

Sunday, October 6, 2019

This sermon is the 10<sup>th</sup> and final sermon in a series of sermons I've been doing on the "Sermon on the Mount" found in Matthew 5-7. Below, I've included the high-level summary I've been using, along with the dates of and links to the previous nine.

1. Our essential characteristics (what we are) – vv. 5:3-12 ([9/2/18](#) and [9/9/18](#))
2. Our function in the world – vv. 5:13-16 ([11/18/18](#))
3. Our relationship to the law – vv. 5:17-48 ([1/13/19](#) and [1/20/19](#))
4. Our religious life – vv. 6:1-18 ([3/31/19](#))
5. Our mundane life – vv. 6:19-34 ([6/9/19](#))
6. Our relationship to other people – vv. 7:1-12 ([7/28/19](#))
7. **Being doers and not hearers only – vv. 7:13-27** ([9/29/19](#) and today)

As mentioned last week, we are now in the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus begins with a command to enter in at the strait gate. The strait gate and narrow way lead to life, and few find it. The wide gate and broad way lead to destruction, and many go there. He follows that up with the two main hindrances to entering in at the strait gate, namely, false prophets and self-deception. He ends the entire sermon up with a metaphor of two men and two houses. As you'll recall, I went over the strait gate and narrow way plus false prophets last week, and I intend to go over the remainder today. And really, today's text can be summed up with one word: obedience.

**“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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:21-27)**

I find Matthew 7:21-23 to be the most terrifying passage in all the Bible. I sometimes read this and I can't help but think, "is He talking about me here?" While this passage can certainly be applied to other people (and SHOULD be applied to other people when warranted), I think the primary application should be towards ourselves. In fact, as a general rule, always apply it to yourself first, and then you'll be in the proper spirit to apply it to others. I said last week that if

you get nothing else out of that sermon, get this: examine yourselves. If you're not examining yourselves, whether you be in the faith, then you've become complacent. You've probably reached the place where you take the grace of God and salvation for granted, and just assume that you're entitled to it. That's a dangerous place to be. That's the pit, I believe, that these people in verses 21-23 have permanently fallen into.

This little passage of scripture is all about people who identify themselves as Christians. We're not talking about atheists, or Moslems, or Buddhists, or any other religion here – they're already clearly on the broad way. No, these are "Christians." These are people who think that they're on the narrow way but are really on the broad way. These are people who believe that all is well between them and God, but it is not. I don't know how it could be any clearer than Jesus makes it in this passage – not only are most human beings going to hell, but most people who claim to be Christians are going to hell. This is one of the weightiest and most sobering passages in all Holy Writ.

The passage starts off teaching us that it's not enough to say; you have to do. These are people who say "Lord, Lord." They see Him and they recognize that He is the Lord God. But as I once heard someone say, all that does is qualify you to be a devil:

**"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."  
(James 2:19)**

But they just don't believe that He's God...they speak about Him with respect and admiration, and it seems that they're rather zealous about it (like in Romans 10:2). There's some emotion here. They don't just say, "Lord." They say, "Lord, Lord." When a name in scripture is doubled, it intensifies it, and the reason is because there's a close relationship there. Like "Abraham, Abraham" ... "Jacob, Jacob" ... "Moses, Moses" ... "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" ... "My God, My God" ... "Martha, Martha" ... "Simon, Simon." These self-deceived people actually believe that they have a close relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, please don't get out of this that one of the hallmarks of self-deceit is referring to Jesus as "Lord." We're SUPPOSED to refer to Him as Lord. We're supposed to confess His name. 1 Corinthians 12:3 tells us that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (In other words, if the Holy Ghost hasn't done His regenerating work, you can't say He is Lord in faith and in love for Him). As adopted sons of the Father, and as the Bride of Christ, we're supposed to have a close relationship and be in close communion with Christ.

