

THE STRANGE AND THE STRAIGHT

College class initial lesson 2023/24

Reading Matt 7.7-16a

- Well, You've come a long way, and found us on your journey of life
- You've turned a corner, and here we are on your road.
- Three strange old men up ahead
- You may have heard that we were up the road.
- Do you know why we stand here on your road?
 - In your way?
- We've been posted here by The King.
- We've been solemnly charged to point any who pass by, to go in the King's direction.
- And seeing we find you on this road, we must do what we've been called to do.
- We've been told to
 - **answer** the travellers' questions.
 - To **teach** them deep things
 - To **explain**, to **guide** them
 - To **encourage** them **to find** the **straight road**,
because it's not far from each one of you.
- But it's narrow and not many find it.
- Most join the crowd and continue on the worldly wide road

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

- Are you even looking?
I hope so.
- But why trust these three old strangers?
 - Yes, we've lived longer,
 - seen some things,
 - got some scars to prove it.
 - Yes, we claim to have gone on the path ahead, and found that good way.

- But many people say many things.

-There are false prophets and wolves in sheeps clothing.

- Yes there are,
but they never carry the Book we do,
and truly teach from it.

- They certainly can *rarely* be bothered to do it for years, like we have. *"Ye shall know them by their fruits"*
- And when they speak they say "I think this and I think that"
- Not "The Bible says this and it says that" like we do.

- **It's His** book we have before us: -
the King's.
 - We are just **ambassadors**, we carry His **warrant**,
His **credentials**.
We **teach** what we **receive** from Him.

- And it's worth learning
because He's **the Ancient of Days**

- Do you want to see our warrant?

Look here

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

"Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found."

- I guess we've found you
- But we are **strange men**.
 - We don't follow the ways of the world
 - We're not caught up in that love affair
 - We don't need it, and don't want it
 - We're unmoved by it - all those things that especially the young, always get caught up in.
 - What the world tells them to wear and to say and to listen to.
 - We ignore it-
 - and the world hates being ignored.
 - Doesn't affect us, it may work on some but it won't work here.
 - Why?
 - Because we **know** things
 - Have **faith** to see things
 - Are given **strength** over things
 - We don't run after it
 - It's powers don't work on us anymore
 - We're dead to the world, but not to you
 - We seek a heavenly country instead

In the meantime We're just sent to look for the lost

- And we seem to have found you.

- But We're **strange** men
 - As the book says we're

"strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For we that say such things declare plainly that we seek a country. And truly, if we had been mindful of that country from whence we came out,

we might have had opportunity to have returned. But now we desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God: for he hath prepared for us a city."

- And it says elsewhere

"There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people"

- And we, like Paul, to the philosophers in Athens

"bringest certain strange things to people's ears: and they would know therefore what these things mean"

- We do **strange** things as well

For example, let me put a large stone into a container.

Then fill it with smaller stones to fill the gaps

Can I fit any more in?

I can fill it further with sand.

Can I fit anything more in?

I can fill it with water!

What am I trying to teach you?

You may say "That's easy, you're trying to teach us about life - that you can always fit more into it"

No, that's not what I'm trying to teach you.

I'm trying to teach you that if you don't put the big things in first, you're not going to fit them in!

It's the same with God.

- **What have you put in your life that leaves no room for God?**

- If you're not a Christian today it's not because God is stopping you.

- He doesn't stop anyone

-It's because you've stopped yourself, you've got everything in the wrong order.

- The remedy **is** offered to you

- **We** can't save you.

- But we can help point the way

- Do you know what the problem always is?

-It's us.

-The problem is in the person, not in God.

- You can waste your time blaming everything under the sun if you like,

- but until you own the blame for the state of your own soul, you won't get anywhere.

- The truth is, before we find the Lord, we've loaded up our lives in all the wrong order.
- The Bible tells us to seek **first** the kingdom of God, and then the blessings of life will come.
 - But instead people **seek the pleasures first**.
 - They think they're going places-
It's true, they are,
but it's not the places they think,
or would ever want to go.
 - They're bold.
 - They say
"No one tells me what to do",
-but they do exactly as they are tempted, -like a puppet on a string.
- They do the will of Satan.
- They do what they're told,
but don't realise it.

