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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

You can't always believe what you read in newspapers. I have a collection of actual newspaper clippings that are quite funny.

Deputy responds to a report of a vehicle stopping at mailboxes. It was the mailman.

An Australian Army vehicle worth \$74,000 has gone missing after being painted with camouflage.

A woman in the 1900th block of 129th Lane Northeast reported October 15 that someone must have stolen her mail because she did not receive birthday cards from some of her friends.

1:14 a.m. Caller reports hitting an intruder in the head with an axe. Notes that intruder was "in the mirror."

A caller reported at 7:14 p.m. that someone was on a porch yelling "help" from a residence on Bank Street. Officers responded and learned the person was calling a cat that is named "Help." (That's about as smart as naming your dog "Fire!")

The Learning Center on Hanson Street reports a man across the way stands at his window for hours watching the Center, making parents nervous. Police ID the subject as a cardboard cutout of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

A classified ad offered, "TOMBSTONE: Standard gray. A good buy for someone named Grady."

You can read lots of funny things in the newspaper. Over the past few weeks, I've been highlighting some humorous statements of Jesus. It was comical to picture a guy with a huge plank in his eye trying to get a speck of sawdust out of someone else's eye. It was ridiculous to imagine a person giving a pearl necklace to a pig. But as Jesus approached the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount, He dropped the humor and got deadly serious. He began to point out that there are two roads in life, two gates, and only two eternal destinations.

Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Jesus taught that there are only two kinds of people in the world. You can use different terms: The saved and the lost; the redeemed and the unredeemed; Christ-followers and Christ-rejecters; Believers and unbelievers—actually, I prefer to call them "pre-believers" because the Bible says that one day EVERY knee will bow and EVERY tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. These two groups of people are on two roads, entering through two gates and they will end up at two totally different destinies. Notice three spiritual truths that Jesus taught.

1. MOST PEOPLE ARE SPEEDING ON THE SUPERHIGHWAY THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION

Jesus said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many follow it." As much as we might hope that *most* people would trust Christ, Jesus said that *many* are on the wrong road. Some people were upset when President Obama spoke recently in Turkey and said that America is not a Christian nation. But he's right. Our nation was founded by God-fearing people who embraced Christian principles, but today we are a post-Christian nation. There are more lost people than saved. Don't be surprised because Jesus said most people are on the wrong road. But these people really think they're on the right road. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way [a "road"] that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." If you've driven in Dallas, you know there are expressways with six to eight lanes going in each direction. But I-635 is a narrow road compared the superhighway that leads to hell. There are hundreds of lanes as people speed recklessly toward destruction. Let me mention just three of the lanes people on the wrong road are traveling.

(1) The Unbelief Lane

There are plenty of people on this road who have been exposed to the gospel and they have simply chosen NOT to believe in Jesus. They're like the drivers traveling in the outside lane of a German autobahn where there is no speed limit. They think they're on the right road, because everyone else seems to be going in the same direction. To them, life is a race, and they're going faster and faster thinking they are on the road to success, never once stopping to consider where that road is leading them. No wonder it's called a rat race.

(2) The Morality Lane

The people in this lane are on the road to destruction but they think it's really the road to heaven. They are living under the delusion that if they just live a good life and try to help other people that they'll end up in heaven. If you ask the average person on the street what they think they have to do to go to heaven the most common answer you'll hear is, "Be good" or "do good." But the Bible says there is nothing you can do to earn your way to heaven. Titus 3:5 says that salvation is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but because of God's mercy."

(3) The Religion Lane

This lane is next to the morality lane. Some people think the religion road will take them to heaven, but they're mistaken. Religion is man's attempt to reach God through rituals and regulations. But salvation is God reaching out to mankind by sending His only Son, Jesus. A Muslim believes that Allah will admit him to paradise if he faithfully observes the Five Pillars of Islam. The Buddhist believes he'll go to heaven if he follows the Eightfold Path. And the Hindu believes if you follow the Doctrine of Karma you'll be reincarnated as a higher life form until you are like a god yourself. These are all roads of religion, but they are ultimately leading to destruction. Are you on this road? Do you know someone who is?