**"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth**

**unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10)**

Everyone who is truly saved will say that He is “Lord,” but not everyone who says “Lord” is truly saved. Lots of people honor Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him (Isaiah 29:13), and they live lives of disobedience (Luke 6:46 – “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”). What you say must be backed up by what you do. A confession of Christ as Lord must be accompanied by a life of obedience. Otherwise, it’s empty, vain talk. Martin Luther once said, “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.” In other words, if you’re really saved, your faith will be accompanied by doing the will of the Father. And of course, this is the teaching of the Bible. For example:

**“Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17)**

So, we have one group of people calling Him “Lord, Lord” who don’t live obedient lives. But there’s another group of people who call Him “Lord, Lord,” and these are the ones who engage in a lot of religious activity. These are people who have devoted some considerable part of their lives to Christ (at least their version of Christ). They are so sure that they’re saved by their works, that they’re shocked on the Judgment Day. You’ll note here that they don’t say one word about the work that Christ did – it’s all about their work. And they can’t believe that they’re not going to heaven. “But Lord, don’t you recognize us? We’re your people! We’re the ones who did everything in your name! Look at all our great works! We did it all for you!” I imagine they are feeling the same way the people outside the ark felt in Noah’s day, and the five foolish virgins crying, “Lord, Lord, open to us!” (Matthew 25:11) after the door was shut.

The three examples given are prophecy, casting out devils, and doing many wonderful works (miracles). These types of activities would have been familiar to His listeners. Just because a person does something in the name of God doesn’t mean that that person is saved. Think of Balaam, or Saul, or Caiaphas – all of whom prophesied. Christ’s disciples were involved in all three of these things...including Judas. But I don’t think Christ’s point here is to provide an exhaustive list of religious activities – it seems like more of a representative sample. I believe that the message here is that these people did a lot of works “in thy name,” and they thought that they’d go to heaven for it.

And then comes those awful words: “I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” He will declare openly that He never knew them. Never knew them! He doesn’t say, “I used to know you, but you’ve changed...I just don’t know you anymore.” It doesn’t mean He didn’t have information about them. It doesn’t mean He was unaware of their existence. In that sense, He has perfect knowledge of them and everyone

else – He knows every thought, every action, every word, etc. No, this means that He never had an intimate relationship with them. He never loved them. He always hated them (Psalm 5:5). Yes, from eternity past, there was never a time that He loved them with that special love reserved exclusively for His elect (“The Lord knoweth them that are His” – 2 Timothy 2:19); they were always the objects of His wrath and hatred. He tells them that all these works that were supposedly done in His name were nothing less than works of iniquity. Why? Because they never did anything out of a true love for and faith in God. They did it for their own benefit and pleasure, but not to please God.

**“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” (Titus 1:16)**

Let’s get something straight here. I told you last time that salvation is personal. Repentance is personal. Faith is personal. You’re saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and that is a gift of God. Not emotions. Not feelings. Not words. Not being baptized. Not turning over a new leaf. Not being a member of a church. Not singing hymns. Not immersing yourself in religious activities. Not preaching to other people. Not partaking in the Lord’s Supper. Not praying. Only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Any work that comes from that is a good work. Any work that does not come from that is iniquity. Jesus calls them “ye that work iniquity.” It is in the present tense. Even as they stand before the Great White Throne, pleading their case, they are at that very time working iniquity. They spent their lives working iniquity, they continue working iniquity at the Judgment Seat, and they will never stop working iniquity through eternity in Hell.

Christ ends the sermon with a metaphor of two men, two houses, and two very different outcomes. It is the picture of the true Christian vs. the fake Christian. Imagine two houses that look the same and are built right next door to each other. The fool’s house is a masterful counterfeit, but you can’t tell without careful examination. They hang around in the same place, they listen to the same preaching, they both appear to like it, they have similar outlooks on life, they are interested in the same activities, etc. Everything looks the same on the outside. It’s just that the most important thing is different – the foundation. One actually has a foundation and is built on a rock; the other is built on sand. One desires to know and love and obey God, and hungers and thirsts after righteousness; the other likes to have the benefits and blessings of being a Christian, without the obedience. Sometimes, like the wheat and the tares, it might take a long time to figure out that that foolish man’s house is built on sand. Sometimes you don’t see it until the storm comes.

We might learn a few things by how these two guys built their houses. According to the Luke account, the wise man “dug deep, and laid the foundation on a rock.” (Luke 6:48). Yes, he

digged deep. He took it seriously. He was patient. He understood that if he didn't have the foundation right, nothing was right. This is deep repentance, deep prayer, deep humility, deep poverty of spirit, deep love of God and His Word, etc. And it's built on a rock that's not going anywhere. What is the rock? Jesus Christ is our foundation. He is our chief cornerstone. We are talking about Jesus Christ, His word and His righteousness. Anyone who has Him as their foundation will be attentive to and obedient to His sayings. My beloved friends, if something is wrong with you, go back and check the foundation.

