

“Which One?”

Introduction

Good morning, church. It is an honor to be here today in worship, and to sing songs, pray prayers, and just be in fellowship with all of you this morning. I want to go ahead and jump into our passage of Scripture,

Scripture

This is taken from Matthew 7:13-20 (NRSV) **New Revised Standard Version**

13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. 14 For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? 17 In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will know them by their fruits.

Family, this is the Word of the Lord... and we all say, “Thanks be to God”

Opening Prayer

Please join me as I open us in prayer.

Lord, this is Your time, and this is Your space. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, Oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opener

It is a privilege to come and preach this morning to this wonderful church family. It is good to be with other Christians who are faithfully serving the Lord. I had the chance to have lunch with Pastor Janet a few weeks back, and she shared with me about this church and I was encouraged as I listened... this church is loved!

After Pastor Janet and I had lunch, I was headed back down to Modesto, and drove a different way down from the bay area than I normally do, since I typically am going back home, to Oakdale. So, I had my GPS going and was following it. One of the exits it told me to get off soon, but I had the notifications off, because I knew what I was doing... well, I was listening to music, and realized as I passed the exit, that it was too late. I tried to justify myself,

and say, that path didn't make sense anyway. I realized my time went up an extra 25 minutes just from the one exit, and I thought okay, maybe I was wrong, I will just go ahead and get off the next exit and turn around... Well... the next exit was the rerouted exit anyways... 12 miles ahead, so no matter what - I had to keep going. I finally made it to my destination, but that detour got me thinking...

You see, I have come to find, like many of us in this room, that the easiest paths in life, are often not the ones that we are meant to take. Following Jesus, He rarely leads us on an easy road, and the things He calls us to do, we need to be sure to be focused on His voice... not silencing His notifications... and when he says to go a certain way, we listen, not getting distracted by other things. His way, will get us to where we need to be, at the right timing we need to be. His way, the narrow way, the only way, Yahweh.

In life, we all face choices, and the key lies in discerning the right path to lead us towards our desired destination. I've discovered, much like many of us here, that the seemingly effortless routes often diverge from our true calling. When we choose to respond to that call and follow Jesus, we embark on a journey that we come to find is rarely along the easiest course. What God calls us to do, and entrusts us with, requires an unwavering focus on His guidance, resisting the urge to mute His direction. So when He directs us down a specific path, we must listen to His voice, steering clear of all distractions. This narrow route, His way, leads us precisely to *where* we're meant

to be, precisely *when* we're meant to be there. *His* way, the *narrow* way, is *thee* way, the *only* way: Yahweh.

Main Ideas

As I began to think about today's passage and study it, I quickly realized there was this theme that continued to shine through for me about decisions often set before us. This is not a new concept for us to think about, but it is an essential part of getting back to basics of realigning ourselves to continually be more Christ-like. Because each day, we are presented with the opportunity to respond to what lies before us: Will we opt for the convenient, familiar route—the broad path, or trust the journey through the small narrow path that few have chosen? Will we lend an ear to the teachings of a misguided voice, or seek to hear the still small voice of the Lord? And will we discern the fruit produced from the lives of others, or just accept whatever fruit that is produced?

Jesus is teaching what we know as “The Sermon on the Mount” and He shares much about the ways of living an honoring Godly life, and not about simply following the law. The words of Jesus carry such weight that it challenges the people to contemplate where the foundation of their lives is found.

Today, I have an important question I want you to remember to ask yourself as you go about your day, and your week. The question is a simple two word question: “Which One?” Can you say that with me this morning: “*which one?*” Some of you may already be jumping into more questions, like: which one, what? I'll tell you.

The passage today marks a few follow-up questions for us of that question: “which one?”

Every single day, we have a decisions to make, and ask ourselves regarding the path we take, the voices we listen to, and the fruit we recognize. So, I want you to ask yourself:

- 1. Which one will I walk in?**
- 2. Which one will I listen to?**
- 3. Which one will I recognize?**

Let’s look at these 3 questions a bit deeper:

1. Which one will I walk in?

Verse 13 and 14 says: *13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. 14 For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Some verses I want us to look at about paths:

- **John 14:6 (NLT)** - *“Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”*

- **Psalm 119:105-112 (NLT)** - *“105 Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.106 I’ve promised it once, and I’ll promise it again: I will obey your righteous regulations.107 I have suffered much, O Lord; restore my life again as you promised.108 Lord, accept my offering of praise, and teach me your regulations.109 My life constantly hangs in the balance, but I will not stop obeying your instructions.110 The wicked have set their traps for me, but I will not turn from your commandments.111 Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart’s delight.112 I am determined to keep your decrees to the very end.”*

Which one will I walk in today: the narrow road leading to life, or the wide path that leads to destruction?

WHICH ONE WILL YOU WALK IN?

2. Which one will I listen to?

Verse 15 says: *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*

Part of being a mature Christian is by being aware. This word beware means there is an intentionality of focus and attention that is brought to something. We need to be aware of what it is that we are listening to. Because the truth is: not everyone has our best interest at heart. And there are people in this life who, unfortunately, will try to deceive us, and if we are not staying alert we will be fooled by the wolves playing dress up.

Some verses for us to consider today:

- **1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)** - *“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”*
- **1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 (NLT)** - *“Do not scoff at prophecies, ²¹ but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good.”*

The attention we take to words that are spoken and discerning the voice we are hearing matters. How have you come to believe that you can trust what it is that you hear? How do you know which voice to listen to? Well, we can know God’s voice, the voice of wisdom and truth, by spending time with Him, by reading His Word. I think about it like this as well: I do not need to know every single trick of the enemy or the counterfeit, I need to know what the truth is and study that truth, so when the enemy comes, I can recognize what is contrary to God’s voice.

Which one will I truly listen to and trust: the voice of wisdom and truth, or the deceptive words of the world?

WHICH ONE WILL YOU LISTEN TO?

3. Which one will I recognize?

Point 2 definitely helps us recognize the fruit... because we need to keep our ears and eyes open, as it gives us the foundation of

what truly good fruit is supposed to look like. Verses 16-20 says: **16** *You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?* **17** *In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.* **18** *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.* **19** *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* **20** *Thus you will know them by their fruits.*

Verses:

- **Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)** - *“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control.”*
- **James 3:17-18 (NLT)** - *“But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.”*

Can you recognize when the fruit of others are Christ-like? What do people recognize in YOU?

Which one will I recognize as Christ-centered: the fruits of love, humility, and compassion, or the shallow appearances of worldly success?

WHICH ONE WILL YOU RECOGNIZE?

Closing

Life is filled with decisions to make. And we can always be challenged to be more Christ like and ask ourselves: which one? Maybe this looks like taking time to yourself and God, and asking Him: which one of the paths have I been walking in, which one of the voices have I been listening to, and which one of the fruits have I recognized in others and in myself?

- 1. Which one will you walk in?**
- 2. Which one will you listen to?**
- 3. Which one will you recognize?**

Maybe this is a pivotal redirection this morning for you, or a good reminder of where you find your foundation... wherever you find yourself, we can all ask ourselves which one?

Church, let's pray.