2. A FEW PEOPLE HAVE MADE A U-TURN AND ARE TRAVELING ON THE JESUS

ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE

Jesus said, "Small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. At one time all of us were on the wrong road, because the Bible teaches we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. But some of us recognized we were on the wrong road so we changed direction. We made a U-Turn. With the new medians we have in Tyler, we're learning more about making U-Turns than ever before! A U-Turn is a perfect description of what the word "repent" means. In one moment you're living in sin heading away from God, but you repent and turn toward God. Once you get on this Jesus-road you find that there are a couple of wonderful benefits.

(1) Jesus is the pathway to know God

Jesus said, "I am the way [the road] and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) If you visit the Bahai Temple in suburban Chicago, you'll find nine doors leading into the room where Bahai's worship, with all the seats facing toward Acco, Israel where their main temple is. These nine doors symbolize that you can get to God using any of those nine religions. They claim all religions lead to the same place—to God. But that's not what Jesus said.

Jesus didn't say He was "a way" to God. He said He was "the way." He had the audacity to claim that He is the *only* way to come to God. To make a statement like that sounds so dogmatic and harsh, so narrow minded. But Jesus was the one who said it was a *narrow* road and only a few find it; such a bold claim as that makes Jesus either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. Either Jesus is the only way to heaven, or He is none of the ways to heaven. But it's impossible for you to say He is simply one of the ways to God.

(2) Jesus is the gateway to blessing

Jesus not only spoke of two roads, but He said there were two gates. One gate is wide open and the superhighway to destruction runs through it; everyone traveling on it has a toll tag so they speed right through the gate. But the Jesus road has a narrow gate. In fact, Jesus is our gate. In John 10 Jesus said He is like a shepherd and we are His sheep. Out in the wilderness, there were stone-walled enclosures where herds of sheep could spend the night. There was a single, narrow opening into the enclosed space. At night, the shepherd would lay across the opening and he would become the gate himself. He would prevent any sheep escaping and would stop any dangerous intruder. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture." (John 10:9) Finding pasture is a picture of green grass and nourishment for the sheep. The name of my blog is "From the Pasture." It's not a misspelling of "pastor," it's a reference to this verse and a testimony about how Jesus has blessed my life.

When you enter the Jesus-gate and travel on the Jesus-road, you're heading in the right direction. Just don't be surprised if you're in the minority. The idea of a narrow gate or a narrow door reminds me of a story I heard about a little mom-and-pop hardware store that did a good business. But then Wal-Mart came in and built a supercenter on one side so close that they

shared a common wall. Then a Target superstore was built on the other side right sharing the other wall. Most retailers would have given up and gone out of business, but the owner of the little hardware store bought a huge sign to go over his store that declared in six foot tall letters, "Main Entrance." Compared to some of the glitz and glamour the world has to offer today, the Jesus-gate and the Jesus-road may seem out of date and old fashioned, but Jesus is the Main Entrance to heaven and the ONLY entrance!

Not only are there only two roads and two gates, but there are also only two eternal destinies. Here's the final principle:

3. YOUR DIRECTION IN LIFE WILL DETERMINE YOUR DESTINATION AFTER DEATH

Jesus taught that there are only two eternal destinies: heaven and hell. In Luke 16, Jesus spoke about two people who died. One was a poor beggar, named Lazarus. Lazarus arrived in Paradise and was in the presence of Abraham: That's heaven. The other man was a wealthy man who never once stopped to help Lazarus, although Lazarus had begged at his gate for years. The rich man had a magnificent funeral, but he woke up in hell where he complained about the torment of the flame and begged for Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool his fevered tongue. Now who was the beggar?

