

## Dare To Be Different

Psalm 31:1-5  
Matthew 7:13-14

May 14, 2017  
Faith Community

A long, long time ago, my family took a vacation at a resort somewhere in Canada. I was seven years old, which gives you a clue as to how long, long ago it was.

One day Mom and Dad had a golf date with friends, and left my sister, brother and me in the care of a sitter. It was an outdoorsy place, so outdoors we went, and had tons of fun. On our way back to the main house we walked along a path on the side of a hill. We came to a fork in the path. One way was obviously the one most travelled, while the other looked a bit more challenging. That's the way I wanted to go, so I talked the sitter into letting me, and she and my siblings headed off, and we agreed to meet back at the house.

On my merry way I went, feeling adventurous, and came upon a branch or some other something in the path that I didn't see until after I tripped over it, and slid all the way to the bottom of the hill, landing at the shore of a lake. Wondering what to do next, I felt a strange breeze on the back of my leg, and when I looked, it appeared that there was a hole back there. Not in the ground, but rather in my leg.

Somehow the sitter found me, helped me up to the main path, and next thing I knew I was flat on my tummy in a doctor's office. This wasn't my first time to get stitches, but it seemed like he was taking a while, so when I asked how many he was putting in there; he had to stop and count, and when he told me there'd be 28 of them, well, that seemed a bit much.

Sure enough, when you're seven years old, 28 stitches cover half your leg. That turned out to be the most permanent souvenir I've ever brought back with me from a vacation, and if you're ever unfortunate enough to see me in a pair of shorts, you'll see why.

Scroll ahead years later to what is now Mott Community College in Flint. I'm in English 101, and I think the assignment had something to do with relating a personal life

experience to something in literature. I thought of that day in Canada, and I thought of a familiar poem by Robert Frost:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.<sup>1</sup>

So, in addition to a scar on my leg, I got an A on that paper in English 101 thanks to my inherent clumsiness.

In today's New Testament passage Jesus says this:

***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.*** (Matthew 7:13-14, TNIV)

This is part of what we call the Sermon on the Mount. One scholar calls it "an understanding of human life that actually works."<sup>2</sup>

And who does Jesus keep coming back to as his best example of how *not* to do life? The church leaders. The pros. The Scribes and Pharisees. They had it going on. They had it going on all on the outside. They had status but no street cred, since everyone on the outside would watch and do their best to follow their lead, but it was impossible to

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/road-not-taken>

<sup>2</sup> Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Your Hidden Life in God (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), p. 136.

match. No one could keep up with it, which was just fine from their point of view.

But along comes Jesus and he says, “Don’t be like them.” Well, that didn’t go down well, but he said it anyway, because if you’re not careful, life becomes a show. It’s all on the outside, and it’s never enough, you’re either trying to catch up, keep up, or get ahead, none of which ever really happens, because the real life, the life worth living, the life that matters, starts on the inside, and not enough people get that, and they end up spending much of life trying to keep up appearances.

Friends, the greatest threat to authentic discipleship is religious respectability. Instead of becoming more like Christ in our character and in our emotional and spiritual maturity, we settle for church involvement as one more part of living a good and acceptable life, and too many of us never catch on because:

***Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.***

I love how the Message paraphrase puts it:

***Don’t look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don’t fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.*** (Matthew 7:13-14)

Make no mistake, friends, there are still scars when you enter through the narrow gate; even Jesus had them, so why should you be any different, but now they’re beauty marks that point to the source of your hope.

We don’t know this, but it may very well have been that when he was a little guy and tucked in at night, Jesus offered a bedtime prayer that went something like this:

***Into your hands I commit my spirit;*** (Psalm 31:5)

He didn’t just read Scripture; he was raised in it. He knew it; he lived it; he was nourished by it, and when the end came on this side of eternity, at the culmination of his life’s

purpose, Jesus prayed Scripture again. He had a base, a foundation that stood the test of time and the tempest of whatever the world might throw at him. Watch this, friends. It had nothing to do with image, impression or prestige. Instead, it had everything to do with what he had become on the inside, in the crock pot of life, slowly and over a lifetime.

One evening, an elderly  
Cherokee brave told his  
grandson about a battle that  
goes on inside people.

He said, "My son, the battle is  
between two 'wolves' inside us all.

One is evil. It is anger,  
envy, jealousy, sorrow,  
regret, greed, arrogance,  
self-pity, guilt, resentment,  
inferiority, lies, false pride,  
superiority, and ego.

The other is good.  
It is joy, peace love, hope serenity,  
humility, kindness, benevolence,  
empathy, generosity,  
truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about  
it for a minute and then asked  
his grandfather,

"Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied,  
"The one that you feed."<sup>3</sup>

And Jesus said,

***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.*** (Matthew 7:13-14, TNIV)

You be one of those few. Dare to be different.

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.nanticokeindians.org/tale\\_of\\_two\\_wolves.cfm](http://www.nanticokeindians.org/tale_of_two_wolves.cfm)