

Series: The Sermon on the Mount

Foundations of Wisdom

Matthew 7:13-29

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, November 16, 2025

Peter: A reading from Matthew 7:13-29: “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. Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit, you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit, you will recognize them. Not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, do we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you, away from me, you evildoers.” Therefore, anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock, but everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.’ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because He taught as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the law,” the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Paul: Thanks so much, Peter. Peter has been our resident for a little over a year, and he is just crushing it. I love that guy so much. Yeah, we can give it up for Peter. He started with us doing small groups and writing small group curriculum earlier this year, and now he is an awesome student resident, just like pouring into our students, and there is so much great happening there. I just love that guy. He is awesome, and he also volunteers to lead our young adults’ ministry on top of all of that and is a full-time student, so he is just like in the thick of it right now. We are so thankful for his time and for his energy.

It is good to be back with you. My family and I were gone last weekend. Steffy had a conference that she was getting to present at for work, and so they paid for her flight and the hotel, and we were like, “That sounds like a pretty good deal. We should just tag along and hang out with you for a week,” so we went to California. Oddly, it was warmer here than it was there, which was a little bit like whiplash for a second, but we took the kids to Disneyland for a day. It was great. Camden just like was so, she just was like glowing, having seen every princess she could find, having them sign autographs for her. Landon was really excited to meet Mickey Mouse, who he calls Minnie Mouse, which leads to a lot of confusion in our home, but we are working on it, and we will probably get through that, so it was just a really good time. I am thankful for the time away with my family.

Josh had a great message last weekend as we were winding down the Sermon on the Mount series, so thankful for him and for Tom Buxton, who led on Wednesday night so I could get away at the last minute with my family. I am really excited to be back. It is crazy. We are wrapping up this series on the Sermon on the Mount. We have been in this series for ten weeks, two and a half months, walking through these three chapters from the book of Matthew, where Jesus outlines what it looks like to live a flourishing, thriving life in the kingdom of God.

This past week while I was in California, I had a little bit of a vision of what a thriving life looked like. Has anyone spent some time in California? Has anyone been to California? Is anybody from California? Okay, a few people. We got some clapping from one person. That feels about right, like that is probably true. California is a vibe, right? If you spent any time there, I will just tell you what I noticed as we like pulled up to L.A. and then drove down to San Diego, a lot of people running on the beach with not a lot of clothes. So that was one thing, a lot of the latest Fitbits and fitness watches and gear, great shoes. Everybody seems to live a very active lifestyle. You go to a coffee shop, and there is really good coffee, but there is also like a \$20 green juice that they say will somehow like change your life if you drink it, I am not sure for the better, but I could not quite figure that out for myself, and there is all of this optimization. Like that is what I felt like when I landed in California, and I was so judgmental. It just felt like everybody was running around. They had podcasts in their ears, I am assuming, about self-help, self-care, or self-optimization, making your life better, and it did not matter who I talked to, whether it was someone at a coffee shop or a taco stand or someone just on the side of the beach and just observing. It felt like everybody was trying to chase the upgraded self.

Do you know what I am talking about? It was like they were just trying to maximize everything about their life and who they wanted to be, and there was so much self-awareness that it like bled over into that space where it is like a little too much self-awareness. Do you know what I am talking about? Where like you're so self-aware, I think you've actually lost a sense of who you are and like what actually the perception of you is. Maybe put down the self-help book and just read a little bit of fiction. It is okay to just have a good time. That was my impression, and what I would say is after the first few days, like I said, I just showed up pretty judgmental. It was like, "I do not think I could ever live here," and by the end of the week, I do not know if it was the surf and the sunshine and the tacos, but I was like, "This is not bad."

Like, I could totally see the appeal here, and I think there is some humor in that, obviously, but the truth is, we maybe like to make fun of California some, but we have our own version of that in Colorado, our own view of what it means to live the good life, and maybe it is not about like sunshine and surf and tacos on the beach. It is more about how many powder snow skiing days can you get in a year, right? How many summits can you get to the top of? How many times can you get away to seclusion in the mountains and a nice cabin by the river? There are all sorts of things that we chase after in Colorado that we think will be the good life. Maybe it is our career, maybe it is family and making sure that we have our kids in all of the right sports and all of the right band opportunities and dance opportunities, and we just have our own version of what we think it means to live the good life.

