

The Golden Rule & The Golden Road

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Date: 09 December 2015

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if you would turn with me this evening to the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 7. The Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 7.
- And we'll read just verse 12 to 14. Matthew 7 and verse 12. So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.
- For this is the law and the prophets. 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.
- For the gate is narrow and the way is hard. That leads to life. And those who find it are few. Well, we're continuing our study in the Sermon on the Mount.
- And the Sermon on the Mount is a sermon which we've been looking at over the past few months. In fact, the other day I was wondering when we started looking at this sermon.
- [1 : 1 5] And I looked back and I found that when we started looking at it, it was March. Which not only frightened me to think that we've been looking at it for so long.
- But it also amazed me to think that there is actually so much in this sermon. And over the past few months, we have heard much from Jesus. And we have been taught much from Jesus.
- But when thinking about how much is in this sermon, I've been asking myself, how much have I learned? How much, I have heard much and I've been taught much from the Sermon on the Mount.
- But how much have I learned? How much have you learned? How much have we responded to the teaching of Jesus? How much has this teaching changed our lives and shaped the way that we think?
- How seriously have we taken our call to live as Christ-centred Christians? Because that's what the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is all about. It's a call to Christ-centred living.
- [2 : 2 3] And in this sermon, Jesus has challenged and called into question, you could say, every area of our lives as Christians. But now, as we come to the second half of chapter 7, we've gone through chapter 5, 6, and now we're halfway through chapter 7.
- Jesus begins at this point to start concluding his sermon. And he does so by building upon it and drawing from everything he has taught already.
- Because he says at the beginning of verse 12, it says so here, but the word is therefore. The word is therefore, whatever you wish what others would do to you. He says the word therefore.
- And although it's a conjunction or a connecting word, which Jesus has repeatedly used throughout this sermon, this therefore, this so. It seeks to connect this conclusion with everything that he's said before.
- And this is important because by now, we should know what Jesus expects from us as Christians. By now, we should know how to live a Christ-centred life.

[3 : 37] And in this conclusion, Jesus is now going to apply all this teaching to us. As he brings everything to its conclusion, he's going to re-emphasize the importance of living out our Christian life in this world as those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

But what we ought to be aware of as we come to this conclusion is that there's no let-up in Jesus' demand for Christ-centred living. Jesus doesn't come to this nice conclusion and present a happy ending for all those who want to follow his teaching.

No, Jesus does, in a sense, the opposite. And he becomes even more hard-hitting in what he says. Maybe even more hard-hitting than what he's been saying already. Because in his conclusion, Jesus issues to us warning after warning after warning in his sermon.

But the purpose of every warning is so that we take heed lest we fall. And God willing, over the next three weeks, we'll look at the conclusion to this Sermon on the Mount.

But this evening, I'd like us to see that Jesus presents to us two things. The golden rule and the golden road. The golden rule and the golden road.

[4 : 55] So we'll look first at the golden rule. That's in verse 12. The golden rule in verse 12. So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

For this is the law and the prophets. And the statement that Jesus uses here in verse 12, it's often been described as the golden rule.

If you're using the ESV Bible, it will have the title, the golden rule. And I'm sure this statement is one with which we are very, very familiar. Because I'm sure that from a young age, or maybe as parents yourselves, you were taught, or you taught your children, to treat others the way you would like yourself to be treated.

And maybe when you were young, or as parents you were teaching your children, or drumming it into them, like my mother did with me, you would make the quote from Luke 6 verse 31.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That's Luke 6 verse 31. And when we think about it, it really is a golden rule.

[6 : 07] That rule. It's a golden rule because just from a moral perspective, if everyone adhered to this golden rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

If everyone adhered to it, the world would be a different place. If everyone followed the teaching of Jesus and the golden rule, the world as we know it would be completely different.

But this golden rule which Jesus uses here, it's unique, not only because if everyone adhered to it, life and society would be completely different, but it's unique because Jesus emphasized what we should be doing rather than what we shouldn't be doing.

Because having a golden rule, it was and it still is, it's common to most religions. Where most religions have this concise rule which emphasizes, you could say, the ethos or the practice of that religion.

But with most religions, they're always put into a, they always come from a negative slant by emphasizing what their followers are not to do rather than what they are to do.

[7 : 17] Because the golden rule, you could say, of most religions is do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you. Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you.

And in one sense, it sounds similar. But you can see that the golden rules, the golden rule for most religions was negative. But when Jesus states his golden rule for his followers, for those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus presents the golden rule of Christianity and he presents it in this positive light.

