I stand at the door and knock," says Jesus (Revelation 3:20). "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me."

That's "Wonder Land"... but until you walk through the door... it's hell.

I've spoken about this much more in other sermons.<sup>xxii</sup> But, our old building was built in 1890 and haunted. I probably wouldn't have believed it, but we actually have a video of this dark thing flying out of the old Sanctuary as we worshipped. And I believe because I've learned to trust my wife who sees these things.

Well, we prayed and bound several evil spirits after that happened. And after that, my wife started encountering ghosts—what the Bible refers to as *phantasma* in the New Testament, or *owb*, "familiar spirits," in the Old. I think they're people stuck in their own psyches, and so stuck in this fallen world, unable to lose their lives, and so find them.

One night with some on the prayer team, we prayed in the basement, and the team suddenly saw children and old men, surrounding a slaughtered goat. We prayed for Jesus to appear, and he did: He healed the goat. The children came to him, and he sent the children back to get their fathers, and as they came to Jesus, they grew down; they got young and began to party.

I prayed, "*Jesus, can you take them home,*" and a door suddenly opened in the wall of the basement; there was a new creation on the other side!

A few weeks later, it happened again in the deep crawl space under the stage; we had entered, for Susan had heard weeping through the access door. Inside, she saw figures cowering in the darkness. I prayed that Jesus would reveal himself, and he did... along with the door to the New Creation. I began to tell them who Jesus was, and the moment they'd look up, they'd rise and go to him.... And yet, some wouldn't look at him. They wouldn't lose their psyches for him, and they wouldn't find them.

Finally, Jesus said, "*I'm leaving this door for those that will still come.*" I would think of them as I'd preach, and the words would descend through the stage and down into that outer darkness.

Jesus said to Peter, "*I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*"<sup>xxiii</sup>

I know that sounds weird, but I'm saying that the door is narrow, and the door is filling all things. I just mention those stories, so you'll dare to believe these things are true—Jesus meant this stuff. But I don't want you to think this message only applies for the day your body dies—I hope you understand it has everything to do with right now.

'Cause I'm guessing that most of you, like me, don't spend a lot of time in "Wonderland," nor do you feel all that much "Alive." So, *enter by the narrow gate that leads to life.*

Narrow is the way and few are those that find it... but you know the Way, and the Life, and he's already found you; he's just waiting for you to enter, everywhere, and every when. Small are those that enter.

So, don't puff yourself up with religion. Don't try to be something. Do not make any promises to Jesus. But just sit naked and vulnerable in the presence of Love.

Sometimes I just sit. Sometimes I picture myself handing things over: I give you to him; I give the church to him; I give my family to him. I give me to him—not just the impressive me—the real me.

I say, *"You know me, Jesus... you know how scared I am... you know my every embarrassing desire. You know that I'd just like to get really, really drunk... You know that I want to be famous but feel like a fool... you know me."*

His presence humbles me, and I become a child in his arms. And sometimes I say, "Abba...", and it's not actually me that's saying it. I'm beginning to walk into "Wonderland," the age to come, and the New Creation. I lose myself in him and find him in myself, talking to our Father.

Another way to say this would be:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are the children... to such belongs the Kingdom of God. They walk right through the Pearly Gates, for they are not offended by Grace.

This is the narrow door, and do you understand? He's found you.

## Communion

He took the bread and broke it, saying, "This is my body given to you. Take, eat. And he took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins."  
(Peter takes communion.)

"Eat me. Drink me." Enter by the narrow gate and into "Wonder Land." We invite you to partake in communion whether you are here with us live or at home. We invite you to worship. To lose yourself. And find yourself...in "Wonder Land." In Jesus's name. Amen.

## Benediction

So let's ask. (Talking to you—the real you, that scared one, the little one. Let's ask. And just ask in the depths of your heart. )

Say: "Abba, I would like the kingdom of heaven. Can I have the kingdom of heaven?"

Now listen to the Word of God: "Ask, and it will be given to you."

You didn't take it. It's his delight to give it, Little One. Now seek...and you will find. Few are those who find, but you see, He's sent his Word to already find you and to help you to seek. And it's his Word that caused you to ask. That's "Wonder Land."