As we have been walking through this series on the Sermon on the Mount, one of the things that we have been looking at is this reality that every generation across time and every location has been trying to answer that question: What does it mean to live the good life? What does it mean to live a life that's

full of purpose and meaning, that when you get up out of bed in the morning, you have something worth living for? What are we all chasing? How are we trying to answer that question? Whether we realize it or not, this is the bedrock of what much of our life is built on, trying to find the good life, the good career, the nice house, the good family, the great partner, and we live so much of our life trying to figure out how we can attain this, and there are a thousand different options that are available to us, a thousand different places like California or Colorado that will tell you how to answer this question, a thousand different self-help gurus, a thousand different social media influencers who will claim that they have the answer to this question.

It is no different than Jesus' day, and when He steps up onto the side of the hill to preach the Sermon on the Mount, He is answering this question for us. He is answering this question, his version of what it looks like to live the good life. The challenge with Jesus, though, is it looks nothing like what we assume the good life is supposed to look like. He does not talk about the right career, or the right partner, or the right place to live, or the right weather. He talks about things like loving your enemies or trusting the Father. He talks about things like not just getting a divorce, but actually not looking at someone lustfully, that it is possible to not only struggle with maybe you have never murdered someone, but you actually still have anger in your heart towards them, and that is what Jesus paints a picture of the good life about, and it is really fascinating, because it is very different than what we would maybe expect, but it is a question that all of us are asking in one way or another.

As Jesus begins to land the plane on His Sermon on the Mount, having tried to paint a picture of what the good life is, He ends it in a way that we may not expect. I feel like every sermon that I have listened to that has been impactful to me, it maybe ends with some sort of inspirational quote from a really great thinker or philosopher or theologian, or maybe it is some sort of story that inspires me and that moves me in some sort of way where it starts to feel a little misty in the room, and my eyes tear up, and I am like, "Oh yeah, this has moved me in my spirit." Jesus does not do any of that. In fact, when He lands his plane on the Sermon on the Mount, it is one of the most binary, like just yes or no questions that is in all of his teaching. He does not try to inspire. He does not try to move. He just lays it out really plainly. Are you in with his teaching? Will you follow his teaching? Are you in the kingdom of heaven? Are you going to choose your own way or the way of the world? It is this very binary, like you are either in or out. It is Jesus' way of drawing a line in the sand, saying, "This is my way. Are you in?" He draws four contrasts. He draws four ways that He tries to drive this home: two paths, two trees, two disciples, and two foundations. He tries four different ways to illustrate this idea that there is a choice before you, every single moment of every single day, that will set an eternal trajectory for your life. The question is, why would Jesus end his sermon this way? Why would He end his masterpiece not with an inspiring finale or some sort of comforting blessing, but with a painfully clear decision?

Now, I think the answer is actually really simple, and so Jesus knows something that we would rather not admit. Jesus knows that it is really easy to admire his teaching without actually ever living it out, and it is entirely possible to admire Jesus without choosing to follow Him. There are a lot of people who can quote Jesus, but how many people do we see actually obeying Him? There are a lot of people who love Jesus' teaching about how to love your enemies or turn the other cheek or do not judge. When it comes to their actual life, how many of us live free of judgmentalism?

We have this ability to love the teachings of Jesus and then forget about what they mean and not actually live them out, and so I think what Jesus is saying is there is a way of living in this world where you have listened to his words, where you have heard the Sermon on the Mount, but you have not been transformed by them. Jesus is saying that there is a way to just nod along and say, “Yeah, that is a great point, amen to that,” and not to bend the knee in allegiance to Him. I think what Jesus is doing at the end of his Sermon on the Mount is He is trying to say that He refuses to let admiration get in the way of discipleship. He does not want admirers. He wants followers.

So, I think what we have to do in order to understand the decision before us is we actually have to go back to the beginning and look at a little bit of how we have outlined this series, look a little bit at what Jesus has actually taught and presented to us, in order to understand the choice that is before us, and so if you remember all the way back to the beginning, tis is like two and half months ago, ten weeks ago. A lot’s happened since then, but Jesus essentially is working in a space where there are four different answers in his culture at the time for how they would answer this idea of how to deal with brokenness in the world, how to have the good life, and it basically boils down to something like this picture.

