

Intro

The gospel demands a response. It isn't enough to hear what Jesus says. It isn't enough to be interested in what Jesus says. It isn't enough to understand what Jesus is saying. It isn't enough to agree with what Jesus says. If we don't act on Jesus' teaching we remain in our sins.

It's kind of like our health. You can go to the doctor. They can reveal your condition. They can explain exactly what's wrong. They can construct a solution for you. Maybe it's taking a certain pill daily, eliminating something from your diet, adding something to your diet, and suggesting a form of exercise. Maybe it's resting an overworked body part.

It's great to know the solution, but the solution's worthless if you don't act on it. If you're too lazy to go to the pharmacy and get the medication. If you're unwilling to cut things out of your diet. If you're unwilling to eat healthy. If you're unwilling to exercise. If you're unwilling to rest, the doctor's orders are fruitless.

Likewise Jesus' promises profit us nothing unless we act on them. This morning Jesus tells us...

BIG IDEA: Be a doer not a hearer

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Passage Focus

Having discussed the nature of kingdom righteousness, Jesus calls us to follow him...

Point 1: Choose the path of life (7:13-14)

Explanation

Jesus commands us: "enter by the narrow gate." Then he lays out two options. You choose an entry way, it puts you on a path, the path leads to a destination.

The wide gate is the easy way. Easy in that it is broad and spacious and comfortable and not constricting. But the wide gate leads to destruction. Eternal ruin, hell is the final destination of the easy path. Hell is described as a place of eternal conscious torment. A place of weeping and gnashing of teeth that goes on forever. A place to be avoided at all costs. Hell is severe because of the severity of the offense. When we sin, we break the moral law of the infinitely holy God who cannot dwell with evil (Ps 5:4). Many choose the wide gate.

On the other hand, the narrow gate is hard. Hard in that it's narrow and constrictive and it squeezes a person. The word translated "hard" is commonly used to describe persecution. In Acts 14:22, it's said "that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

But the destination of the hard way is life. One day Christ will return, raise his people to sinless, imperishable bodies, establish his eternal kingdom, and dwell with his people forever. The path to eternal pleasures is hard. "And those who find it are few." The wide gate is simply entered, but the narrow gate is found. But only few choose the narrow gate. Following Jesus is the exception, not the norm. As believers we find ourselves in the minority.

Application

There's two options. The easy path to eternal destruction. Or the hard path to eternal life. There's only two paths: following Jesus and everything else. Whether it's pursuing fame, leisure, wealth, power, sensuality, social justice, or the world's religions, every path that ignores Jesus is the wide gate.

The way to heaven is narrow and only through Jesus.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The way to salvation is narrow and only through Jesus.

Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Jesus says forsake ease. Forsake the common path. Avoid hell.

Jesus says embrace difficulty. Embrace persecution. Embrace ostracism. Attain heaven.

The broad way is inviting: it's easy, you can do whatever you want, you can fit in with everyone else, you can go along with public opinion, you don't have to face persecution. But it's end is hell.

The narrow way is alarming: it's hard, you give up your autonomy, you don't fit in, you get persecuted, you can't go along with the prevailing morality of the day. But it's end is heaven.

Following Jesus makes life difficult. We're tempted to take the easy path. But following Jesus is the only path to life. Jesus says consider where your path will take you.

Point 2: Choose your spiritual sources wisely (7:15-20)

Explanation

Given there are two gates, one leading to destruction, Jesus warns us about following dangerous guides. False prophets likely means false teachers, like the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus says three things about false teachers. First, they're misleading. They appear devoted to God (sheep's clothing), but inwardly they're corrupt (ravenous wolves).

Second, Jesus says you can recognize false teachers by their fruits. By their behavior. Trees don't produce what they're not. Thorn bushes don't produce grapes, and thistles don't produce figs. Likewise, false teachers don't produce spiritual fruit. They're discovered by their conduct.

Third, false teachers end up in hell. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." In the analogy, false teachers are the bad trees. The warning is this: if we embrace false teachers and follow them we'll be judged with them. Avoid them!

How can we identify false teachers?