He gives the golden rule this positive outlook and positive perspective by turning the usual emphasis of the negative on its head and he makes the golden rule of Christianity more significant and more distinct from all the other religions.

And even distinct from the way the world thinks and lives. And just when we consider what Jesus is saying, his teaching is radically different. Because if we were to follow the teaching of all the other religions, the teaching, do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you.

Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you. If we were to follow that, that would be quite easy. Because if you don't want people to speak to you, don't speak to them.

[8 : 41] If you don't want your neighbour to be friendly to you, don't be friendly to them. If you don't want your neighbour to love you, then don't love your neighbour. And you see the progression of thought.

That if we were to follow such a rule, you could end up being very negative and very insular. And we'd be focused upon self and inward looking and always looking after my own space and my own patch and dealing with my own issues and either forgetting about everyone else or just not getting involved.

We'd be very much like the world is today. Selfish. Selfish. And you know, sometimes as Christians we can be like that. Where we can so easily fall into the trap of being selfish and insular and self-centred and always dealing with our own patch and forgetting about the community that surrounds us.

But here Jesus builds upon what he's taught us already in the Sermon on the Mount. Where we've been taught to be the salt of the earth, we've been taught to be the light of the world and then Jesus teaches us here with the golden rule that it's not about what we don't do that makes our Christianity distinct.

No, Jesus teaches that our Christianity is distinguished and made different and made known to the world by what we do. Because this golden rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

[10 : 09] It's not only self-explanatory, but it's also self-examining. Because if we're to follow the golden rule, we'd examine our motives, we'd examine all our actions far more carefully than we do.

Even if I was to take a few examples, the golden rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. So if I want people to speak to me, therefore, I will have to make the effort to speak to them.

If I want a good and helpful neighbor, I must take the initiative and be a good and helpful neighbor to them. If I want people to love me, because nobody wants to be hated, and if I want people to love me, therefore, I must show love to those who are around me.

But this golden rule, which Jesus issues here, it becomes more effective and more difficult to uphold when those around us don't respond in the same manner as us.

If they don't speak to us, we're still commanded to speak to them, because that's what we would like. If they aren't a good and helpful neighbor, we are still commanded to be a good and helpful neighbor to them.

[11 : 27] If they don't reciprocate the love that we show towards them, we ought to continue to show love towards them. And although this golden rule, it's a general rule, do unto others as you'd have them do unto you, the general rule, it covers every area of our lives.

Every single area, because it can be applied to every single area of our lives. And it challenges every single area of our lives. And it challenges how we deal with people and how we react towards other people.

Because if I don't want to be hurt, I shouldn't hurt others. That's clear. That makes sense. But if someone hurts me, I shouldn't retaliate, because I don't want to be hurt.

And I am doing unto others as I would have them do unto me. The same is also through about maybe gossip or speaking ill of people. I don't want other people to speak ill of me.

Therefore, I shouldn't speak ill of them. And if I hear that they've been speaking ill of me, yet I am to do unto others as I would have them do unto me. I'm not to retaliate or seek revenge or seek to feel better by speaking ill of other people.

[12 : 46] But when we look at this golden rule, we can ask the question, what is the overarching command which Jesus is emphasizing here?

Because we can go down every road and highlight every sin and ill that we are capable of doing towards other people. And we can emphasize that we're not to do them because we would never like to be treated that way ourselves.

But what is the overarching command which lies behind the golden rule? What is the root of the golden rule? Well, is it not the greatest commandment?

Which we were reading about in Deuteronomy chapter 6. The commandment which was issued to the children of Israel as God's covenant people, the greatest commandment.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And this was the commandment which was to be written on their heart.

[13 : 52] It was to be taught to their children. It was to be spoken of when they sat in their house. It was to be discussed while they walked along the road together. It was a commandment which was to be part of their daily lives.

And it was to be repeated by the Jews when they would lie down at night and when they would rise in the morning. That's what it says all in Deuteronomy 6.

The Israelites were to never forget this command because the Lord had said to them, you shall bind them as a sign on your hand. They shall be frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

My friend, the purpose of the greatest commandment was to shape the thinking of the Lord's people. It was to shape the way in which they lived their lives before God and amongst other people.

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. But what I want us to see is that the greatest commandment was the basis and the foundation for the golden rule.

[15 : 01] And I say that because when we read in Matthew 22 where Jesus had yet another encounter with the Pharisees. But on that occasion, because the Pharisees had over 600 laws, they had lawyers amongst their group to distinguish between the more important and the less important laws.

And so on that occasion, in Matthew 22, the Pharisees employed this lawyer. The lawyer came forth out from among them and came to ask Jesus the question, which commandment is the greatest?