In the final pages of our Bible, we're told that one day there will be a final judgement of all people. Some people who were on the Jesus road will enjoy heaven, while those who were on the superhighway to destruction will suffer in hell. The Bible says, "The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:14-15)

In order to have your name written in the book of life, you must admit you are a sinner and that you're going in the wrong direction. But admitting you're wrong goes against the popular idea that we're all "pretty good people." This attitude is reflected in a song by pop singer Lilly Allen. In her song "The Fear" she pokes fun at today's self-absorbed society. She sings, "Now I'm not a saint, but I'm not a sinner; And everything's cool as long as I'm getting thinner." She asks, "and when do you think it will all become clear? 'Cause I'm being taken over by the Fear." You can debate all day about what she means by "the fear" but maybe her fear is the nagging thought that life is about more than possessions and there might actually be a final judgment where we'll all be held accountable before God.

At this final judgment, there will be people who will be surprised because they sincerely thought they were on the right road. Remember the verse from Proverbs 14, "There is a way that seems right, but the end it leads to death." Every time I read that verse I'm reminded of a fatal automobile accident in northern Georgia in the 1980s. A mother was driving her daughter and a couple of her cheerleader friends home after an out of town football game. It was a foggy, rainy night and she wasn't familiar with the roads. She mistakenly took a wrong road, a road under construction, and she never saw the sign that said "Bridge Out." She drove the car off the end of the bridge and it crashed into a ravine and all four occupants were killed. When they investigated the accident, they determined there weren't any skid marks on the bridge. This indicated the

driver never had a clue they were approaching danger. I can imagine the girls in the car laughing and talking as the radio was blaring. One moment they were on the road they thought would lead them home, and the next moment they were falling into the ravine. Can you imagine what must have been going through the minds of the mother and those girls in that split second they realize that they took the wrong road? To me, that describes exactly what is happening with millions of people who think that they're on the right road and they think that right up until the split second that they discover that the road actually leads to death.

Poet Robert Frost wrote a short poem about the road less traveled. The first verse begins: "Two roads diverged in yellow wood; And sorry I could not travel both; And be one traveler, long I stood; The traveler takes his time to ponder both roads—one is a well worn path, and the other has had little traffic. He concludes the poem by saying: "I shall be telling this with a sigh; Somewhere ages and ages hence; Two roads diverged in a wood; And I took the one less traveled by; And that has made all the difference." And if you choose the Jesus-road, even though it is less traveled, it will make all the difference—for eternity.

CONCLUSION

Whenever you read God's Word, your first question should be, "Now that I've heard from God, what am I going to do about it?" I call this the "so what?" response. In light of this truth, the first "so what?" question is: (1) Are you sure you're on the right road? Through the years as I have talked to people about their relationship with God there is a diagnostic question I've asked: Have you come to a place in your life where you know for certain you have eternal life and that you will go to heaven when you die? You don't have to answer, "I hope so" or "I think so." You really CAN know for certain. 1 John 5:13 says, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may KNOW that you have eternal life."

Looking over this crowd, I think most of you can answer "yes" to the question about being sure that you're on the right road. But there is another "so what?" question for you: (2) Will you help (and you fill in the name of someone you know) who is traveling in the wrong direction to turn around?

The Lord revealed something to me about these two roads a few years ago that I had never realized before. To illustrate this, I need six volunteers to help me. I'm going to place all six of you in a couple of lines going in the same direction. For illustration purposes, let's imagine that all six of you are on that crowded superhighway heading toward hell, okay? So, in other words, why don't all of you just go to hell? (I've always wanted to say that in church!)

At one time all of us were on this same road to hell, until we repented (made a U-turn) and got on the narrow road. But I used to think the narrow gate and the narrow road was somewhere far away from the superhighway to hell. I pictured it as a winding mountain trail where the air was fresh and the scenery was lovely. But here's what God showed me: The narrow road is actually right in the middle of the superhighway to hell—but it's going in the other direction. How do we know this? When Jesus prayed for us in John 17, He said, "My prayer is not that you would take them out of the world ...as you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." The Christian life was never meant to be lived in a cloistered retreat or an isolated monastery.