There was one group, the Pharisees, and they believed in radical obedience, that the key to the good life, the key to experiencing blessing, the key to experiencing the life you have always wanted, is making sure that you obey God to the letter, and that if you can just obey Him, and if you can draw enough boundaries around the rules and make sure that you follow the rules around the rules, then you will live in a space where God blesses you and where you experience his salvation, and many of us live with a similar script in our lives. We think like the Pharisees that if I could just get things right, if I could just live with a certain sense of morality, if I could just be good enough, we believe that God would be pleased with us when we are good and that He is disappointed with us when we stumble and that He is ready to withdraw from us when we do not quite measure up, and so many of us live with this fear in a relationship with God that just one wrong move puts us on God’s bad side, and so we become harsh with ourselves and with others, because deep down we think that salvation and blessing is earned, not given.

Then we see the Sadducees, and they live with this radical compromise. They were the people who were in charge of Israel, but Rome was in charge of them, and so they were willing to bend the rules of their morality and their religion and what God had called them to be in order to get the ear of Rome. In order to have access to the throne, in order to have influence with those who were in power, they thought, “You know what? This teaching is a little hard. We will just set that aside. We will put that one on mute. We will just set aside the things that make our superiors feel uncomfortable, and we will just bend what we believe to the cultural norms of the day in order to get along with the people in charge,” and again, we see this all over the place. People are compromising politically and religiously, because they just want to have access to the people who are in power. You see that on the left, the right, and the center, people who are willing to bend the rules of scripture in order to just say like, “Yeah, I know that is not technically Jesus’ way, but it will lead to Jesus’ way if we just follow this person or this group.”

Then we see the zealots, the radical revolutionaries. They were tired of waiting. They did not want to wait for God to show up. They did not want to wait for obedience or compromise. They just thought, “We are going to take the kingdom by force. We are going to make what we want to happen in the world happen by the sword,” and so we see this all the time, too. It is the culture of outrage, the culture of people

who, if you disagree with us, then you are canceled. If you do not get along with us, then you are the enemy, and we believe in this idea that if we could just conquer all of the people who disagree with us and silence them, then we could have the world and the life that we have always wanted.

Then finally, you have the Essenes, those who believed in radical withdrawal. Their mindset was, “If I could just get away, the world is burning itself up. It is chaos, there is nonsense happening everywhere, there is evil around every corner. If I can just pull back into my own bubble where everybody agrees with me, thinks like me, believes like me, and does what I do, then I will be safe, and my people will be safe.” Again, some of us live with this temptation. We think that the world is just going to hell in a handbasket, it is too terrible, and if I could just retreat into the safety and the comfort of people who think like me, then that would present me with the life that I am looking for.

So, Jesus has all of this going on in the backdrop when He steps up onto the side of the mountain, and He presents a radical alternative. The idea that these four things have in common with each other is it is all up to you, your obedience, your compromise, your passion, your withdrawal, and Jesus says, you do not understand. The life you are looking for, you cannot get on your own. It is up to me, and so He presents this idea of radical transformation, that actually the key to the life you are looking for is not changing the world. It is your inner world being changed and transformed by who Jesus is, and then that transformation that takes place inside of you spills out and bleeds into the world and changes things. He says that change and transformation comes from Him. It comes from a life that is healed from the inside out, a life of wholeness with the Father, a life of righteousness that grows from a renewed heart, not fear or pressure, and He says this is the key to the good life. It is actually not trusting yourself. It is trusting God with our lives.