And Jesus responded by quoting the greatest commandment from Deuteronomy 6. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

And Jesus said, this is the first and the greatest commandment. But then Jesus went on to say, and the second is like it, you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

And Jesus explained his answer to the Pharisees by saying to them, on these two commandments hang the law and the prophets. And what we see here in verse 12 is that that's the basis for the golden rule.

[16 : 17] Jesus says, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. Jesus based the golden rule upon the teaching of the Old Testament, the law and the prophets.

And with this, Jesus emphasised that the golden rule of Christianity, it wasn't actually a new golden rule, but it was in fact building upon what the Lord had always taught his people in the Old Testament.

To love him and to love other people. That's what the Lord always taught his people. To love him, love the Lord, your God, and love others.

And so, we've discovered that the thrust and the focus and the foundation of the golden rule is to love. because by showing love towards others, even when they don't show it to you, or by performing acts of love and kindness towards others, even if they don't show it towards you, if love is at the heart of our thoughts, our actions, our speech, then that's what will make the golden rule of Christianity more distinct and significant from all the other religions.

That's what will make Christianity more distinct from the way the world thinks and the way the world lives. And you know, when we consider what Jesus is saying here, his teaching is radically different because he's saying that our Christianity will be made known to other people by our love for God and our love for people.

[18 : 05] Our Christianity will be made known by our love for God and our love for other people. And is that not what Jesus emphasized to his disciples over and over again when he said in John 13 in that upper room discourse where he had just washed the disciples' feet and Jesus says to the disciples, a new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you that you also love one another.

And then Jesus says, by this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. And then in John 15 still in the upper room Jesus still speaking Jesus says this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. you are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. And even John who had been sitting there that night he stressed the importance of the church's role in showing love towards other people.

When he wrote his letter in 1 John he said here in his love not that we loved God but that he loved us and he sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

But he says if God so loved us we ought also to love one another. No man has seen God at any time if we love one another God dwells in us and his love is perfected in us.

[19 : 49] My friend the golden rule ought to affect every area of our lives and there's no doubt it's a difficult rule to live out to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

But that's the call which Jesus has put upon us if we are to live Christ-centered lives. So the golden rule but secondly I'd like us to consider the golden road.

The golden road. Look at verse 13. Jesus says 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 for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few.

As Jesus continues to bring his Sermon on the Mount to its conclusion Jesus is going to issue to us yet another warning that we need to take heed lest we fall.

And by presenting this illustration of two gates and two ways Jesus wants to he wants us to again do a bit of self-examination.

[21 : 06] For he wants us as professing followers and citizens of the kingdom of heaven Jesus wants us to consider our ways. He wants us to ask ourselves and inquire of our own heart which road am I travelling on?

Is it a broad road or a narrow road? And what way am I going? Is it the broad way or is it the narrow way? And Jesus says that we can only be on one of two ways.

We can only be on one of two ways the broad way or the narrow way and that each way leads to one of two gates the broad gate or the narrow gate but each gate it leads to one of two ends destruction or eternal life.

But what makes the illustration even more hard hitting is that Jesus indicates the number of people travelling on each way. He says that those on the broad way travelling to the broad gate going to a destructive end Jesus says there are many who go in by the broad gate.

There are many who go in by the broad gate. But the flip side of this is that Jesus says those who choose the narrow way and travel to the narrow gate they are going to go through the narrow gate which leads to eternal life.

[22 : 31] And Jesus says about them there are few who find it. There are few who find it. And you know I believe that those words should always be a sobering reminder to us.

I don't know if you'll agree with me in saying this but I believe that there will be more people in hell than there will be in heaven. There will be more people in hell than there will be in heaven.

And that thought ought to make us realise how privileged we are as God's elect people. It ought to make us realise how privileged we are to be numbered with the saints who will go marching in through the narrow gate.

It ought to make us realise how blessed we are to have our sins forgiven to have grace in our hearts to have our blindness removed to have peace with God and to have joy in our salvation.

But it also ought to make us realise that our calling as Christians is a high calling. It's a high calling because we've been called to walk the narrow way that leads to the narrow gate and opens up for us eternal life.

[23 : 54] But what I want us to see here is that Jesus not only tells us the number of people travelling on each road, he doesn't just tell us how many people are going to their eternal destination, he also tells us why they're heading to that eternal destination.

And this is what's key to the illustration that Jesus uses because he explains why they are heading towards their eternal outcome. And he tells us first of all in verse 13 that the reason so many are on the broad road seeking the broad gate and going to eternal ruin is because it's an easy road to travel on.

