

The Road Less Traveled?

Robert Frost entitled his famous poem “The Road Not Taken” (not “The Road Less Traveled”). And for good reason, Frost writes of walking in the woods and coming to a fork in the road. He first describes one path, and then says the other is “just as fair” and “really about the same.” He chooses the second path and soon realizes he will probably never get back to see where the first would have led him. His story is about the many choices we make in life, and how we never really know what would have happened if we had chosen differently. Even though he doesn’t see a difference between the paths, he knows that he will eventually convince himself that the road he took was different, “less traveled by,” and, on that basis, a better choice.

In stark contrast is a scene from C. S. Lewis’ book, *Prince Caspian*. The four children are walking through another wood, trying to avoid the enemy. Lucy, the youngest, sees the Lion Aslan in the distance, beckoning to her. She excitedly tells the others, but they don’t believe her and move in the opposite direction. Dejected and sobbing, she follows her siblings rather than Aslan. Things turn out badly for the children. But early the next morning, before the others wake, Lucy sees Aslan again. She goes to him, attempting to defend her actions.

“I couldn’t have left the others and come up to you alone, how could I? . . . oh well, I suppose I could. Yes, and I wouldn’t have been alone, I know, not if I was with you. But what would have been the good?” Aslan said nothing. “You mean,” said Lucy rather faintly, “that it would have turned out all right – somehow? But how? Please, Aslan! Am I not to know?” “To know what would have happened, child?” said Aslan. “No. Nobody is ever told that.” “Oh dear,” said Lucy. “But anyone can find out what will happen,” said Aslan.

In this week’s passage, Jesus calls us to choose a way that really is different from any other. A way that takes us to him, even if we don’t know what will happen next.

Monday – The Gate

1. Please read Matthew 7:13-14. How are the two gates different? Where do they lead? What do these gates and roads symbolize?
2. Now take a look at John 10:1-13 (focusing on verses 7-9). What does this passage add to your understanding of the gate?
3. In Matthew 7:14, Jesus says that “only a few” will *find* the narrow gate. How do you think a person could go about searching for the gate? Look back at Matthew 7:7-8 for Jesus’ assurance to those who seek him.

Tuesday – Good Fruit/Bad Fruit

1. Jesus instructs us in Matthew 7:15-20 to put effort into discerning good fruit from bad fruit (as seen in the lives of those who teach God’s Word to us). How do we go about distinguishing between good fruit and bad fruit?
2. In Galatians 5:19-26, we discover that good fruit comes by “keeping in step” with the Spirit. What does it mean to keep in step with the Holy Spirit?

Putting it into Practice – In recent days, has the Holy Spirit been prompting you to follow him in some way? Purpose today: to obey and follow him.

Wednesday – Lord, Lord

1. Please read Matthew 7:21-23. Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? What does Jesus say about those who claim to know him but do not do the will of God the Father?
2. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus gives much greater detail about those who follow the Father’s will and those who do not. What are some of the concrete ways to serve Jesus?
3. Jesus’ words call us into a relationship with him. Please read Romans 10:9. How does the “heart belief” that Paul describes, compare with the “head belief” to which many subscribe?

Making it personal: If you do not yet belong to Jesus, read Romans 10:9 again and turn to him. If you do believe in Jesus, re-read Matthew 25:34-40 for some inspiration in serving and pleasing him.

Thursday – Hearers and Doers

1. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount. What does he tell his hearers to do with “these words of mine”? To what does he compare those who put his words into practice and those who do not?
2. Now take a look at James 1:22-25. What happens to the person who “looks intently” into God’s Word and then does what it says? What do these blessings look like?

Friday – Amazed

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

1. Please read Matthew 7:28-29. How did the crowd respond to Jesus’ teaching? Why did they react that way?

Text Insight: Scribes, the people who taught about Scripture in Jesus’ day, did not claim to teach by their own authority. They constantly referred to other teachers who came before them, relying on tradition to help them interpret Scripture. Jesus didn’t need to.

2. John 1:1 tells us why Jesus has such authority. Please read Philippians 2:9-11. We see that “one day” everyone will recognize Jesus’ authority. If you were to act upon this verse today, what would it look like? What would that day look like if you did it now? Do you recognize it? As Jesus said in Mark 5:36, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

For the Weekend: What has your reaction been to the Sermon on the Mount the past few months? Spend time this weekend reading these 3 chapters again (Matthew 5-7), and ask God to lead you in being not only a hearer of his word but a doer as well.