

Ever since I heard the Great Teacher proclaim:

*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*¹

I was somewhat puzzled. After all, our mission was to seek and save the lost over the whole earth. Was this statement indicating the limited results we were destined to achieve? Other statements that He made clearly predicted a great harvest that could be on the order of a hundred fold².

It seemed to me at first that the meaning was that God was keeping the door almost shut, as though he were trying to keep out the yard animals. But I knew that God wanted all men to be saved³, so that meant that the door must be left invitingly open. Yet He would keep out those who were opposed to Him and did not accept His will. Those covered by His tremendous Grace as marked by the blood of His Son our Savior would be welcome.

The narrow door, for me, was opened a bit when I thought about another episode in the life of the Great Teacher. He described two men at prayer in this way⁴:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

I considered that to some degree each man represented one of the two paths. The Pharisee in his arrogance thought that he was on the narrow way, for in his mind there was no one as good as himself. He thought that everyone else was on the broad way that leads to destruction, yet he himself was on it and could not see that because of his pride and selfishness. I could visualize him walking along with his nose in the air, and not even seeing the narrow gap that truly leads to God.

The tax collector thought that he was too small to be on the road at all. He expressed his emptiness as compared to God. His prayer, though briefly stated, seems to follow this line of thinking:

O God, have mercy on me,
for I am a sinner!
You are the greatest, I am the worst.
You are everything, I am nothing.
You are the creator of the universe, and I am absolutely weak.
You are all-wise, and I am utterly foolish.
You are perfectly pure, and I am filthy dirty.
Please forgive me!

I can see why he goes home justified, because he sees the beauty of God, and His greatness. I visualized him as traveling through the rugged terrain of life, and he sees a beautiful verdant

valley through a narrow gap between the peaks. He is able to pass through because he has humbled himself, and made himself small.

So in my thinking I see that it is not that God has made the door small to keep people out, but to ensure that those who “find it” have the proper perspective. They “get it”, because they see that in spite of life’s troubles, Love is the overwhelming meaning in the universe, and it is best shown through the humility of the Son, who made himself small (for a time) for us⁵.

Perhaps rather than thinking “only a few are accepted”, I should think “only a few see the beauty of God⁶”. I don’t know who that is, and I leave that judgment to God. I know that none of us can “get it” all (i.e., understand everything about God), but we can see the essential core of His nature. And I do know that though the way may be narrow, Love is wide⁷. And the way leads to not just “life”, but the greatest adventure imaginable.

1. Matthew 7:13-14
2. Luke 8:8
3. 1 Timothy 2:4
4. Luke 18:9-14
5. Philippians 2:5-8
6. ... very few actually set out to live such a focused, beautiful life. Narrow is the way, and only a few find it. Velvet Elvis, Rob Bell
7. Ephesians 3:17,18

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