In Jesus's name, Amen.

You know, everybody wants the kingdom of heaven. The shock is that the way we get it is the exact opposite of what the world would tell us. "It's not through a process of addition that we gain the kingdom of God," but rather it's subtraction. In other words, it's not by growing up but by growing down. In other words, it's not exulting yourself; it's humbling yourself. And that sounds bad, but I've discovered that's incredibly good news. Because I worry about myself a lot. And so, it's pretty great to lose myself and then be able to find myself in his kingdom.

In other words, believe the Gospel.

In Jesus's name, Amen.

## Endnotes

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<sup>ii</sup> — C.S. Lewis, On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature

<sup>iii</sup> Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it.

<sup>2</sup> For the Lord is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter. -Isaiah 34:1-2

Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and deliver Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling. – Isaiah 43:27-28

"Therefore wait for me," declares the Lord, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed. [but read on] <sup>9</sup> For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord." -Zephaniah 3:8-9

<sup>iv</sup> Romans 3:10-12

<sup>v</sup> Luke 19:10

<sup>vi</sup> In Greek πολλοί is differentiated from πάντες (όλοι) by the fact that it is the antonym of a minority. It is thus used exclusively for many (but not all). In contrast, the Heb. מִצְרָיִם / Aram. אֶרְאֵב can have an inclusive sense: "the many who cannot be counted," "the great multitude," "all." The same is true of (οι) πολλοί in Jewish Greek writings. This inclusive use is due to the fact that Heb. and Aram. have no word for "all."

- J. Jeremias. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, πολλοί

<sup>vii</sup> John 10:7-9

<sup>viii</sup> Romans 6:5

<sup>ix</sup> "few" [oligos] appears to be one in Matthew 22:14. In some ancient manuscripts "few" also appears to be one in Luke 10:41-42. Jesus says "few things, one thing, is needful."

<sup>xx</sup> Ephesians 1:4, 1 Corinthians 15:22

<sup>xl</sup> John 14:6

<sup>xii</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:1-3

<sup>xiii</sup> "I do indeed, Sir," said Caspian. "I was wishing that I came of a more honourable lineage." "You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve," said Aslan. "And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor in earth. Be content."

- C. S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1951), p. 211-212

<sup>xiv</sup> The great Meister Eckhart said very beautifully, "God is not attained by a process of addition to anything in the soul, but by a process of subtraction."

- Anthony De Mello, *Awareness* (New York, NY: Image Books, Doubleday, 1990), p. 82

<sup>xv</sup> The wrath of God revealed from heaven ([Rom. 1:18](#)) is not split off from the rest of the divine life. It is a manifestation of God's saving righteousness. It is actually intrinsic, states Barth, to "the judicial sentence by which those Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ are acquitted and justified. This sentence itself annihilating in its action" (II/2, p. 487). Note that here Barth obviously accepts a form of annihilationism. Unlike Stott's version, it foresees not an annihilation for the few or for the many, but for all. It is an annihilation in which the only possible hope for anyone is the faith given and received by grace. This annihilation excludes all humankind, Barth comments, "from any freedom or justification except those that come by faith. It judges human beings absolutely. It utterly abandons them. It burns them right down to faith, as it were, that there it may promise and give them as believers both freedom and justification" (II/2, p. 487, rev.).

- George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, p. 246

<sup>xvi</sup> Matthew 23:12

<sup>xvii</sup> When the Lion had first begun singing, long ago when it was still quite dark, he [Uncle Andrew] had realised that the noise was a song. And he had disliked the song very much. It made him think and feel things he did not want to think and feel. Then, when the sun rose and he saw that the singer was a lion ("only a lion," as he said to himself) he tried his hardest to make himself believe that it wasn't singing and never had been singing-only roaring as any lion might in a zoo in our own world. "Of course it can't really have been singing," he thought, "I must have imagined it. I've been letting my nerves get out of order. Who ever heard of a lion singing?" And the longer and more beautifully the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did. He soon did hear nothing but roaring in Aslan's song. Soon he couldn't have heard anything else even if he had wanted to. And when at last the Lion spoke and said, "Narnia awake," he didn't hear any words: he heard only a snarl. And when the Beasts spoke in answer, he heard only barkings, growlings, bayings and howlings. And when they laughed-well, you can imagine....

