

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 4TH-5TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

GATES, TREES, & FRUIT (MATTHEW 7:13-20)

As Jesus closes His "sermon on the mount", He doesn't give any new ethical teachings, but rather He challenges His disciples to obey what they'd already been taught.

- What follows in vs. 13-27 are four pictures which emphasize the importance of responding to the teachings of Jesus with decisive obedience.
- Real faith is not just knowing correct beliefs with our minds, it's trusting in Christ with our lives through true obedience.

Remember the larger context- Jesus is contrasting for His disciples true righteousness with false, religious, self-righteousness (5:20).

- Self-righteous religion can appear to be real to other people.
- It's possible for someone to know the right language, believe the right doctrines, conform to the right external rules, and yet not be saved.

TWO WAYS (VS. 13-14)

- The 1st picture Jesus gives of a proper, obedient response to the Kingdom is that of a "narrow gate" that leads to a hard way and a "wide gate" that leads to an "easy way".
- The "narrow gate" is the way of personal faith in Christ that leads to eternal life, and the "wide gate" is the normal human tendency towards dependence on self and self-righteousness.

The "wide gate" is the popular way- "those who enter by it are many" (vs. 13), but the "narrow gate" is less popular.

- It's less popular because it's costly- it requires those who walk it to give up control over their own lives in obedience and depend solely on Christ for salvation and direction.
- But one path leads to life, and the other to destruction.

GOOD & BAD TREES (VS. 15-20)

- The 2nd picture Jesus gives comes in the form of a warning against "false prophets"- those who appear as disciples and spiritual leaders but are actually "ravenous wolves" (vs. 15).
- How can we discern if someone is a genuine disciple or a "false prophet"? By their fruits.
- Everything in nature reproduces after its kind (vs. 16), and this is also true spiritually.
- Good fruit comes from a good tree, but bad fruit comes from a bad tree (vs. 17-18).
- The tree that produces rotten fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (vs. 19).
- In the end, it doesn't matter the label a person gives themselves- the truth of their identity will be revealed eventually through their character.
- Spiritually fruitless people are spiritually dead who are traveling the broad road to hell.

From these first two pictures Jesus gives that emphasize the proper response to the Kingdom, we can judge our own identity as disciples.

- 1) Has my profession in Christ cost me anything? Am I on the narrow road or the broad road?
- 2) Has my profession in Christ changed my life? If so, what kind of fruit am I bearing?

"I NEVER KNEW YOU..." (MATTHEW 7:21-23)

There are false prophets in the world, so we must be careful of spiritual deception.

- But the greatest danger of all is self-deception- where we fool ourselves into thinking we're truly saved because of our religious activity.
- The 3rd picture Jesus gives is a shocking scene from the future day of judgment, where the one exercising divine judgment is none other than Jesus Himself (vs. 23).

There's coming a day- whether that's tomorrow or 10,000 years from now- where the full and final judgment of God will be poured out on those who did not truly repent and trust Christ's sacrifice for their sins.

- They will be sentenced to a final, eternal hell (Rev. 20:15), while those who are truly in Christ will enter into a Kingdom where they rule and reign with King Jesus for all eternity.

Shockingly, there will be many on that day that are horrified and surprised to discover that instead of receiving the Kingdom, they will be cast out from the presence of the King! (vs. 23).

- Why will they be so shocked?
- They'll have a false assurance of their standing with Christ because of their claim that He's their Lord, even though they've never done God's will with their lives (vs. 21-22).

Calling Jesus Lord is much different than actually making Him Lord over our lives.

- We can claim loyalty and devotion to Jesus with our lips, but what Jesus is ultimately more interested in is loyalty with our lives.

- Our external professions of faith in Christ as our Lord may impress other people, but if it's not genuinely grounded in a surrendered life and trusting heart, it's completely useless.

The 2nd reason many who are sentenced to hell will be shocked on judgment day is because they will have prophesied, cast out demons, and done "many mighty works" in Jesus' name (vs. 22).

- Preaching or prophesying, casting out demons, and performing miracles can all be faked- but even if they are divinely inspired, they give no assurance for real salvation.

Just because you've experienced the supernatural or God has used you to do good things doesn't mean you have a trusting, surrendered heart towards Christ as our Lord and Savior.

- Even Judas most likely participated in these spiritual activities as a disciple of Jesus!
- It is possible to parrot and mimic the language and activities of true believers without truly having a transformed, surrendered, obedient heart.

Regardless of the misplaced confidence in their own claims or religious activity, Jesus says that He will cast them out of His presence (vs. 23).

- Why? Because "I never knew you".
- "Knew- "ginosko"- to "personally know through a first-hand or face-to-face experience".
- It implies a type of knowledge of someone that is intimate, life-changing, transformative, and powerful.

The self-deceived "make believers" will be cast out of the presence of the King and the Kingdom because they never had an intimate, life-changing, transformative, and powerful encounter with King Jesus that led to them doing the will of the Father.

- They might have had an intellectual understanding of His person or His ideas, but this type of knowledge has no power or authority to transform a life, change a heart, or grant anyone entrance into the Kingdom.

OUR FOUNDATION (MATTHEW 7:24-29)

Jesus gives a 4th and final picture of what a life that responds to His teachings in obedience will look like.

- He gives a picture of two builders, one that built a house on a rock, and the other who built a house on sand.
- The wise man represents "everyone who hears these words...and does them..." (vs. 24)
- Obedience is what Jesus is after.

We're not to just hear the words of Jesus, we're to actually do them (James 1:22).

- Hearing God's Word without implementing it into our lives through obedience is ultimately meaningless and shows that we don't really value or even believe it.
- When the rain fell, the floods came and the wind beat on the house, it didn't fall because it was founded on the rock (vs. 25).

Our profession of faith in Christ as our Lord will ultimately be tested.

- It will be tested by the trials, storms, and troubles in this life.
- When life becomes difficult, many who have professed faith in Christ but have no real commitment to Him sadly walk away.
- But our faith will be tested by a final and devastating storm of the future judgment of God.

There's coming a day when those who have claimed to trust Christ, yet who have not truly obeyed the will of God with their lives, will be exposed by the storm of God's final judgment.

- The foundation of their profession will be revealed as nothing but sand (vs. 26).
- "Great was the fall of it", is a chilling declaration about the finality and horrors of God's final judgment towards those without true faith.

Those who spend their lives building an exterior, phony, self-righteous facade of religion that isn't grounded on real faith, commitment, and obedience are considered fools by Jesus (vs. 26).

- Why? Because life's trials will shake us to our core and reveal if we've built our lives on a solid foundation.
- God's final judgment will expose our false professions of faith that had no real obedience or commitment in this life.

Jesus began His sermon with only His intended audience (the disciples) present, but by the time He concluded a crowd had gathered.

- The content and manner of Jesus' teaching were overwhelming- He taught with authority (vs. 29).
- Unlike many of the rabbis of the day, Jesus didn't cite other sources for His teachings.
- It was He who decided who would enter the Kingdom and what basis they would do so.

HEARING VS. DOING.

Picture #1- A Narrow Way & Broad Road (vs. 13-14) Picture #2- Good & Bad Trees (vs. 15-19)

Picture #3- Judgment Day Surprise (vs. 21-23) Picture #4- Rock vs. Sand (vs. 24-27)

Are you a fan or a follower?