

Sermon on the Mount

Lesson 7 – Choices to be Made

Matthew 7:13-8:1 – Luke 6:43-49

Many have called the Sermon on the Mount an ordination message for the newly chosen twelve apostles. Though it was preached on a specific mountain at a specific time, this is a wonderful example of what Jesus taught every day! Let's sit at the feet of Jesus and learn too!

“The multitude was confronted with two diverse interpretations of what God demanded for acceptance into His presence. On the one hand was the explanation of the Pharisees and on the other was the requirement of Jesus. Christ now exhorted these people to enter the kingdom through the narrow way that He presented---by hearing His word and accepting His person.” J. Dwight Pentecost

Christ's Closing Challenge to His Listeners: Two Commands and Two Warnings

I. Enter the Narrow Gate – Two Ways, Gates, and Destinations Jesus begins His final remarks with this urgent Gospel statement!

“ Enter ye in at the strait (Lit. narrow) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad (Lit. easy, prosperous) is the way, that leadeth to destruction (Lit. eternal separation from God, hell), and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow (Lit. experience trouble, difficulty, confined, uncomfortable) is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:13-14

Broad way – This easy road holds no resistance or restrictions but is the way to eternal destruction. It's the crowded way! Here is the road most people will travel, but the travelers on this road are a very versatile group! You will find extremely religious people as well as God-haters, and everything in between. Religious travelers are self-deceived. They have fooled themselves into thinking that the easy, popular, well-traveled path is leading everyone to God. But they have missed God's way explained plainly in His Word!

Narrow way – One must go through the narrow gate in order to reach the narrow path to eternal life. It is so narrow that **few** find it! Some will carelessly pass by it, others will openly reject the gate! It is not a difficult process, but the one who would travel through the narrow gate must leave everything behind to squeeze into the narrow restrictive confines of the way. You see, there is only one way and only a **few** decide to follow it! Jesus is the Way and God enables man to find it! John 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:...” Christ tells His listeners that once the way is found, it is then a difficult, strenuous, narrow path but it leads to life everlasting! (Matt. 10:38-39; 16:24-25)

All those who have chosen the way of faith in Christ, know how difficult the narrow path can be. They find themselves outside of customs, fashions, and the conventional thinking of the world around them. Those **few** on the narrow way are comparatively unpopular with those on the broad, easy way. John 15:18-19, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Many times, in the book of Acts, the haters of God would ridicule and speak evil of “the way!” But keep in mind, just as those early Christians, self-denial, temptations to resist, and service are now the way of our narrow path. Acts 14:22 “...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

II. Beware of False Teachers – Two Trees and Fruits

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing (Lit. shepherd's clothing), but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? ¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt (Lit. diseased, infested, bad, rotten, worthless) tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know (Lit. recognize, discern) them. (“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Luke 6:45)” Matthew 7:15-20

False Teachers – Here are the leaders on the broad path! There are as many today as there were when Jesus spoke this over 2000 years ago. Matter of fact, the cry of the Old Testament prophets was also against False Teachers! There have always been blind religious leaders and teachers who lead many foolish followers the wrong way! These teachers may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong! Some will **deliberately** teach false doctrines, rejecting the Words of Life found in the Scripture, but others have **never honestly examined** the truth of Christ, and blindly believed their religious teachings and norms. Both false shepherds promote the wide gate and lead their sheep over the cliff to eternal destruction!

Jesus gives us the criteria for recognizing these false prophets!

“Wherefore by their fruits, ye shall know them.” – Fruit defined – doctrine, character, morals, lifestyle, obvious motives and attitudes, results in their disciples and ministry - The verb tense used in Greek highlights a consistency of fruit quality!

Good Tree and Fruit – Over time, the teacher of truth will have the blessings of God. Their life and ministry will reflect the truth of Christ. This is not about the size of their ministry; it is about the truth of the Gospel of Jesus! These will be humble, faithful people in word and deed!

Bad Tree and Fruit – Over time, the teacher of lies will reveal themselves as a false prophet. Their life and ministry will reflect a desire for power, gain, and control of others. They and their doctrines will be the center of their ministry not Christ! They are proud and self-seeking people in everything they do. They appear as friendly instructors in religious things, but in truth are the enemies of both God and people!

“for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” – The revealer of their evil, ignorant heart is their words! Later in Matthew 12:34, Jesus will say, “O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Identifying False Teachers: (By their words.) The Epistles are full of warnings concerning false teachers.

1. A lack of conformity to the doctrines found in the Scripture. I John 4:1-6
2. Motivated by the acceptability of the majority, a desire for money, fame, and power. 2 Peter 2:1-3
3. Minimize Christ and glorify themselves and their cause. Acts 20:29-30; Rom. 16:17-18; Col. 2:8
4. Lack of confession when their sin is confronted. Romans 8:5-8

III. Beware of False Religion – Two Professions These two professions will take place at the final judgment; one will be from the false teachers and those who believed their lies, the other from Christ Himself! Please notice the deity Jesus is verbalizing in this passage. He is telling those listeners that He is the final judge!