So, from there, with these as the backdrop, He begins to outline the Sermon on the Mount. What I want to try to do is a little bold. I am going to see if I can summarize what we have done in ten weeks in two minutes. All right, are you ready? I am going to try to bring you along with me, and so I have got this graph to look at a little bit of where we have been for the last two weeks, and some of you by the end of it are like, “Paul, why didn’t we just do this from the beginning? Why spend ten weeks on what we can do in two minutes?” Talk to me later after the service, and we can have a conversation about why, but here is where it starts. Jesus begins with the beatitudes, and essentially what Jesus says in the beatitudes is He completely reshapes our understanding of what the world is supposed to look like. He blesses the kinds of people whom no one else blesses, those who are empty, grieving, dependent, gentle, hungry for God. Jesus says right from the start, these are the people who are on my team. These are the people experiencing the kingdom of God. These are the people that are experiencing the good life, the poor in spirit, the meek, the mild, because they understand that the good life is not something you achieve. It is something that you receive.

So, then He moves on from there, and He gives the people who are following Him an identity. He says, if you are following me, I want you to go into the world, and I want you to be salt and light. I do not want you to just try to be that. That is your new identity, that in a world of decay, you are supposed to be salt that preserves goodness. In a world of darkness, you are supposed to shine a light, and then the question is, “What does that look like? How do we do that?”

So, then He talks about this idea of righteousness that fulfills the law, righteousness that surpasses the Pharisees. Righteousness is having a right relationship with God and a right relationship with others,

and He says if you want to be salt and light, if you want to understand the good life, then you need to have a righteousness, a right relationship with God and others that surpasses even that of the Pharisees. Then, the natural question to that is, “What does that look like?” and so Jesus gives six case studies. He looks at things like lust and divorce and murder and anger, and He looks at oaths and integrity, and He looks at things like loving your enemies, and He says it is entirely possible for you to do all of the right things, follow all of the law, and still not have righteousness, because you can do all of the right things without actually having been transformed in your relationship with others. So, Jesus moves from this horizontal relationship of what righteousness looks like with others to this vertical relationship of what righteousness looks like with God, and then He talks about three spiritual disciplines, giving, prayer, and fasting.

Jesus says there is a way of living where even the spiritual disciplines, even the relational stuff with God is done for the wrong reasons. You do it for the admiration of others or to earn God’s favor, but God actually just wants your heart, and He just wants intimacy with you. Then He moves from that, and He says, if you want to experience intimacy with God, you have to understand and trust the righteousness of the Father. You have to understand that He is good, that He provides, that He cares for you, that He sees what you need, that you do not have to chase after treasures in the world, because God knows what you need before you even ask, and so you do not store up things on Earth. Store up things in heaven. Do not worry. Trust Him. Then He wraps up with this idea that you have listened to the Sermon on the Mount, you have it all down. Let’s say you’re really good at the righteousness that surpasses the Pharisees. You are good at the spiritual disciplines. You do all of that really well. You have no room to judge. You are not supposed to condemn others who are maybe further behind you on the journey. There’s no reason for you to judge them, because all of us are just in need of grace, and then He says, and some of you, you may not think you are doing super well. You might feel like you are struggling, and you feel like you can’t live up to all of these things that Jesus has called you to do. All you have to do then is just ask and seek and knock. Just ask the Father. He is not asking you to do this alone. He will empower you to do what He has called you to.

So, Jesus takes us on this whole journey, this whole trajectory, and He lands the plane with this conclusion, and He gives us a choice: Will you live this out, or will you choose your own way? Will you choose to follow Jesus into this way of radical transformation, or will you choose to go your own path? He is not presenting this as a checklist of do’s and don’ts and the things that you are supposed to do. He is trying to present this not as a performance manual, but a picture of what a whole integrated life with God looks like. I think I did that in a little over two minutes, but pretty close. So good job me.

All right, and then He presents us with a choice. This is the conclusion. This is where He wraps things up, a choice of whether or not we will live out the Sermon on the Mount or go our own way, and this is what He says. He begins this choice with these words: “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 is the road that leads to life, and only a few will find it.” There are two roads, two paths you can take in life, two choices that you can make. You can take the broad road that everybody finds, everybody is on, everybody is chasing after, and it will look like it is taking you to life, but it ultimately leads to destruction, or you can take the narrow path, the hidden path, the path that is harder to find, the

path that is a little more isolated, that feels a little more lonely, that is more countercultural, the way of Jesus, and that path will lead you to life.

