

Fruit, Fellowship, Foundations – Matthew 7:13-27

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Today's Chief Virtue*

1. The Christian Faith has fallen on hard times in our nation.
2. It's not that The Faith is less true than it used to be. It's lost none of its power or relevance.
3. But the prevailing attitude thinks that to embrace Christianity is to virtually take a stand against what has come to be the defining virtue of the modern era – Tolerance!
4. Pluralism and Tolerance are esteemed by many people today as being the chief virtues that frame polite society.
5. Then along comes the evangelical, Bible-believing Christian who says that Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life.
 - a. why! how narrow, how exclusive, how elitist!
 - b. so, it's not uncommon when you attempt to share your faith to hear something like – “You Christians are all a bunch of intolerant, narrow-minded religious bigots!”
6. Interesting isn't it - that Biblical Christianity, which has classically been the main defender of virtue, is now being equated with what the world holds as the greatest of all vices – *intolerance*.
7. And all because we're only being faithful to the very thing our Lord and Master said.

B. *Two Ways*

13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

1. What Jesus says here speaks right to the heart of this whole issue of tolerance.
2. Which is more important – to be tolerant, or to be right?
3. Tolerance is fine when we're talking about something like flavors of ice cream or music styles.
 - a. you like pistachio, I like cookies & cream.
 - b. you like country western, I like classical
 - c. opinions, tastes, & preferences are the proper realm for tolerance,
 - d. but not for something as crucial as one's eternal destiny; not for issues of *survival*.
4. Do you want the airplane mechanic who performs the periodic maintenance on the 747 you're flying to Hawaii to be tolerant of the differing opinions on how much torque to apply to the bolts holding the jet fan in it's housing on the wing, or do you want him to use the guidelines set by Boeing?
5. Do you want the pilot to stay on the course radioed to her by the Air Traffic control tower, or to pick her own path through the crowded skies over LA?
6. Tolerance is fine, it's great when we're talking about mere preferences, but not when we're talking about Life itself!
7. Are Christians narrow-minded? Yes! Because we reject the modern age's mistaken belief in relativism; which says there's no such thing as absolute, objective truth.
8. We believe that God is real, and that He has made the way to live and the path to eternal life.
9. We believe that because that is **EXACTLY** what Jesus says right here in vs. 13-14.
10. In John 14:6, Jesus told us what, or I should say WHO that narrow way is. He said, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**
11. Are Christians narrow-minded? If we're consistent, if we're who we say we are, those who believe in Christ, then I guess we **HAVE** to be narrow-minded – because He was.
12. I wish those who say they *respect Christ* but *reject Christianity* because it's too narrow-minded would think through their position.
13. How can you respect the man who thrusts the requirement of narrow-mindedness on His followers?
14. You see, the issue isn't about being open- or narrow-minded. The issue is about being *right*!
15. Are Christians *intolerant & bigoted*? When it comes to such things as personal preferences, they *shouldn't* be.
 - a. on the contrary, Jesus taught His followers to be respectful and to show honor to others.

- b. it was He Who said we're to love and do good to our *enemies*.
 - c. there's no room for bigotry, racism, prejudice or hatred in the heart of the Christian – toward *anyone* for *any* reason.
16. But this cannot be confused with holding every person's personal beliefs about God, righteousness, and salvation as being *equally valid*.
- a. I don't agree with the atheist, the Buddhist, the Muslim, or the Hindu;
 - b. but I do not love them any less, nor disrespect their ability to hold their belief, as wrong as I know it to be.
17. The problem with the modern era and its embrace of relativism is that it paints a false picture of the Biblically consistent Christian.
- a. the relativist wants to honor Jesus as a good man, maybe even the best man!
 - b. but anyone who would honestly follow Him is labeled as the worst of all people!
 - c. you can't have it both ways!
18. Jesus annihilates religious pluralism, moral relativism and their attendant false virtue of unthinking tolerance with these two verses.
19. The Truth is narrow – its span is the width of His Word!
20. The Path that leads to eternal life is only as wide as His Cross.
21. What path are you on today? The narrow or the broad way?

C. Determining Which Path

- 1. Jesus now presses on to elaborate on the two paths, the two ways, this course of life we chose.
- 2. Permeating all He says here is the stark reality that this life that we live right now will end in one of two places; heaven, or hell!
- 3. And the choices we make right now determine which path we're on.
- 4. The problem is, there are some on the broad way who appear to be on the narrow path.
- 5. Jesus tells us how to make sure we're on the true path to life.