Jesus says **their fruits** give them away. But we need to think beyond external behavior. If we've learned anything from the Sermon on the Mount, we've learned that kingdom righteousness is internal. The beatitudes reveal how the Christian faith is a heart response to God, to others, to our sin, to our circumstances. Our motive behind giving, praying, and fasting is critical. And the fruits of the Spirit reveal fruit involves character.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

For example, the person with spiritual fruit is characterized by love (they're not hateful), joy (they're not a complainer), patience (they endure trials, persecution, etc. well), self-control (under pressure they don't explode). While false teachers might be able to fool us for a time, their sin, or lack of character, will show itself. Circumstances have a unique way of revealing what's inside us.

Their false doctrine gives them away. Maybe they deny the existence of hell, salvation in Christ alone, the deity of Christ, etc. I'm not talking about the relatively new Christian who hasn't put all their doctrine together. I'm talking about the person who seeks a teaching role in the church.

Their lack of doctrine gives them away. If they leave out God's holiness, sin, hell, salvation through Christ alone, repentance, etc., they're not committed to the Christian faith.

In Jesus' day the threat was the scribes and Pharisees. In the early church the threat was false teachers invading local churches. That threat remains today. We safeguard ourselves with our church membership process. For membership we require affirmation of our doctrinal statement and we conduct a membership interview to ensure our members are born again. If we let a stranger waltz in and immediately start teaching Sunday School for example, we would be disregarding Jesus' warning.

While it's possible a false teacher could infiltrate our body, I'm more anxious about what you hear on the internet and TV. I'm not talking about David Jeremiah or Allister Begg or other legitimate radio preachers on Christian radio. I'm talking about preachers on the television. Preachers who emphasize healing and wealth while never proclaiming the gospel. They leave out faith in Christ alone, repentance, substitutionary atonement (big words for Jesus died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins), and sanctification (big word for maturing in the Christian faith). They demand your money with no concern for your commitment to Jesus or advancement in the faith.

I'm also concerned with the internet. What I call the internet crusader. That person who's left the local church himself because nothing meets his stand. The one who repeatedly attacks credible ministries. Well, how can we evaluate internet bloggers?

- 1) Are they endorsed by reputable ministries?
- 2) Are they connected to a local church? Are they a member in good standing at a healthy local church? Do they have elders they submit to?
- 3) Do they advocate bizarre doctrines?
- 4) What is their mission? What is their end goal?
- 5) What is their fruit?
- 6) How are they contributing the spread of the gospel to the nations?
- 7) How are they contributing to the spiritual health of local churches?
- 8) How are they helping the individual believer to mature in the faith?
- 9) Is there any negative fruit? Are they causing division?
- 10) Are they attacking gifted teachers with credible character that God has given to the church?

Beware of TV and the internet. False teachers abound. Any questions about someone. Ask me.

Point 3: Give Jesus your life not lip service (7:21-23)

Explanation

Claiming devotion to Jesus won't get you into the kingdom of heaven. But obeying the Father will get you in.

When Jesus returns and people stand before him at the final judgment, some will call him Lord while appealing to their works (prophecy, casting out demons, miracles), but he will reject them: "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." Some people think they're saved when they're not. And they won't find out until the final judgment.

MAKE THIS REAL (imagine a loved one)

Don't want this to be any of us at the final judgment. We need to get conversion right.

Jesus says he never knew these people. He knew who they were. He knew facts about them. But he never knew them relationally. They were never his people. They were never believers. They were never saved. But they did great things.

You're probably asking, "how this is possible?" The simple answer is these unbelievers must have done these miracles by Satan's power. In the Exodus account, Pharaoh's wise men were able to replicate some of Moses' miracles (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7). In **Matthew 24:24**, "false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders." In **2 Thessalonians 2:9**, "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders." Satan can work miracles. This is what was going on.

The flip side is that the people Jesus knows do the Father's will. Hearing alone is useless. Jesus says you can't enter his kingdom unless you obey the Father. Jesus assumes works and faith are inseparable, much like James: "faith apart from works is dead (Jas 2:26)." Faith works.

D. A. Carson puts it well:

"It is true, of course, that no man enters the kingdom of God because of his obedience; but it is equally true that no man enters the kingdom who is not obedient. It is true that men are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ; but it is equally true that God's grace in a man's life inevitably results in obedience."

Again, works are a consequence of our salvation, not the cause of our salvation. We are saved through faith alone. Jesus took our punishment and his righteousness is credited to our account through faith. But obedience implies faith. It's faith that drives obedience. No one can obey Jesus without faith.