**“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11)**

**“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” (Isaiah 28:16)**

The fool, though, didn't want to follow the rules. He wanted what he wanted, and he wanted it now. Nobody tells Mr. Fool what to do or how to do it! He'll do it his own way. He doesn't have any need for following rules, listening to instruction, thinking things through, looking forward to potential danger, etc. He picks and chooses the things that are pleasing to his flesh – he likes to think that he's forgiven, that heaven awaits him, that God loves him. He just doesn't want to bother with obedience to Christ, because he has more important things to do. He's like Balaam, who wanted to enjoy the death of the righteous, but didn't want to live the life of the righteous. (“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” – Numbers 23:10).

The storms of divine judgment and/or chastening will come, and it will only be those who are obedient to Christ out of love for Him that will remain standing. The metaphor is rain descending, floods coming, and winds blowing, and at least one of the messages is that it comes from all directions – from above, from below, from the sides. And I think that another one of the messages is that it is the same storm that beats on both houses – one house remains, and the other falls. There is a little nuance in the Greek that you don't see in the English translation. Our translation says that the storm “beat upon” the house. The word translated “beat upon” regarding the wise man's house is “prospipto” which means “to fall towards, prostrate oneself in supplication or homage, to violently rush upon.” It's the same word as in Luke 5:8 where Peter “fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” The word translated “beat upon” regarding the foolish man's house is “proskopto” which means “to strike, surge upon, trip up, stumble at.” It's the same word as in 1 Peter 2:8 where it describes those “which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” It's no accident that He chose these different words here. The storms that come at the wise man cause him to fall on his knees in humility and

prayer before God. The storms that come at the foolish man cause him to stumble and fall; his false religions is of no value in his greatest hour of need.

So, we have self-deceived people who are trusting in their words, trusting in their works, trusting in their shifting foundation of sand, but not trusting in God. The thing about self-deception is, if you're in the middle of deluding yourself, then by its very nature, you won't realize that you're self-deceived. That is, of course, unless and until something happens that causes you to realize it. So, if anyone here is in that state, I hope this sermon causes you to realize it.

### **Indicators of self-deception and a house built on sand**

1. **Mistaking a past event or a feeling for salvation.** I'm talking about things that have happened in the past, like a profession of faith, or baptism, or a strong emotion you once had, or a "religious experience." And I'm not discounting these things. Those are important and necessary things. But if they aren't coupled with a present life of obedience and desire to serve God, those things cannot be relied on as any indication that you're saved. You can't say, "I made a profession of faith in Christ and got baptized when I was a kid, so even though I proudly disobey God now, I'm still saved. After all, the Bible says if you say you believe on the Lord Jesus then you're saved, and once saved, always saved." No. You've either backslidden into gross sin, or you were never saved in the first place. You can't substitute some vague, general feeling that you're saved for obedience.
2. **Mistaking church membership and activities for salvation.** Again, I'm not saying there's something wrong with being a member of the church – it is absolutely necessary for God's people to be members in a local church. But being a member in a church doesn't necessarily mean you're saved. Church membership can turn into a false assurance. It may just be safe and comfortable to you. You might like the people, the songs, the activities. You might like the social aspect. You may have a history, and it's more convenient to just stay where you are. It may make you feel holy. "I like to go to church, so I must be saved." These types of people love talking about the church, and the activities of the church, and the people...but if you try to talk to them about their souls or about the Lord, they become eerily silent. You may be so involved and over-busy with activities in the church that you have neglected your own soul.
3. **Mistaking morality for salvation.** I will make it clear again that living a moral life is essential for a Christian – you can't say you're a Christian and continue to live an impenitent life of sin. But having some morals, and living by those, is not the same as being saved. This is how the Pharisees lived – they thought since they didn't commit

murder, or perjury, or adultery, that they were saved. One of the main points of the sermon on the mount, in fact, is that those people who thought they were saved by their own morality were not, in fact, saved. We see this all the time – people may be disgusted that fornication, and divorce, and homosexuality, and transgenderism, etc., are so accepted and promoted in our society. They know that what the Bible teaches on moral living is right. They talk a lot about “returning to Christian values” and such. They’re not happy with where the country is headed. They’re always front and center with this or that political or social cause. And because of all that, they think that they must be aligned with us, since we preach against sin. There’s just one problem with that – they don’t love Jesus Christ, and when they find that we have built our house on Him, and that we insist that anyone in our church hear and obey His sayings, they don’t want to have any more to do with us.