It's an easy road to travel on. And I don't know about you but whenever I imagine the broad road leading to ruin I always have this image in my mind of the M8 coming into Glasgow where you've travelled down the A9 and you're on your journey and on the road the road has changed from a single track A road to the dual carriageway and it goes in and out.

But as you begin to enter into Glasgow the road then changes to a motorway and you get three lanes. And as the volume of traffic increases with all these slip roads coming in from either side there are then four lanes and sometimes there's even five lanes.

And despite the number of cars all going in the same direction with so many lanes the M8 becomes an easy road to travel on.

[25 : 31] It makes for a comfortable drive into Glasgow. But Jesus says that that's the problem with the broad road. It's comfortable. It's easy going.

It's pleasant. It's smooth because there's no opposition. There are no difficulties. There are no worries. There's no resistance. There's nothing to slow you down.

The broad road is the road of comfortable Christianity. And remember the sermon is addressed to Christians. Jesus is stressing to Christians that the broad road leads to destruction.

Because the broad road is paved with stones of no conviction of sin. Stones of no temptation. Stones of no feeling of inadequacy.

No thoughts of wrongdoing. No desire to read the Bible. No prayer life. No commitment to church. No concern over your Christian witness. My friend, the broad road, it's easy believism.

[26 : 32] The broad road is love God and do as you please. The broad road is a road where being a Christian is being like the world. Where your Christianity is unrecognisable.

Where you don't need to change your lifestyle. We don't need to change your behaviour or conduct. We don't need to watch how we speak. On the broad road you can do what you like. And it's no wonder many people want to choose the broad road.

Because the broad road is attractive. The broad road is easy. And the broad road is where everyone wants to go and everyone wants to be on. And we can so easily follow the crowd on the broad road.

Many go in that way. Many go. And we can follow the crowd and do what the crowd does. And think that because everyone else is doing it, that somehow makes it all acceptable.

Where it's okay for Christians to be in pubs. It's okay for Christians to be in dance floors. It's okay for Christians to be in places that they would never ever think of taking Jesus or their minister.

[27 : 37] It's okay for Christians to live a double life. My friend, the broad road is an attractive road. But the broad road, says Jesus, leads to destruction.

And what Jesus is absolutely clear on is that we will make shipwreck of our Christian faith if we're on the broad road. We will make shipwreck of our Christian faith if we're on the broad road.

But the command which Jesus is actually issuing here in verse 13 is enter by the narrow gate. Enter by the narrow gate. And the only way to enter into the narrow gate is to walk the narrow road.

And the Sermon on the Mount from the very beginning of it's all about walking the narrow road and living a Christ-centered life is how we walk the narrow road.

But when Jesus speaks about the narrow road, he's straight with us. Right to the point because he says it's not easy. It's not an easy road like the broad road.

[28 : 48] The narrow road, it's difficult. And the narrow gate, it's hard to find. And you know, for someone in the first century hearing this from Jesus, they knew what it was like to be a Christian.

And they knew that it wasn't easy to be a Christian because in the first century and in the life of the early church to convert from Judaism, from being a Jew to Christianity, it meant that you were put in your life in danger.

to confess Jesus as Lord and not Caesar as Lord meant that you were signing your death warrant. You'd be put to death. And the same was true for many converted Muslims today.

To confess Jesus as Lord is to blaspheme Allah. And it would result in being an outcast from your family, from your community, even from your country.

Confessing the name of Jesus is deserving of the death penalty. But for those who do, those who do confess the name of Jesus, they know that they're on the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

[29 : 59] And yet, it's not an easy road. It's not an easy road because there's lots of opposition. Opposition not only from without, but also from within.

And Jesus warned us about this, that being a Christian, it's not a life of popularity. because it's all about denying self. It's about putting away temptation.

It's about repentance and confessing sin. It's about having a Christ-centered faith that goes against the grain of society. And the desire to love the Lord and love those around you.

It won't always be welcomed by the world. And that's what Jesus said in John 15. where he had spoken about our need to live out the golden rule in our life.

But then Jesus emphasized that walking the golden road is not a road which will be welcomed by the world. Because Jesus said, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

[31 : 02] But then he went on to say, but if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it ever hated you. If you were off the world, the world would love you as its own.

But because you're not of the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. My friend, the narrow road is a difficult road.

And as I said, when I imagine the Brond Road, it's the image of the M8 coming into Glasgow. But when I imagine the narrow road, I imagine those tiny sheep paths that you find along the cliffs.

If you're ever walking along the cliffs and you see them, or you see the sheep and they've been going up and down these paths, or they've been feeding off the cliffs, they've made little footpaths for themselves.