Romans 14:23 For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Faith works because trusting in God's promises we act on them, and because we have newness of life through the Holy Spirit we're empowered to obey Jesus. We could never obey Jesus without the Spirit. As Augustine put it:

"Give me the grace to do as you command, and command me to do what you will!"

And faith itself is obedience. Jesus came on the scene preaching, “repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15).” When we trust Jesus’ words we are doing the Father’s will.

Application

Jesus warns us not to think that we’re saved when we’re not. The same goes with our loved ones. Jesus says the litmus test is: do they do the Father’s will? **Be a doer, not a hearer.** If this is troubling, we can have assurance.

- 1) If you are presently trusting in Christ alone, not your works, for the forgiveness of sins you should have confidence of your salvation.

John Frame puts it well: “If you believe in Jesus, you cannot doubt that his promises are true. And if you believe in him, you cannot doubt that those promises apply to you, because they apply to everyone who believes.”

- 2) If there is fruit in our lives we should be confident in our salvation. Like the absence of fruit reveals the false teacher, the presence of fruit reveals we’ve been born again. A good question to ask ourselves is this: is there evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence in my life? If so, you should have confidence. Ask yourself: has God changed who I am? If so, you should have assurance. Transformation will look different in different cases (e.g., the drug dealer and the child raised in a Christian home without a distinct period of outward rebellion), but faith will always result in transformation. We should see Godward direction, not perfection. We will battle sin till we die.

If you’re concerned, repent (turn from your sins and obey the Father) and believe (trust in Jesus’ work on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins).

Point 4: Build your life on faith-driven obedience (7:24-29)

Explanation

Jesus makes his final appeal. Two men are contrasted: one who does what Jesus says and one who ignores what Jesus says. The point of the analogy is that it’s wise to respond to Jesus’ words with faith-driven obedience, and it’s foolish to ignore Jesus’ words. Just like it’s wise to build a house with a solid foundation and foolish to build a house without a foundation. The difference is one hears, the other does.

There’s another principle: a solid foundation stands up to harsh storms.

Illustration

It’s kind of like the USS San Francisco. On January 8, 2005 the submarine was 360 miles southeast of Guam at a depth of 525 feet traveling at 35 mph. Without notice the sub came to a dead stop, the ship’s crew was tossed around, some over 20 feet. One sailor died as result. The submarine had hit an underwater mountain. The sub’s bow looked like a crushed soda can.

What’s remarkable is that the sub was able to move on its own power back to port on the island of Guam. How was this possible? In 1963, the USS Thresher was lost during sea trials. As a result, the SUBSAFE program was created to ensure that no matter what, a submarine’s hull would maintain structural integrity and at a minimum be able to resurface. Without the SUBSAFE program, the San Francisco and its crew would have been lost. Because its structure was solid, it was able to withstand an underwater mountain.

Likewise, the life built on faith-driven obedience withstands the storms of life. The narrow gate comes with difficulty. If we build our lives on faith-driven obedience, we'll be able to withstand trials that inevitably come, like persecution. We'll also stand at the final judgment: Jesus will welcome us into the kingdom of heaven. The fool has no foundation because they've done nothing with Jesus' words.

Conclusion

Jesus is calling for a response: **Be a doer not a hearer.** There's a helpful evangelistic curriculum called Two Ways to Live. The premise is:

- 1) God is ruler of his creation
- 2) We've rebelled
- 3) God doesn't tolerate rebellion
- 4) God sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins
- 5) Jesus rose from the dead and conquered death
- 6) We have two options: continue in rebellion and face the judgment of hell or give up rebellion and submit to Jesus, trusting in him for forgiveness and eternal life

There are two ways to live: I'm king or Christ is king. If you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Jesus, this is what Jesus says to you: Submit to me, or you'll face eternal ruin. Turn from your sins and follow me. Trust me and your sins will be forgiven. Choose the narrow gate. Eternal life will be yours.

One day Jesus will return. And each of us will stand before him. We'll either hear: "I never knew you; depart from me, you worker [s] of lawlessness." Or we'll hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant...Enter into the joy of your master (Matt 25:21)." Respond to Jesus with faith-driven obedience.

Believers, following Jesus will make life difficult, but it's worth it. When the rain falls, when the floods come, when the winds blow, you'll stand because your life is founded on the solid rock. And you'll be welcomed by Jesus when he returns. Build your life on obedience. But know you can't do this on your own. Like Augustine pray:

"Give me the grace to do as you command, and command me to do what you will!"