Jesus turned us around and we're smack dab in the middle of people who are going in the opposite direction. Christians are always going against the flow. It's like the guy who was driving home from work. His wife calls him on his cell phone and says, "Honey, be careful. I just heard on the radio that there's an idiot driving in the wrong direction on your highway." Her husband said, "It's not just ONE idiot, there are hundreds driving the wrong way!" That's a picture of us. We're the few who seem to be going the wrong way on a one way street, but we know that we're actually going the right way.

While we're traveling on this narrow road, Jesus has given us specific directions, a great commission. He said, "As you go, make disciples of all people." So our job is to help people going in the wrong direction to turn around and get on the Jesus road.

Am I going to say to them, "Hey, dummy, you're going to hell!!!" Nope. I'm going to stop and befriend this person so I can eventually say to this person, "Are you pleased with the direction of your life? You know, there was a time in my life that I realized I was heading in the wrong direction. But Jesus came to me and turned my life around. I still make mistakes and have struggles, but I know my sins are forgiven and I have a real hope for the future. Would you like to turn around and follow Jesus on this new road?" I'm not going to force them or drag them with me. I'm just going to love them and share my story with them.

Over the past six weeks our adults have been studying about how to help people turn around and get on the Jesus road. They've been studying SPLASH which stands for "Show People Love And Share Him. I asked some of our folks to share some of their "splash stories" with me and here are just a couple of the many I received. Paul Drewry teaches one of our Sunday Morning Bible Study classes and he wrote me: "When making a visit to a home of a person who had visited the church service, we were met at the door by an older teenager. During a discussion while standing in an entry foyer which overlooked a sunken living area, the teenager acknowledged she was not a Christian. After presenting a salvation message, we asked the teen if she would like to receive Christ, to which she replied, 'No.' When we are about to leave, a 12-year-old girl whom we did not see in the sunken living room stood up and said, 'I would.' She prayed and received Christ. Our visit was a divine appointment for a 12-year-old whom we did not even know was listening to the Gospel." When you splash someone with God's love and grace, you never know who else might get splashed!

One of our members, Mary Gail Smith, wrote: "I was in the shower singing 'How can I keep from singing your praise' after my swim that day at the YMCA pool. The young lady that cleans the locker room had just come in and was crying. I asked her if she was okay and would she like to talk to me about it? The first time I met her, several months ago, we immediately struck up a friendship. We had brief conversations each time I was there working out. She felt comfortable sharing with me the reason she was so upset. I remember asking for the Holy Spirit to help me and she and I sat down in the now-empty-locker room and were able to talk privately! God's timing! I shared Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23 and other scriptures and God was drawing her to HIM. I asked her if she would like to pray. She said she wanted to but didn't know how. I told her that she could talk to God the same way she was talking to me. He hears her prayer of repentance and acceptance of His Free Gift of Salvation. She prayed aloud and, praise God, I witnessed a new creation! There are two other people I'm praying for and if God wills, maybe

I'll get to lead them to Christ!" She signed it, "Love to Splash, Mary Gail Smith."

That's what it's all about. There are two roads that go through two gates that lead to only two eternal destinies—heaven or hell. There is more to life than just having our ticket to heaven punched. Every day we encounter hundreds of people who are on the wrong road, and God has called each of us to Show People Love and Share Him. So, let's go out there and start splashing some people with the Living Water!

OUTLINE

1. MOST PEOPLE ARE SPEEDING ON THE SUPERHIGHWAY THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION

"There is a way [a "road"] that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." *Proverbs 14:12*

- (1) The Unbelief Lane
- (2) The Morality Lane
- (3) The Religion Lane

2. A FEW PEOPLE HAVE MADE A U-TURN AND ARE TRAVELING ON THE JESUS ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE

- (1) Jesus is the pathway to know God

"I am the way [the road] and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." *John 14:6*

- (2) Jesus is the gateway to blessing

Jesus said, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture." *John 10:9*

3. YOUR DIRECTION IN LIFE WILL DETERMINE YOUR DESTINATION AFTER DEATH

"The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." *Revelation 20:14-15*

So What?

- (1) Are you sure you're on the right road?

(2) Will you help [name of someone you know] who is traveling in the wrong direction to turn around?