II. TEXT

A. Fruit

- 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them."**
- 1. The shepherds of Jesus' day wore a sheepskin garment.
 - a. they wore it with the skin side out and the fleece facing in.
 - b. any man could don the sheep skin, but he might not be a shepherd at all.
 - 2. In the same way, in that time, prophets wore a standard uniform.
 - a. drawing their cue from Elijah, the first of the OT prophets, they wore a shepherd's mantle.
 - b. remember when Elijah selected Elisha to be his replacement, he put his mantle over his shoulders.
 - c. and when Elijah was carried away by the heavenly chariot, he left his mantle for Elisha to carry.
 - d. it's from this that we get the phrase that a leader's mantle has fallen to his successor; and he has taken up the "mantle" of leadership.
 - e. so, by Jesus' day, prophets wore a sheepskin mantle as a badge of their office as prophet and shepherd of God's people.
 - 3. Jesus uses this idea here but elaborates on it.
 - a. He says His followers need to be on the lookout because false prophets, men who bring their *own* message, will come claiming they speak for God.
 - b. they don't – instead, they use the right words and effect the right manner so that they look and sound like the genuine thing.
 - c. but instead of simply wanting to be faithful to build up the flock of God, they want to use it

- for their own ambitions and desires.
4. So, if they look and sound like the genuine thing – how are we going to know they’re false?
 5. Jesus said they would be known by their fruits – plural!
 - a. He likens them to trees, and says that a good tree produces good fruit while a bad tree bears rotten fruit.
 - b. Jesus asks an interesting question –
Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?
 - c. what’s interesting about this is that the buckthorn produces a small black berry that from a distance looks like grapes. And there’s a thistle which produces a flower which from a distance appears to be a fig.
 - d. but once you get close and try to use the berries or pluck the flower, you realize it for what it is – worthless!
 6. Jesus’ point is that it isn’t always easy to discern a false teacher, a charlatan.
 - a. they may look & sound like a genuine believer and solid teacher.
 - b. but what they are, will *eventually* manifest itself.
 - c. the root determines the fruit!
 7. By using the word “fruits”, Jesus means that there are two main ways we can determine whether someone is a false or true prophet and shepherd –
 - a. by the fruit of his own life, his own moral and spiritual fruit
 - b. and the effect, the result his teaching has when it’s planted in the lives of others.
 8. Since the false prophet is motivated by selfish ambition and desire, it will eventually become obvious that he, personally, is living *contrary* to God’s righteousness & will.
 9. On top of that, his message will be skewed from the counsel of God’s Word and will seek to gain a following by appealing to some desire of fallen human nature.
 - a. it may be man’s carnality through greed, lust, or pride –
 - b. whatever fallen desire the false teacher is appealing to will be masked behind a front of piety.
 10. The Apostle Paul said that the good fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control. ^[1]
 11. The fruit of false prophets is pride, sin, and ruin.

B. Fellowship

- 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’**
1. Notice that both times these false people speak, they address Jesus as “Lord, Lord!” Not once, but twice.
 - a. they seem earnest – but they’re insincere!
 - b. His title comes too easily to their lips, but He is no where in their hearts!
 2. You see – they **CALL** Him “Lord – **MASTER!**” But Jesus said they do not *obey* Him! They may call Him ‘Lord’ but they don’t treat Him as such.
 3. In v. 21, Jesus said that it was not those who *said* the right things, but those who **DID** them who would find that narrow path into the Kingdom of God & eternal life.
 4. So, what *is* the right thing – what *is* the Father’s will?
 5. In John 17:3, Jesus said that the essence of eternal life is to know God; to have a relationship of close intimacy with Him.
 6. He says the same thing here.
 - a. these false professors claimed to have done all kinds of good stuff *for* God, things they thought were sure proof of their tightness with Him.
 - b. but Jesus turns them away with the words – “I never *knew* you.”
 - 1) “You and I never enjoyed a relationship of mutual knowledge.”

- 2) “We had no fellowship!”
7. Now, many people read this and are troubled. How can these guys have done what they said they did and not be saved?
 - a. they claim to have spoken God’s message. To have done exorcisms,
 - b. and even to have worked the miraculous.
 - c. how is this possible without having been born-again?
 8. Note that Jesus neither refutes nor accepts their claims – He *ignores* them; because that’s the very lesson He wants to get across here!!!!
 9. It’s not your doctrinal purity that would recognize Jesus as The Lord – even to the point that you would staunchly defend it – “Lord! Lord!”
 10. Nor is it that you have done all kinds of deeply religious and good things – even doing them, as Jesus says *3 times* here “in His name.”
 11. The crucial issue is – have you done *the most important thing*, the core and heart of the Father’s will, and that is to believe *in* Jesus and *on* His work on your behalf??
 12. Before you call Him, “Lord” did you hear Him in your heart call you “Beloved”?
 13. Is it just “Lord, Lord”– or “MY Lord & Savior. My Lover & Friend, MY GOD!”?