I can't read this passage without thinking of Interstate 25 during rush hour traffic, because if you think of I-25 at rush hour traffic, a lot of people are on I-25 during rush hour. A lot of people are taking that way. You are not alone on I-25 during rush hour traffic, but are you flourishing? I would say probably not. There is a lot of stress on I-25 during rush hour traffic. You're not thinking like, "Man, this is a good life. I am really glad of the choices I made to get on this road." You're thinking like, "Could I have taken a different route? Could I have gone at a different time? Could I have gone a different way to get home?" No one is there thinking like, "Oh, this is just what I have always hoped for," but then I want you to think about that path that you found up in the foothills or maybe somewhere in the Colorado Rockies, and it is a path, a trail that not very many people maybe know about. It is one of those places that just you and your family or you and your friends like to go, and while you are on the path, you experience the beauty of creation, you experience some solitude, you experience just that peace of being in nature and being around those that you love. That is more of an image of flourishing. Less people know that it is there, less people are taking that path. You might encounter a few, but it feels a little different. It is very countercultural, but it is the path that leads to flourishing. Jesus is painting that kind of picture. There is a broad road that a lot of people are on. There is heavy traffic. The path is beaten down. There is a path that is hidden, that is a little less familiar, that is more countercultural, and it will lead you to life, not to destruction.

So that is the first way He presents this choice and gives us this option of a way we can choose, and then He moves from there to what feels initially pretty weird. He starts talking about false prophets and two different types of trees. So, in verse 15, He says this, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are as ferocious as wolves." Now pause, time out for a second there, because He has been talking about this idea of two paths, and then what He is saying essentially is that there are actually false prophets, false guides, who might try to tell you that they are leading you on the path towards life. They come to you in sheep's clothing. It looks like it is leading you to the path of life, but actually inwardly they are ferocious wolves. Intentionally or unintentionally, they are leading you down the path towards destruction, so be careful of who you are allowing to influence you. Be careful of who you are following when they say they have the key to the good life.

So how do you know whether or not you are following an actual guide or a false guide? "By their fruit, you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Do people get good fruit from bad trees? No. Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit, and a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit." Is everybody tired of hearing good fruit, bad fruit, bear fruit, all of those things? It feels a little like convoluted, right? "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit, you will recognize them."

Here is what Jesus is saying. There are false teachers. There are false guides. There are people in life who will claim they have the path to life, and He is not just talking about other religions. He is talking about anyone who claims to have the path to life. He says they will have their opinions, their views, their teachings, their ideology about what it means to live the good life, but you be careful. Here's the danger. Not everyone who is inviting you down a spiritual path is leading you to life. Some voices, some teachers, they sound good, they look good, they seem trustworthy, but their path is not the narrow road of Jesus. It

is the broad road, disguised as the path of Jesus. He gives this image of sheep and ferocious wolves. This image is chilling. It is not that they are obvious enemies. They do not wear a sign that says, “danger.’ It is deception, whether intentional or unintentional. They may look harmless, but they are predators, so do not be naive.

I think this is such an important word for the church today, because we have so many different people, social media influencers, different people who have written different books. We have different religions that are available to us in so many different spaces. We have all of the information that we could ever ask for. Thousands upon thousands of voices are trying to tell us that they have the key to the good life, that they know the way that will lead to life, and Jesus says, be careful, because many of them will lead you to the path of destruction. Many of them will lead you to the path claiming that it leads to life, and it will not, and so you have to ask yourself, you have to be aware of the fruit that they are bearing. Is it good fruit, or is it bad fruit? It is not just what the leader says, it is what their life produces. Are they cultivating humility or ego, generosity or aggression, gentleness and kindness, love, or are they self-serving? When you look at people, do they begin to look more like Christ? Do they help you look more like Christ? Or do they make you look more like the way of the world? Do they teach you how to win arguments and defend their tribe and maintain certain appearances? What Jesus is saying is that not everyone who uses Jesus’ name is leading people towards Jesus’ way, and so we have to be careful. This flows directly out of the teaching about the two roads. The broad road is popular for a reason. There are many voices that are pointing toward it, some knowingly, and some blindly, but Jesus is saying, be careful whom you follow. Be careful whom you trust with your soul, because if the road is wide and easy, the fruit might be bitter and hollow, and it is not the way of the kingdom.

