

**Hard Choices and Prudence** Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday, June 23, 2015  
8:15 AM Gn 13:2, 5-18; Mt 7:6, 12-14 (Hard choices have to be made if you really want to gain something of value. Sometimes it is very necessary to be prudent, shrewd, with what you share and when and with whom.)

**“And those who find it are few.”**

This is a teaching for the disciples. Its meaning is not easy to comprehend. It seems to contradict the very idea that is found at the end of the gospel: “Go forth, and teach all nations making disciples of them, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” That is **the idea of universality: inviting all people into God’s covenant, bringing all people the message of salvation. Here something else, but it is not really a contradiction. It’s a different element within the message.** “The road to life,” Jesus said, “is not easy to find.” Well, as we teach people to be disciples, as we share with them the way of discipleship, we have to realize that the way is not an easy way. So, yes, it’s universal in its invitation and, yes, it’s all-encompassing, but, nonetheless, there is **an element that is very difficult**; and we have to keep that in mind because human beings actually, ordinarily don’t like things that are difficult. **We tend to shy away from great effort, unless we see great gain.** So people will work real hard if they are being paid well; but if they are not being paid well, they don’t tend to work too hard. Or we may be really involved in some project if we see it as beneficial in some way, to us, to our family, to some aspect of being. People don’t put a great deal of energy into something they think is worthless. It’s not natural. So we have to keep all that in mind.

Jesus is talking about the road to life, meaning the choices that lead to God really—**the choices that lead to God.** He is saying, well, **they are difficult choices.** “The road that leads to destruction is wide and broad,” in other words, very easy. **The easy path in life, however, leads to destruction. It’s self-destructive.** So another way of putting this is that if we simply do what is easy and in a way natural, we will destroy ourselves. That can be taken on an individual basis or a group basis or a social basis. **Hard choices have to be made if you really want to gain something of value,** here called “life.”

And there is a narrow gate. Now you know in the ancient world there were big gates and little gates. The big gates were for carts and wagons, and **little gates were just for people. So we can get through, but we can't bring a lot of stuff.** We identify often with a great deal: **our possessions, our achievements, our opinions, our feelings.** How important feelings are to people, way too important actually: like and dislike. Well, they have to stay on the other side. They are not going to get through the narrow gate—too much, too much stuff, they have to leave it behind. You can get through, but only you, the real you. The you God wants can get through that narrow gate. All the stuff you have acquired in life, what you think is part of you, what you think is so important, even what you think is true very often, you have to leave it behind. It won't get through, too much stuff. So we have to try to enter the narrow gate.

Meanwhile, can everyone understand this? No, **not everyone is ready at all times for this gospel.** That's why he starts off by saying, **"Do not give what is holy to dogs."** Now that's not a very nice statement, and Jesus could be rather brutal at times. But sometimes people are dogs. They just tear stuff up. They don't listen. They're not ready to listen, so **"Do not give what is holy to dogs."** **Maintain a certain sort of caution.** Or **"Throw your pearls before swine—"Your pearls" refer to, of course, what you understand of God. Not everyone should hear what you understand,** because they are not capable of sharing it, any more than a swine can appreciate the value of a pearl. **It has to do with a spiritual faculty of discernment, of appreciation.** Not everyone has this all the time. Sometimes it has to grow and develop. **Meanwhile, we have to be careful "lest they trample them underfoot, and in turn tear you to pieces."** This is recommending not exactly courage in this case, but prudence. **Sometimes it is very necessary to be prudent, shrewd, with what you share and when and with whom.**