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,

have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, (“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Luke 6:46) I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:21-23

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not...in thy name done many wonderful works?” – The sad reality is, **many** are sincerely believing they are working and serving God and are blind to the fact they are not on the narrow way! The emphasis is on the “wonderful works” they are doing, and not on the wonderful Lord they are serving! They will one day stand before God shocked at the fact they were not really serving God at all. They had built their ideology **on their works** not **on Jesus’ work**. They had believed a lie. Eph. 2:8-9

“And why call **me** Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” – These folks had never taken the time or saw the need to check their beliefs against the truth of the Scriptures! They had believed their teachers, and they turned out to be false prophets!

“I never knew you:” – They never had the opportunity to know Jesus and He didn’t know them. No relationship with Christ.

“depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” – The broad way followers of sin will hear these words from the lips of Jesus and will be separated from Him for eternity in hell! As ugly, sad, and repulsive the truth of hell is, it is truth, and must be said! 2 Thess. 2:8-12

IV. Build your Life on Christ’s Doctrine – Two Builders and Foundations

“Therefore whosoever (“cometh to me, and” Luke 6:47) heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house (“and dug deep, and laid the foundation” Luke 6:48) upon a rock: ²⁵And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and (“the stream” Luke 6:48) beat (“vehemently” Luke 6:48) upon that house; (“and could not shake it” Luke 6:48) and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which (“without a foundation” Luke 6:49) built his house upon the sand: ²⁷And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and (“the stream did beat vehemently” Luke 6:49) upon that house; and (“immediately” Luke 6:49) it fell: and great was the fall (“and the ruin” Luke 6:49) of it.” Matthew 7:24-27

Wise Man and Rock Foundation – The foundation is Christ! “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” I Cor. 3:11 A wise man builds their life on the person of Christ, and this is done by obedience to His teachings seen first in salvation and then in a walk of obedience and faith. Some will mix Christ’s words into their own teachings, but this is not acceptable to God. Christ alone is the foundation and basis for eternal life – remember, it’s a narrow way! In staying with Jesus’ teaching on eternal destiny, the rain, wind, and flood, in this passage, would depict the final judgment. But certainly, these can be applied to life’s difficulties and the response of faith to them. Both in a life lived for Christ on earth and in the final judgment, this man’s foundation is sure, for they are built on the rock of Jesus Christ! Col. 2:6-7

Foolish Man and Sand Foundation – Jesus goes on and says a foolish man builds their hopes for eternity on anything else but the rock of Christ and obedience to His words. It is truly a foolish person who doesn’t consider the most vital and important aspect of their life, Jesus Christ! He is the foundation for life now and for life eternal. Building on a sand foundation, like that of good deeds, or religious activity, will not hold them up at the final judgment. They will hear, “why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Luke 6:46 “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:23

Response of the Listeners:

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished (Lit. buzz of amazement; swept by wonder; engulfed by amazement) at his doctrine (Lit. teaching); ²⁹ For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 8 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.” Matthew 7:28-8:1

“people were astonished at his doctrine:” – The multitude that day had never heard anything like this before. Don’t miss, this amazement and buzz was about His teachings and the authority of Christ’s words!

“one having authority, and not as the scribes.” – The normal teachings of the Rabbis were based on the second-hand rehashing of other teachers and rabbis. The Religious Leaders had long before left off teaching truths and giving principles found in the Scriptures. Jesus was the Word; He was full of grace and truth (John 1:1, 14, 17) and He delivered it with full authority calling for commitment and change!

“great multitudes followed him.” – As chapter 8 of Matthew opens, no wonder great multitudes were following him! We will see thousands sit at His feet for days at a time, even neglecting the need for food. Every day they would hear messages like the Sermon on the Mount and be amazed at His words. But please know, Christ always called for commitment to Him and His words. Jesus would often end the same way, “deny yourself, and follow me.”

What is our response?

1. Astonished at His doctrine? Do you see the truth of His words? Is your heart thrilled with His doctrine? Do you have the Holy Spirit within you that stirs your heart as you see the principles of Christ revealed? Have you chosen to be a Faithful Follower of Jesus?
2. Recognize His authority? Do you agree with Jesus? Do you recognize that He is your Way, your Truth, and your Life? Have you submitted to His rightful position as Lord, Leader, and Master of your life? When Jesus taught that life’s foundation must be built on His words, have you acted on it? Have you sought to learn His truths with a heart to obey? Have you chosen to be a Faithful Follower of Jesus?
3. Follow Him also? Have you ever committed to following Christ? Have you found the narrow gate that starts you on the narrow way to life eternal? Have you chosen to be a Faithful Follower of Jesus?

*“As you immerse, soak up, and cleanse yourself in the works and words of Christ,
His light will shine brighter through your life! Your defaults will begin to change to His ways,
and your worship, relationships, and faith will honor Him!
BUT this action of the Holy Spirit can only be done as you are open and obedient to Him.”*

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly** in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And **whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,** giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”
-Colossians 3:15-17