



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT • ENTERING THE KINGDOM •

MATTHEW 7:13-27 • 11/13/2022

MAIN POINT

Because the path to the kingdom is so narrow, we must be careful who we follow to get there.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Think of a time when you were faced with a tough decision between right and wrong, but chose to do what you knew was wrong. In what way was it the easier choice of the two? What were the consequences?

Now think of a time when you were faced with a similar decision, but chose to do what you knew was right. In what way was that choice more difficult? What were the rewards of doing so?

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount builds to the climactic ending of chapter 7, when He challenged His listeners to make a choice—would they follow Him through the narrow gate into the kingdom, or would they choose the second path of a wide gate that many enter, but that leads to ultimate destruction?

UNDERSTANDING

READ MATTHEW 7:15-20.

Are false prophets still present today? If so, what danger do they pose? How should followers of Jesus respond to them?

How do you spot false teachers? If they are so dangerous, why are we tempted to follow them instead of Jesus?

Jesus compares false prophets to wolves disguised as sheep. Jesus often referred to His followers as sheep, noting that He, as the Shepherd, looks out for His sheep and protects them from predators. False teachers are particularly cunning predators because they pretend to be just another sheep as they seek to destroy the flock. Jesus transitions from the metaphor of sheep to one of fruit trees to address the content of false teaching. Good teaching comes from a good tree, but bad teaching come from a bad tree. False teachers are a dangerous thing in the church. They not only lead astray those who would seek to faithfully follow Jesus, but also those who are seeking God for the first time. The quickest way to spot false teachers is by the quality of the “fruit” they produce (see vv. 16-20).

What are some of the most tempting but dangerous false teachings about Jesus and Christianity today? In what ways might they represent the

“wider,” easier path of belief for our generation?

Why do you think Jesus chose the metaphors in verses 16–17 to describe false prophets? What do these images reveal about the seriousness of false teaching?

What did Jesus mean by “fruit”? Think back over our study on what it means to follow Jesus thus far. What are some key characteristics of good fruit?

READ MATTHEW 7:21–23.

What stands out to you about Jesus’ words in verses 21–23? What does Jesus mean by “doing the will of My Father” (v. 21)?

What were these people substituting for their relationship with Christ (v. 22)? Why isn’t having correct doctrine or effective ministries alone enough?

Why will Jesus deny knowing people on Judgment Day—even those who believed they knew Him? What emphasis does this place on knowing and holding onto concrete truths, such as Scripture, to ensure we are following the true Jesus, rather than a concept of Jesus that seems more comfortable or convenient?

What are the outward marks of Christianity we consider important today? Could a person do those things and still not be known by Jesus?

Many people profess to be Christians, but their actions and attitudes deny any real relationship with Jesus Christ. For those who have never experienced genuine salvation and surrender, Jesus’ words are not “I no longer know you,” but “I never

knew you.” There was never a relationship to begin with. The tragedy is that a time of final judgment will come when entering that relationship is no longer possible. Sadly, many people who assume they are saved are lost (v. 22). This includes all false prophets and all whose Christianity is superficial. “I never knew you!” supplies the reason (v. 23). The only way to know Jesus personally is to yield our hearts to Him by faith—that is, to make Him Lord of our lives. Anything less is mere religious ritual or activity.

READ MATTHEW 7:24-27.

How is obedience in relationship with Jesus similar to building on a solid foundation? What kind of storms can it brave?

What does “obedience” look like that if it does not come from an authentic relationship with Jesus? Why are our motives for obedience so important?

Jesus only lists two outcomes in this parable. Why is there no middle ground? How is following Jesus, as a foundation for our lives, either an all-or-nothing decision?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What can you do this week to start living in light of the gospel of grace, rather than trying to justify yourself through works? How should this genuine love and trust inspire good works in return?

How can you ensure you build your life on the solid foundation of Jesus' truth?