Then to drive this teaching home a little bit more, Jesus says there are false guides out there, but then you need to be careful about yourself. He says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of the Father who is in heaven.” This is interesting. Jesus is saying there are some out there who will claim and say, “Jesus is my Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord,’ but the difference between people who say that Jesus is Lord and the people who actually do the will of the Father is what tells you apart, that some people claim to know Jesus, claim to follow Jesus, but their life looks nothing like Him. They are not doing the will of the Father.

Now what is interesting to me about this idea is that Jesus says there is a difference between claiming allegiance to Jesus and actually living for Jesus, but then He gives examples of doing things, so He says, “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?’ That is doing something, ‘and in your name, did we not drive out demons?’ That is doing something, ‘and in your name, did we not perform many miracles?’ They are doing the good things. These all sound like things that would be according to the Father’s will, so why does Jesus then say, “Then I will tell you plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.’” People who cast out demons, prophesy in the name of Jesus, perform miracles, He calls evildoers. Why? Because I think Jesus is driving home the point that He has been making the entire time in the Sermon on the Mount, and that is this. It is entirely possible to do the right things and still miss the heart of God, and every point along the way, He has been saying, you can follow all of the rules, you can do all of the right things, but if you do not understand the heart of the Father, then it is not actually the way of the kingdom of heaven.

It is not just about what you say. It is not even about what you do. It is a matter of the heart. Have you given your heart to Jesus? Are you being transformed and changed by Him? Jesus is after your heart, not your resume'. It does not matter how many times you show up to church. It does not matter how many mornings you spend in prayer. It does not matter how many different people you serve. If your heart is not submitted to Jesus, then you are in danger of missing the kingdom of heaven, and there is one more piece that I think we have to drive home as we bring this part of the sermon to a close. Notice that Jesus says on that day, "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord.'" Now that is eschatological language. It is the language of the prophets. It is referring to the day of the Lord, the day when God will set all things right and He will reveal what is true and evaluate what has been hidden. It is the day that the road will be revealed whether or not we were on the path to destruction or on the path to life, and so Jesus is connecting that metaphor, the day of final judgment, with the path that we have chosen every day, and here is the thing that is interesting about the path that leads to ruin and destruction. It is that that word in the Greek actually has several different connotations. Destruction means final ruin, final judgment, but it also means ruin now, in the present, and it also has this third connotation of disintegration, wasted potential, so what is Jesus saying? I think what Jesus is saying is that in other words, the choices you make now, the choices you make of whether or not you are living on the narrow path or the wide path, they have consequences daily, right now. You will feel the consequences of whether or not you are living on the path of destruction or the path of life now, and it is also setting an eternal trajectory for your soul, and on that day, what has been forming you all along, all of those decisions that have been stacked up one over the other will be revealed for what they are. Were you living according to the path of life or the path of destruction?

Now hear me so clearly. I am not saying that you are earning your way into heaven. I am saying that the way you have lived your life will be revealed on that day, and what Jesus is saying is that you can experience the kingdom life now, or you can experience the way of disintegration now, and He is not trying to scare us. He is trying to wake us up, because the worst type of deception is self-deception, the belief that you are going down the narrow road while living comfortably on the wide one. I think what Jesus is trying to show us, what He is trying to say is that just being in the presence of spiritual things and doing good things, that does not actually lead to transformation. You can speak the name of Jesus and not know his heart. You can do the things that Jesus has called you to do and not be walking with Him, and so finally, Jesus pulls in one last illustration to try to drive all of this home, and He says this. He says, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine," the words of the Sermon on the Mount, everything Jesus has just spoken, everything He has been teaching on, "and puts them into practice," who practices what I have preached, "is like a wise man who built his house on the rock, and the rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because its foundation was solid on the rock," of Jesus, "but everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, and the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Here is what Jesus is saying. When you look at your life, are you building it on the foundation of who He is and what He has said and what He did, or are you building it on the ways of the world? If you build your life on who Jesus is, then it will be a solid foundation, so that no matter what happens to you in life, no matter when the storms come, when, not if, when the storms come, you will be able to stand,

but if you build your life on anything else other than the rock of Jesus, at some point your life will fall apart. You will experience that disintegration, that ruin in this life.