- In the 1950's America the world told the young to listen to rock-'n'-roll and wear blue jeans and leather jackets.
- In the early 2020's it might tell some people to pierce, and tattoo themselves, wear the latest trainers, and listen to drill music.
- And thousands of gullible youth do as they are told, like obedient sheep.
- Wearing the world's uniform (because they're scared of not fitting in),
- all the time being tricked into thinking they're being original.
- But they look like all the others.
- The truth is they're just being conformed to a mould, and stamped out, one after the other by the world and its seductive temptations.
- Have you fallen for it?

- Take the way of a man with a maiden:
The King's book says:-

*"The way of a serpent upon a rock;
and the way of a ship in the midst of the sea;
is like the way of a man with a maid."*

- There are **snakes** that lure their prey with a convincing decoy
- There are **ocean currents** that will drag a ship way, off course
- There are **easy lovers** that will take your soul, but you won't feel it
- It's so upside down that it's common to find people instead of-
 - 1) getting married, then
 - 2) having physical relations with your wife, then
 - 3) having children,

to find people rather-

- 1) having physical relations, then
- 2) children, then
- 3) (if they make it that far, and often they don't) marriage... if it suits them!

Upside down!

- Usually that ends in disaster because you don't have a firm foundation of commitment and declaration of loyalty before God and men, to build a stable relationship upon.
- You make a shipwreck of your life.
- Society is full of disastrous shipwrecks like that.

Broken families. A ship graveyard

- But often the idealistic proud youngster is convinced that the other person can only have eyes for him or her.
- Not realising that the way the world influences people today does nothing to encourage loyalty and chastity.
- Just because someone is attracted to you and seems to like you doesn't mean they don't have a roving eye for others, because we live in a society and time that doesn't encourage monogamous relationships, but promiscuity.
- If they don't love God they don't love His ways, and His ways are loyalty and faithfulness.
- He gives us the lesson of relationships, Because Ultimately He wants us to be true to **Him**, not to give our love and devotion to idols instead of our rightful Creator.

- Imagine an Artist makes a sculpture of clay and gives it life.

- But the sculpture instead of loving his creator ignores him, and sets up some stones and worships them instead.

- That's like us and God.

- This society turns a blind eye to disloyalty and idolatry, and encourages a multiplicity of partners.
- You hear foolish young men even saying "I *worship* her"
- But then comes, betrayal and heartbreak

-That's not true love.

- Is that what you're rejecting God for?

-Let go of it.

If she's to be your wife, God will give her back to you, as your wife, not your idol!

- It's like clinging on to a sinking ship in a storm, and the rescue worker is winched down from a helicopter to pull you free, **but you won't let go of the ship!**

- What is your 'ship'

- What have you put in your life first that means you've got no room for God?

- Ask yourself, is it going to help you with **your problem?**

With the dire situation you may, or may not, be aware of.

- "What situation Sir, what problem?"

- The one concerning your guilt.

-God is holy, **like a flame**.

-We are unholy **like crude oil**.

- What do you think will happen when the two meet!? 🔥

- Maybe that thing you put first instead of God can help you with that?
- Maybe you can go to her, or it, to save your soul?
- It can't though can it?.be honest with yourself.
- It can never do anything for your lost soul.
- Can going to a party help?-
A- no, next day you'll feel just as empty as before.
- Can a close relationship with another human being help? -
A- no, you could talk to them for a thousand years about your innermost concerns but it won't change the charge against you.
 - You'll just be like two inmates on death row having a long chat before your life is taken.
- Can you buy yourself salvation? -
A- If you think that, then I'm not sure your powers of reason are working enough for me to help persuade you of anything!
- God stands patiently at the door, but you don't want to open it.
Like Cain Gen 4.7

"And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?(that is- if you are perfect) and if thou doest not well (that is- if you're a sinner), sin lieth at the door.(that is- a sin offering lieth at your door- a sacrifice)"

Cain never opened his door, but murdered his brother instead.

- Christ is our sin offering.