And if you're walking along them, or if you've tried to walk on them yourself, or just seen them for yourself, you'd know that they're only about the width of one shoe. That's how narrow they are.

[32 : 12] They're very narrow, very difficult to walk along. One wrong foot and you slip. You can't, and you can't even on those paths, you can't even walk side by side with someone.

You can't even have two feet together walking on them. And this image in my mind, the fact that you have to walk alone on this road. You have to walk by yourself.

You can't have somebody beside you. And that image, it enhances the lonely nature of the narrow path. Because Jesus says about this narrow path, there are few who find it.

There are few who find it. But, although the number of people who follow the Lord may be small, and the number of people who find the narrow gate may be small, is it not far better for us to always be in the minority, with Jesus as our shepherd leading us on these narrow paths, going towards eternal life, than on the broad road, the wide road that leads to destruction.

It's far better for us, isn't it, to be on the narrow path leading to eternal life, than on the broad road leading to destruction.

[33 : 34] But I don't want us to leave this without seeing that although the narrow road is hard, there are many blessings by walking on this narrow path.

Not least because the destination is far better than the journey. Because the destination through the narrow gate is eternal life. But also because despite the difficult nature of the narrow path, the Lord promises us many blessings.

It was John Calvin in his commentary who pointed out that all the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, these blessings he says, all these blessings apply to the narrow traveller.

They apply to the narrow traveller. Blessed are the poor in spirit. There 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 those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed. Blessed, he says. All these blessings, they apply to the narrow traveller.

[34 : 43] And these blessings, they're to be found all over Scripture. All over Scripture. That's even what we were singing about in Psalm 1. Psalm 1.

Our first Psalm in the Psalter. In Psalm 1. It's the Psalm of two Adams. Psalm 1 is the Psalm of two Adams.

We're presented with two Adams going two ways. And what the Psalmist reminds us is exactly what Jesus is telling us here. That to go the way of the first Adam leads to death.

Because it's the way of the wicked. It's the way of the ungodly. They're like the chaff. The wind drives them to and fro. But go the way of the last Adam. The last Adam, Jesus Christ.

That's to go the way of blessing. That's to travel the golden road. Because the one who goes the way of the last Adam, says the Psalmist. That man.

[35 : 41] That man hath perfect blessedness. Who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men. Nor stands in sinner's way.

Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair. But placeth his delight upon God's law and meditates on his law day and night. And what will he be like, he says?

He shall be like a tree that grows. Near planted by a river. Which in his season yields its fruit. And his leaf fadeth never.

That man. That man. I want to be that man. I want us all to be that man. Because he is the one who goes the narrow way.

The narrow way following the last Adam. The narrow way of blessing. The blessing of life that shall never end. The golden rule.

[36 : 45] The golden road. As Jesus seeks to bring this sermon to a conclusion. He's calling for wholehearted commitment to him.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God. We give thanks for thy word. Help us, O Lord, we pray, to to be like that man who was like the tree planted by the river.

which in his season yields his fruit and his leaf fadeth never. O Lord, that we would truly grow. Grow in the knowledge of our Saviour. Grow in love for him.

Grow in love for others and those around us. Help us, we pray, to be more Christ-like. To be more like Jesus every day. O Lord, we see so much of self.

So much of, in a sense, the old man. But help us, Lord, to see that we are new creatures in Christ that are being renewed day by day. Lord, help us then to know that thou art the God who has begun a good work in us and will bring it on to completion.

[37 : 57] Bless us, Lord, we ask. Help us to keep looking to Jesus. Remember us in our homes and our families. Remember us in our woodness, in our workplaces or wherever, O Lord, we are placed each and every day.

That thou always be gracious to us and help us to let our light so shine before them that they may see our good work and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Do us good then, we pray thee, and take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119, singing from the beginning that's page 339, 399.

Psalm 119, singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 4. And as you know, Psalm 119 is all about the Word of God.

[39 : 04] The psalmist is talking about the statutes, the commands, the laws, and the ways of God. And how he begins the psalm, Blessed are they that undefiled, and straight are in the way, narrow are in the way, who in the Lord's most holy law do walk and do not stray.

Blessed are they who to observe his statutes are inclined, and who do seek the living God with their whole heart and mind. Such in his ways do walk and they do no iniquity.

There has commanded us to keep thy precepts carefully. These verses to God's praise. Let it are they that undefiled, and straight are in the way, who in the Lord's most holy law do walk and do not stray.

Blessed are they who to observe his statutes are inclined, and who do seek the living God God with their whole heart and mind.

Such in his ways to walk and play, to know iniquity.

[40 : 51] thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts carefully.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.