I think what Jesus is saying and the choice He is presenting to us, the message that is rising to the surface of the Sermon on the Mount is that Jesus is not after your admiration. He is after your allegiance. Jesus is not looking for more admirers. He is looking for disciples, not people who live in a world that loves to admire Jesus and people who love to claim the golden rule, they champion love your enemies, they follow and quote the Sermon on the Mount, and they post beatitudes on Instagram, but they have not given Jesus their lives. Admiration is emotional agreement. Allegiance is embodied obedience. Admiration can sit there and nod in approval, but allegiance bends the knee to Jesus. Jesus does not end the Sermon on the Mount with some poetic ideal. He has given us the blueprint for how life actually works, and He is being honest with us. He is saying that the narrow path is going to feel isolated. It is going to cost you. The good life is going to cost you. Jesus does not mix his language about that at all, but what He says is that the cost of non-discipleship, the cost of not following Him, it will cost you more.

Here is the reality. It is that it is costly to forgive the way Jesus calls us to forgive, but it is far more costly to live in bitterness and unforgiveness. It is costly to trust God with your finances and his provision, but it is more costly to live under the weight of anxiety and fear about tomorrow. It is costly to confess your sin and to admit that you are not enough and that you cannot build the life that you have always wanted, but it is more costly to hide your sin and live in shame. It is costly to love your enemies the way Jesus has called us to, but it does not cost as much as living in the hatred of a shrinking soul. What Jesus is saying is that, yes, following Him will have a cost, but the cost of not following Him is far greater.

So, I do not have any stories. I am going to finish my sermon the same way Jesus finished his. I do not have anything to inspire you. I just want to simply leave you with this question: What foundation are you building your life on? What foundation are you building your life on? Are you just sitting in the seat, admiring Jesus, or are you actually following Him? Do you just look at Him from a distance and think, “Man, He is so good,” or are you actually giving Him your life? That is the narrow road. That is the fruitful tree. That is the disciple who is known by Jesus, and that is the life that stands when the storm comes, and so the invitation is simple. This is the kingdom. This is the way of Jesus. Which way will you choose? Would you please stand and pray with me?

Heavenly Father, God, as we come to a close on this teaching from the Sermon on the Mount, God, I pray that any way the Spirit has maybe stirred over the last few months as we have been sitting with these words of Jesus, sitting at the feet of Jesus, God, for some of us, there may be places in our life where we are recognizing today for the first time that we have been living on the wide, broad path, and that we need to turn, we need to repent and choose the way of Jesus over the way of this world. God, there may be some of us today who feel burdened and weighed down. We have been living under this guise, this idea that we have to earn our way into your good graces, that we have to earn your pleasure, your praise, and yet, God, the invitation from the sermon is simple. You already love us. We just have to receive. God, there may be some of us who for the first time are recognizing that Jesus offers us a choice to life instead of destruction, and I pray in this time of response that they would just pray a simple prayer of giving their life to Jesus and say, “I am tired of living on my own strength, my own will, my own way. I simply want to trust the Father, his provision, his goodness, and follow the way of Jesus with my life.” Father, wherever

we may be, that choice is before us. May we choose wisely. May it be revealed in the final day that we gave our lives to you, not just in word, but in how we lived our lives. It is in Christ's name we pray, amen.

This series over the last several weeks, if you today maybe made a decision to give your life to Christ for the first time, myself or elders would love to talk with you after the service today, and secondly, maybe you are feeling like the Spirit is moving in you in some way, that you want to make a decision to follow Jesus, and you want to do that through the act of baptism. We have a baptism service coming up next week. We have already done the class for it, but we will still let you get baptized. You can skip the class. That is not the prerequisite, so we would love to talk with you about that as well, so you can come and find me after the service. I just want to leave you with the final words of the Sermon on the Mount. The people had heard Jesus' teaching, and they responded in awe, and I want to read that to you: "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." Essentially what this means is that Jesus taught like someone who knew what He was talking about, who knew the path of life and what it took to get there, and they were amazed. May that be true of you. May you be amazed by the person of Jesus this week. May you choose to walk in his paths, and in that, you are released. Have a great Sunday afternoon.

43:12 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

Message #897