C. Foundations

24 “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. ²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

1. Jesus has referred to two paths, two trees, and two claims; now he speaks of two houses.
2. And this is something Jesus would have known much about from his experience as a craftsman.
3. Those who have been to Israel know all about the wadis; the dry gulches lined with sand.
 - a. they’re bone dry for most of the year,
 - b. but when the rains come, they quickly fill with water and turn into a crashing torrent of destruction
4. Many of these wadis are quite wide and look like they would make for a great place to build a house under their sheltered banks which would provide cool shade and protection from the winds.
5. But the ground is loose sand and no place to lay a foundation.
6. No, a house needs to be built on something solid and its footing needs to be sunk into the earth.
7. Jesus picture two houses, sitting near each other. From a distance, they look the same.
 - a. but one is built in the bottom of a wadi,
 - b. while the other is set on the rocky spur of the hill above it.
8. Then a colossal storm comes, the rains pour over the landscape, collect in the upper reaches of the wadi and begin their crashing course down the gully.
9. When they reach that house in the wadi, they will tear into it and sweep it away in a moment.
10. But the house next to it will endure because its footing goes deep into the bedrock.

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Storm

1. The storm Jesus means in this story doesn’t refer to the trials of life of that are common to all.
2. No – He means **The Storm** – the one that will lay bare which path we’ve traveled, what kind of a tree we are, whether He’s just been “The Lord” or “My Lord.”
3. This is the final storm, the one that will either confirm our standing with God, or sweep us away into everlasting ruin.
4. Look with me again at vs. 22 & 23 -

22 Many will say to Me in that day,

- a. what day? Judgment day!

22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name,

cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’²³ And then

b. when? On the last day, the day of final judgment

then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

5. In vs. 13 & 14, Jesus spoke of two paths and their two destinations: life and destruction.
6. In v. 19, Jesus warned about the fires of judgment for those who bear rotten fruit.
7. Listen friends – a storm is coming, a day of judgment, a time of reckoning.
8. What path are you on?
9. What fruit are you bearing?
10. Are you in love with Jesus and wrapped up in an intimate relationship with Him?
11. What are you building your life on?

B. Appearances

1. It’s not enough to be a *spiritual* person and interested in religion; you may only be on the broad way.
2. It’s not enough to go to church and put a CCO bumper sticker on your car; that’s not the fruit Jesus is looking for.
3. It’s not about being able to sing along with the songs, and having all the right christianese down, or even being an usher or prayer counselor – seeing God give dramatic answers to your prayers for others.
4. It’s not about listening to the awesome teaching of someone like Chuck Smith, or Jon Courson, or reading Charles Spurgeon and being able to argue the finer points of theology; if you only hear and do not do, you’ve built your house on the sand.
5. Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount with this 4 part warning about coming judgment and the very really potential that people could miss *the most important thing* in the pursuit of what was merely *a good thing*.
6. The most important thing is to Know Jesus!
 - a. to not just call Him by a theologically correct title, but to embrace and love Him as *your* Lord and Savior!
 - b. and because love motivates and empowers the heart to please the One loved – those who genuinely know Christ will *obey* Him – bearing good fruit.
 - c. their passion will be to listen to Him SO THAT they can do what He says.
7. When I first met Lynn and found a deep love developing toward her, I delighted in talking with her, always with an attentive ear to her desires, her likes and dislikes.
8. You know why? Because I loved her so much, I wanted to know **HOW I COULD** show her that love – how I could bless her.
9. In John 14:15, Jesus said – “If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments.”
10. How true!

C. The Shepherd’s Need To Warn

1. So, as Jesus ended His sermon with a warning of coming judgment, so I want to end in the same place today.
 2. The good shepherd warns the flock of impending danger – so let me do that.
 3. Listen, a monster storm is coming – it’s the Final Day of Judgment in which all the secrets of men’s hearts will be laid bare.
 4. Your path, my fruit, your confession, my foundation – will all be revealed, finally and fully.
 5. There is a heaven to be gained and a hell to shun – *those are the facts*.
 6. Today – you must decide! And if there is any doubt whatsoever about what path you are on and where it leads – do not let another minute go by without settling this once and for all.
 7. It matters not if you’ve gone to church for years; know the songs, have the bumper sticker or even a well worn Bible.
 8. **DO YOU KNOW JESUS? DOES HE KNOW YOU?**
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[\[1\]](#) Galatians 5:22-23