4. Justifying and minimizing sin. You are in a bad place if scripture convicts you of your sin, and instead of agreeing that what it says is true, you try to justify the sin, explain how you’re really not doing what you’re clearly doing, or excuse yourself as if you’re the exception to the rule. You may be too swelled up with pride to admit that you are a depraved creature. You may be too self-righteous to admit that your righteousness is filthy rags. You may think so highly of yourself that you believe that your good works outweigh your bad works. You may be a hypocrite, where you can’t wait for this sermon to end so you can go back to your sins. You may see things in other people that you refuse to see in yourself. Conversely, others may see things in you that you refuse to admit, and in fact become enraged when it is pointed out to you.

You may compare yourself to other people and take comfort in the fact that you’re not as bad as they are. You may compare your sins to other sins and rest in the fact that those sins that you are particularly disposed to aren’t as bad as other sins. You may have a perverse view of grace, where you think it’s owed to you, or that your sins are ok because of grace. You might sin, and quickly get over it with no remorse, because of your low view of the grace of God, and your despising of the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering (Romans 2:4). You may have a false sense of forgiveness and peace in your heart, as you continue unabated in your sin. If you are not broken over your sins, if you are so hardened that you sin without concern, there is something terribly wrong with you.

5. Giving only intellectual assent. You must give intellectual assent to the truth of God, because how can you say you believe something if you don’t know what it is that you believe? But if that’s all it is, and it’s only academic to you, you have deceived yourself into believing you’re saved. People can hear the Bible, love it, defend it, preach it, be enthused about it, and still go to hell. The fact is, it may just be interesting to you.

Theology might just be another ology to you. A person can know facts about God, but not know God. For example, a person who really likes to reason and debate might be drawn to the religion because it gives them something to reason and debate about. It gives them great satisfaction to search the scriptures for the purpose of harvesting debate points. Or, as another example, a person might be obsessed with a particular point of theology, just because it's interesting to them...but they stay away from those parts of the scripture that they don't like. Meanwhile, they don't love God, they live in disobedience to Him, and make shipwreck of themselves and everyone around them.

Now, I'm not saying we shouldn't study the scriptures - the scriptures must be studied, but not just for the sake of studying them. They should be studied with an eye towards feeding us and bringing us closer to God. Every time you read the Bible, the end of that should be, "how do I apply this to myself?" If you find yourself reading it just because it scratches your itch of curiosity, but you have no interest in applying it to yourself, it's time to step back and reexamine your foundation.

6. Refusal to examine yourself. You must hold your own self up to the standard of the Bible. And when you scrutinize your works, you must examine your motives – you know what your true motives are. But many refuse to examine themselves in the light of the Word, and rather judge themselves by the standards of the world. Such people are often offended when they are exhorted to examine themselves, because how they feel about themselves is more important to them than what God says about them. You may not feel like you're a liar, for example, but God says you are: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar." (1 John 2:4).
7. Interest in the results of faith and the means of salvation, but not in the Savior. This is when people don't actually have faith in Christ but do have an undue interest in the things surrounding such a faith. Like exalted feelings, joy, happiness, blessings, miracles, angels, healings, or as one commentator said, "sparks of understanding." None of those are bad things, but they are only a means to an end, and the end should be to know and love God more fervently! This is the person who loves God's blessings but doesn't love God. If you get so caught up in the means and the by-products of grace that they blind the Savior from your eyes, you're in trouble. Remember that at the end of the day, the one thing that matters is, are you in a right relationship with Christ? It will be Christ who is the Judge. It will be Christ who is the one to say, "Depart from me. I never knew you." It is what Christ thinks of you that matters.
8. Selfishness. The selfish person is the one who works God into his busy schedule, when it's convenient for him. They do the things that they want to do. Their lives aren't governed by love for Christ and focus on those things that are above, but rather, "what's



in it for me?” They view God as someone who exists to give them what they want. Christ is seen as more of an accessory to tack onto their existing life, rather than being the center of a new life, which He ought to be.