-The Lamb of God that takes away sin by sacrifice

- The truth is,
God must make the first move,
- otherwise we'd never want to open the door, and no one would ever find God
- But people do find God.

How?

- God speaks to them,
 - He opens deaf ears
 - and blind eyes
- It's like he calls to them, through the door. Like in Song of Solomon - the woman says:

"My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved;...

"I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone:

She didn't respond quickly enough when He called to her, she was slow, she looked back to the World like Lot's wife

my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

The watchmen that went about the city found me,"

'The Watchmen' ...that's us. We've found you.

- Do you hear Him sometimes?
- But He won't call for ever.
- He forces no one against their will.
- But There's another thing involved also.
 - It's not just our muddled thinking that's the problem,
 - it's the seduction of the world used by a deadly Enemy of ours.
- Problem is, he is so subtle, we never realise what he's doing till it's too late.
- He's got many names.
 - One is the father of lies
 - But we like to believe them

-He gently sends our souls to sleep,

-slowly drugging us with the entertainments of the world,

-we're rocked to sleep,

-he makes us light people,

-not substantial people,

-spirituality weightless,

-and we hang, slowly spinning in a stupor,

not realising we're spinning in his web of lies,

-and as life goes on we're being slowly wrapped in his web until he sucks all the life from us

-and we die in our sins, to face judgement without ever having sought the remedy.

- You'll have been
fooled, tricked, ensnared, captured.
 - It's already happening to you, and by now it can be very developed.
- By the time the young unbeliever finds us they're sometimes very worldly
 - By the time young people get to us,
(if God hasn't saved them),
we find hard faces, and harder hearts, as Satan works his poison in.

.

- Hard is also brittle and weak.

Soon he'll break you, if that's you.

- What is it that he's caught you with?
 - A pretty face? Vain fashions?

- The promise of future fulfilment?

He never keeps those promises in the long term you know.
And when you protest, he'll just laugh in your face.

- And all along, God was offering people the way to Him, but they kept ignoring Him, looking the wrong way,
 - thinking this direction is so much more important to me.
 - They were too busy with all the temptations of life that they didn't have time for Him
- Their only Saviour was ignored for a few vain pleasures.
- If that's you, you'll be like a child who perishes in a house fire because he couldn't stop playing his video game.
- Lost in a world that wasn't real.

-He wanted to get to the next level.

-He was warned, but he kept saying


"just one more minute, just wait a bit longer",

until it was too late.

- The only level he'll reach now is the lowest hell!
- Don't sleep your life away in a dream chasing a false promise.
- Don't run after a shadow
- Don't try to grasp a fist full of air
 - There's no future that way.
 - In the end it'll be too dark to see where to go.
- We **can** point the way,
but only the King can give you light.
- The light of **life** and **faith**.

In Ephesians it says:-

"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

- The same Christ who went to the cross  and was punished for all who put their trust in Him.
- Can it be that it was for you,
and you've been living like He's not important to you?!
- So, We invite you to tarry here for a while with us in College Class
- and then maybe when you continue on your way, it will be in a different direction, the way to that heavenly country.
- There's a door to go through.

We *can't* open that for you.

- But we *can* try to persuade you to ask the **One** who can

The One who opened the way in the first place and went ahead.

- After you ask, wait to see if He'll let you through.

- There's no toll, no charge.
- It's free

- You just need to approach right, and ask sincerely with faith.
- He is true to His word.
- He'll forgive those who ask in real faith

- Go, see what He'll do next.
- Go in prayer

- What other road can you go down?

- There's only **One way** to heaven.
 - To **meaning** and **purpose** in life
 - To **peace** and **joy** and **contentment**

- There's many other different paths you could take in life, but they all lead to one other place.

-The path of **self-righteousness**

-The path of **worldly, short-lived, pleasure**

-The path of **indifference**

-The path of **material gain**

- They twist and turn, here and there,
but in the end all converge into one place where *the worm dieth not and the fire isn't quenched.*
- According to the Book, you've got just two options.
- Which one for you my friend?

-Ask yourself that, every day, until you find the straight way.

Let's pray.