PRAYER

Pray for the discernment and perseverance it takes to follow Jesus on the narrow road that leads to life as you close your group.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 7:15-27

7:16. What defenses do believers have? How can we be aware of these deceitful wolves in sheep's clothing? You'll recognize them by their fruit. Grammatically, the questions Jesus asked could be translated, "Men don't gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles, do they?" The answer, of course, is no.

7:17-18. Jesus continued, In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. God's Word clearly distinguishes between good and evil behavior, godly and ungodly practices, doing good to glorify God and doing good to glorify self. False teachers thrive on recognition and praise while pretending humility. They often explain away sinful behavior as being acceptable or as making no difference because Jesus already died for it. They misuse Scripture, as the Devil did with Jesus during the temptations in the wilderness. They take God's Word out of context and make it mean what God never intended.

7:19-20. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. A gardener who had a fruit tree that didn't produce would use the tree for firewood. Why should it use up the resources of soil and rain and take up space that could be used for a productive tree? Jesus probably was referring to the judgment coming at the end of the age, when He will separate the sheep from the wolves. He concluded, "So you'll recognize them by their fruit."

Many who profess Christ are pretending, masquerading as Christians. Others who profess Christ are genuine, the "right stuff." How can they be distinguished? Jesus pointed to outward behavior as the telltale sign. Like inspecting vegetation, one can look for good fruit or bad fruit. Good fruit refers to actions such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control (see Gal. 5:23). A person who is a true believer will lead others to faith in Christ, will lovingly restore believers who have been overtaken in sin, and will ultimately glorify both Christ and the Father in heaven. Bad fruit refers to actions such as sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry (greed), sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, and carousing (see Gal. 5:19-21).

7:21. Jesus had a strong word for people who pay Him lip service by calling Him Lord when He is not really their Lord at all. The word says could be translated "continuously says," indicating a persistent practice. The one who will enter the kingdom of heaven is not the one who repeatedly says Lord, Lord! to Jesus or about Him, but the one who does the will of the Father in heaven.

Jesus was not saying a person is saved by living according to God's will. We are saved by grace through faith. Faith that saves, however, is faith that works to do God's will. We who are saved do good works because we are saved, not to become saved. Good works are a means by which we say "thank you" to God and demonstrate to the world the sincerity of our faith. In other words, good works are useless as a means of salvation, but they are most useful as evidence of salvation. If we attempt to earn our salvation through good works, we are saying in effect that we do not need Christ and implying that He died for nothing.

7:22-23. On that day refers to the day of judgment. Jesus continued, Many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?' The Greek grammar indicates that each of these questions is to be understood in the sense of "We prophesied, drove out

demons, and did miracles in Your name, didn't we?" The questions require affirmative answers. Coming in the context of recognizing false prophets by their fruit, what comes next is surprising. One would think that preaching, driving out demons, and doing miracles would be evidence of faith in Jesus Christ. The ones asking such questions will think they are saved. The problem is, the Judge won't think so. He will know that they never entered into a personal relationship with Him by faith.

Clearly, those speaking will have been active in religious work. How are we to understand their claims of effective Christian service? Jesus did not dispute their claims, so perhaps God in His grace worked in spite of them rather than through them. Also, we know that signs and wonders can be faked or produced by demonic powers (see Acts 19:13-16; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; Rev. 13:13-14).

The point Jesus made is that He never was the religious workers' Lord. They may have done some good things, but as far as God's law is concerned, they were lawbreakers. As will be true of all who have not accepted Jesus Christ by faith to be their Lord, they will hear Him say I never knew you! Depart from Me. Those words expose the heart of their problem; they didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus, even though they did many things in His name.

7:24-27. The first man was wise; the second man was foolish. The first man found stability and blessing in this life and in eternity; the second experienced calamity in this life and in eternity (the rain, floods, and winds can represent both hardships in this life and God's final judgment). Notice that wisdom (the rock) means to put the words of Jesus into practice.