

# WORSHIP AT HOME

Mercy | Grace | Love

## Positions for debate

Institutional Righteousness.

Teachers of the Law and Pharisees make progress by insisting that “others” treat them the way they want to be treated. This is the broad way that leads to destruction.

## Retaliation

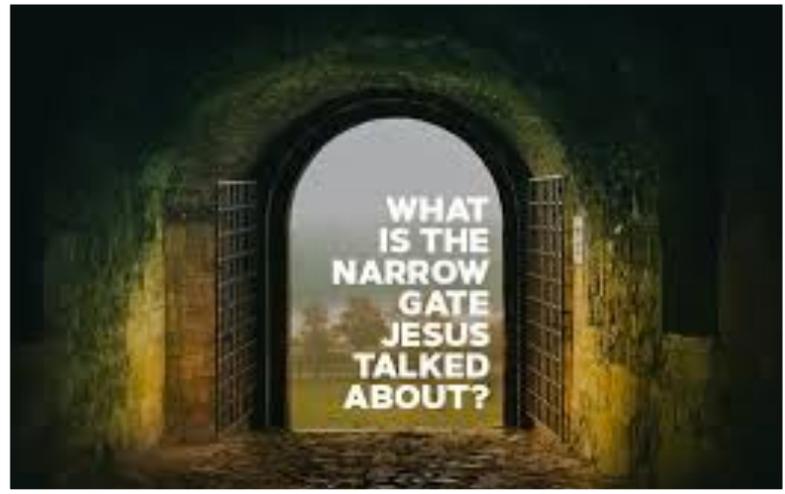
Do to others as they do to you. This is the practice of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

## Self Righteousness

Do as I say, not as I do.

## Repentance

Do to others as you would have them do to you... especially if you were in their shoes. This is the practice of compassion that flows through Grace. Compassionate people listen to others to hear, and understand their heart and mind.



## Prelude:

Prepare to Experience God as revealed through Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection.

## Lighting the Candles

Suffering is an experience of darkness. Jesus’ suffered the darkness of all our sin. Mercy is God’s Light which shines in the darkness of suffering and death.

## Special Music

Breath one breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love what Thou dost love, and do what though dost do.

## Welcome

9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him



## Announcements

Beginning Sunday, March 21st we return to ONE in person worship service, at 11 am. Covid19 policies remain.

Sunday school returns Sunday March 21st at 10 am in the fellowship hall.

On Maundy Thursday, April 1st at 6pm, you are invited to participate in an experience of scripture wherein Jesus prepares to fulfill the Old Covenant.

On Easter Sunday we will have one service at 11am. Special Music will be provided.

The Easter Cross will be adorned with flowers. Contributions to "The Flower Fund" help continue this Easter Tradition.

a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? **11** If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! Prayer

## Reading of Scripture

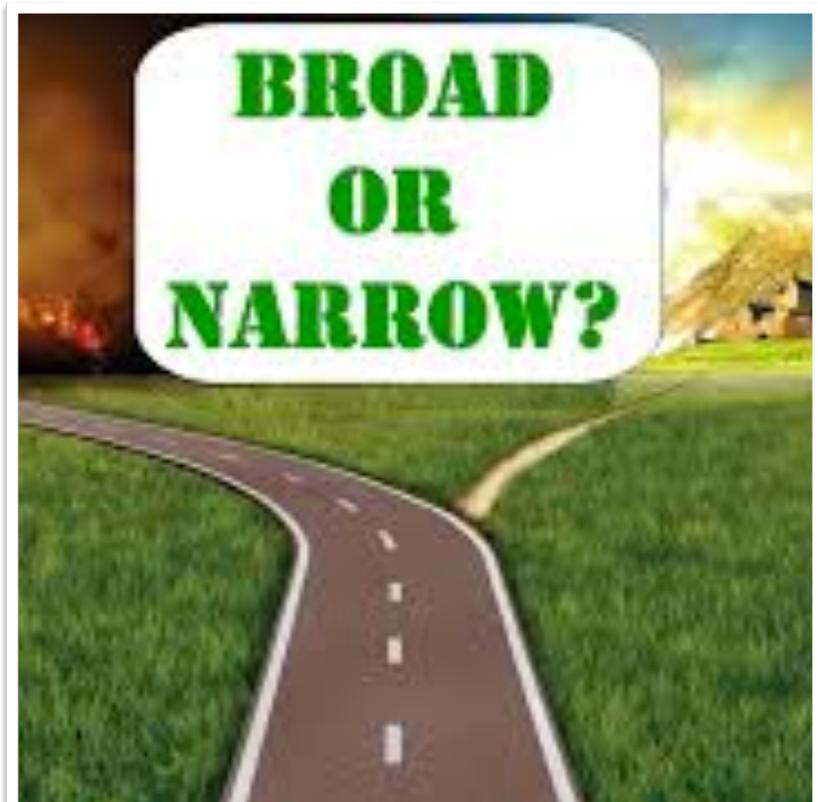
**12** So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