"He thinks great folly, child," said Aslan. "This world is bursting with life for these few days because the song with which I called it into life still hangs in the air and rumbles in the ground. It will not be so for long. But I cannot tell that to this old sinner, and I cannot comfort him either; he has made himself unable to hear my voice. If I spoke to him, he would hear only growlings and roarings. Oh Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good! But I will give him the only gift he is still able to receive."

He bowed his great head rather sadly, and breathed into the Magician's terrified face. "Sleep," he said. "Sleep and be separated for some few hours from all the torments you have desired for yourself." Uncle Andrew immediately rolled over and closed eyes and began breathing peacefully.

- C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1955), p. 125-126, 170-171

<sup>xviii</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), p. 215

<sup>xix</sup> "She dare not come within a hundred miles of the Tree, for its smell, which is joy and life and health to you, is death and horror and despair to her."

Everyone was staring solemnly at the Tree when Aslan suddenly swung round his head (scattering golden gleams of light from his mane as he did so) and fixed his large eyes on the children. "What is it, children?" he said, for he caught them in the very act of whispering and nudging one another.

"Oh-Aslan, sir," said Digory, turning red, "I forgot to tell you. The Witch has already eaten one of those apples, one of the same kind that Tree grew from." . . .

"So we thought, Aslan," she said, "that there must be some mistake, and she can't really mind the smell of those apples."

"Why do you think that, Daughter of Eve?" asked the Lion.

"Well, she ate one."

"Child," he replied, "that is why all the rest are now a horror to her. That is what happens to those who pluck and eat fruits at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The fruit is good, but they loathe it ever after."

"Oh I see," said Polly. "And I suppose because she took it in the wrong way it won't work with her. I mean it won't make her always young and all that?"

"Alas," said Aslan, shaking his head. "It will. Things always work according to their nature. She has won her heart's desire; she has unwearying strength and endless days like a goddess. But length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery and already she begins to know it. All get what they want: they do not always like it. . . .

"And the Witch tempted you to do another thing, my son, did she not?"

"Yes, Aslan. She wanted me to take an apple home to Mother."

"Understand, then, that it would have healed her; but not to your joy or hers. The day would have come when both you and she would have looked back and said it would have been better to die in that illness." . . .

"That is what *would* have happened, child, with a stolen apple. It is not what will happen now. What I give you now will bring joy. It will not, in your world, give endless life, but it will heal. Go. Pluck her an apple from the Tree."

- C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1955), p. 173-175

<sup>xx</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. -Colossians 1:27

<sup>xxi</sup> 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 a 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, if we only look to Him and follow Him, step by step, we shall not go astray. But if we worry about the dangers that beset us, if we gaze at the road instead of at Him who goes before, we are already straying from the path. For He is Himself the way, the narrow way and the strait gate. He, and He alone, is our journey's end. When we know that, we are able to proceed along the narrow way through the strait gate of the cross, and on to eternal life, and the very narrowness of the road will increase our certainty.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

And this vision instructed my understanding that it pleases God a great deal if the soul never ceases to search; for the soul can do no more than seek, suffer and trust, and souls that do this are moved by the Holy Ghost; and the splendor of having found God comes by his special grace when it is his will. Seeking with faith, hope and love pleases our Lord, and finding pleases the soul and fills it with joy. And thus my understanding was taught that seeking is as good as finding for the time that our soul is allowed to labour. It is God's wish that we seek to behold him, for then he will graciously show himself to us when he wills.

Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love

xxii      <https://relentless-love.org/sermons/jesus-in-the-land-of-ghosts-the-light-of-the-world/>  
<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/jesus-in-the-land-of-ghosts-ii-how-he-sets-us-free/>  
<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/jesus-in-the-land-of-ghosts-iii-i-can-die/>

xxiii Matthew 16:18