9. Disinterest in and/or hostility toward the Word. These are the people who want to call themselves Christians but have little interest in what Christ has to say to them. Remember, the Bible is God’s message to you. It is Him talking to you. It is highly offensive to God to treat His Word with contempt. These types of people have no interest in pursuing the truth or in having a deep understanding of the doctrines of salvation and grace. They like to keep it superficial and trivial, with just enough understanding to fly under the radar. And not only is it a disinterest, it’s a hostility. If you don’t know and love the scripture, when part of it goes against your flesh, you become irritated. You might think it’s too restrictive or forces you to behave against your true interests. Or you become impatient to receive its instruction – it’s just too much trouble and effort. You betray your true interests when you open your mouth. If you want to know what’s really important to someone, listen to them talk for a period of time. If you don’t ever hear any spiritual talk coming out of their mouths, that person probably doesn’t have a whole lot of interest in the Word of God. If you’re worried that this is you, it would be a wise thing to have a trusted friend in Christ examine you.
  
10. Hatred or hostility toward the people of God. Often this will simmer under the surface, hidden by over-the-top and insincere niceness, but then burst out in unguarded moments. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” (1 John 4:20-21). Self-deceived people hate the people of God because they hate God.

To help with self-examination, you might ask yourself the following questions: Does your love for God govern and control your life and the actual decisions you make (not your hypothetical decisions – but your actual decisions)? Are you growing in grace (2 Peter 3:18)? Do you know and love God more and more (Philippians 3:10)? Do you possess the fruit of the Spirit, and is that manifesting itself more and more with each passing day (Galatians 5:22-23)? Do you have a desire to be like Christ, and are you actually becoming more and more like Him (1 John 2:6)? Do you resent and bristle at the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount? Do you hate being examined (Psalm 26:2)? Are you a forgetful hearer (James 1:25)? Is your ambition to live in obedience to Christ and His Word? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Do you bemoan your failure to live according to God’s standards? Could you truly say, with Paul, “I

have fought a good fight...I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7)? Can you truly say, with Paul, that to depart and be with Christ is far better (Philippians 1:23)?

The Sermon on the Mount is of no value to you if you don't do what it says. Unless you are desiring and striving to practice (and actually practicing) its teachings, you have no business claiming to be in the kingdom of God.

**"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as [one] having authority, and not as the scribes."  
(Matthew 7:28-29)**

To conclude, remember who uttered the words of this sermon on the mount. This isn't just some story that someone wrote down in a book – this is an event that actually happened. Jesus really did deliver this sermon on a mountain, and the impact it had on the people can't be minimized – they were astonished! "Who is this speaking these words? Who does this guy think He is? He doesn't speak like anyone else – He speaks on His own authority."

This sermon isn't just a practical set of morals and ethics – it points us to the Savior. The teaching will be of no value to you if you're not right with Christ. Let's review, very briefly, what He said about Himself. He is the One that the law and the prophets spoke of, and is the One for whose sake the people in the kingdom will suffer persecution. He said, "I am come to..." He did not say "I was born to..." He came from somewhere else. Where? Eternity, Heaven, Glory, His Father (John 17:5). And what did He come to do? To fulfill all that was spoken of Him in the law and prophets. He came as Savior. He came to live a sinless life. He came to satisfy all the demands of the law. He declared Himself as the lawgiver when He said, "But I say unto you..." He gave the original law, and therefore is the only one who has the authority to properly interpret it. He tells us that if you don't obey "these sayings of mine" you will go to Hell. He declares Himself to be "Lord" when He says that they will say unto Him "Lord, Lord." He declares Himself to be Judge when He says, "I never knew you: depart from me." It's as if He said, "Do you have any idea who's talking to you here? I am Jehovah. I am laying down the eternal standards of God. If you don't keep these sayings of mine, you will go to Hell, and I will be the one to send you there."

He has shown us how futile our own efforts to save ourselves are. The beatitudes are quite beyond our own abilities and require a supernatural rebirth. We cannot become the light of the world unless the true light of the world imparts His nature to us. He came to fulfill the law on our behalf. He came to suffer the punishment on our behalf. And He is the strait gate that we must enter in. I love you. Amen.