### The Narrow and Wide Gates

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

### True and False Prophets

**15** "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious



wolves. **16** By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. **18** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Leviticus 19: **18** “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

## Instrumental Mediation

Lord, we pray not for tranquility, nor that our tribulations cease; we pray for Thy Spirit and Thy Love, that Thou grant us strength and grace to overcome adversity through Jesus Christ. UMH page 531

## The Message: Receive The Good Gifts

Long ago Rabbis gathered in temple and houses of prayer to debate the 613 Laws of Torah. Their favorite question to debate was, “Which of the 613 Laws is the greatest?” They believed the greatest Law would fulfill the entire Covenant. Jesus gives the answer. See Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 7:12.

**Question for debate:** *What is your focus? Do you focus on how to fulfill the Law? Do you debate which of the 613 Laws reveals the greatest sin? Do you focus on right choices as the way to change behavior?*

Once we accept that the 613 Laws form One Covenant, not individual covenants, our eyes are opened to see that everyone, according to the Law, is a sinner. No one can keep the 10 Commandments, let alone the 613 Laws in Torah. The Hebrew people had a sacrificial system to cover, atone, for their sins. Each time they violated even the least of the 613 Laws of Torah they made sacrifice. They had faith that their sacrifice made them right with God and neighbor until the next violation.

The Old Covenant trains us to see our sin. The New Covenant trains us to see God’s grace. Each covenant bears fruit. The fruit of the Old Covenant is Sin. Its seed is works righteousness. The liberal Pharisees and conservative Teachers of the Law both practice works righteousness. They each contend that their way is right. I contend that little has changed.

Many so called enlightened people, today, contend there is no sin. They prefer to focus on personal and social injustices. Paul speaks of us in Romans 2: **14** “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. **15** They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.”

Furthermore, Paul says, “Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. **3** Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. **4** You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. **5** For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. **6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” Galatians 5: 1-6

The Fruit of the Old Covenant is Sin. The Fruit of the New Covenant is Grace. Both are known by their brand of love. Which measure of fruit are you/I/we known by? The words that proceed from our hearts and minds, which exits our lips, reveals our brand of love.

**Question for debate:** *Do our right answers exceed those of the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees? Matthew 5: 17-20. Have you/I/We even reached the place in life that we are debating which of the 613 Laws fulfills the entire Covenant. Isn't this Jesus' stated purpose?*

*I contend much of the debate in the United Methodist Church falls well short of the righteousness of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. Today, teachers continue to debate. One faction debates the 613 Laws looking for the greatest sin. Is the greatest sin racism, abortion, homosexuality, tattoos, piercing...? Another faction debates social justice, equal rights, and solutions to stop injustice. Both groups spend massive amounts of money, energy, and time to influence politicians. They do these things in the name of their view of progress. Progress focuses on human power, authority and control. Repentance focuses on having the same mind that was in Christ Jesus as he suffered, died, and rose to newness of Life.*

Jesus says that he didn't come to do away with the Law or Prophets. He keeps them by fulfilling them! When will our Teachers of the Law return to debate which of the 613 Laws fulfills the One Covenant? When will our Pharisees debate how God restores God's people, instead of debating individual righthand institutional obedience? When will our right answers “do unto others as you/I/we would have them do unto you/me/us?”

Again Paul describes in vivid detail the divisions currently taking place in what we know as The Church. **11** When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. **12** For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. **13** The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. **14** When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? **15** “We who are

Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles **16** know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus reveals this faith of which Paul proclaims saying, Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. How many “others” do you and I know? Conservative, Liberal, Progressive, Democrat, Republican, Jew, Moslem, Buddhist, Indian, Black, Mexican... Jesus says treat them all the same. You and I are to treat others the way we would want to be treated if we were in their shoes.

Welcome to the Narrow gate. Jesus is the narrow gate! The one who hears his words and puts them into practice is the wise person who enters the narrow gate that leads to life.

Those who enter the Narrow Gate Practice “Doing unto others as they would have them do unto them.” The narrow gate is located in the middle of the broad road that leads to destruction. It gate is Christ who always stands between you/us and “them”.

## Special Music

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

## Tithes and Offerings

## Postlude