

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: POWER OVER PRIDE

IN GOD'S NEW HUMANITY

A Seminar on Kingdom Principles

Matthew 5-7

Session Six

Matthew 7:13-29

The Text:

13. Always enter through the narrow gate because the gate and the road which lead to destruction are both wide and easy and many are entering it, 14. but because the gate and the road which lead to life are both narrow and hard (difficult) only a few are finding it.

15. Watch out for false prophets who are of such nature that they come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are voracious wolves. 16. You can really tell who they are by their fruits. People do not gather grapes from thorns, do they? Nor figs from thistles! 17. So then, every good tree produces good fruit and every bad tree produces bad fruit. 18. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, neither can a corrupt (rotten) tree bear beautiful fruit. 19. Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20. So then you will really know them by their fruits.

21. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but on the contrary the one who (continually) does the will of my Father in heaven. 22. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in your name, haven't we, and in your name have cast out demons and in your name done many works of power?' 23. And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you; keep on departing from me, you who are doing lawless things.'

24. Therefore, whoever is of such nature that he listens to these words of mine and does them shall be likened to a wise man who was of such nature that he built his house upon the rock. 25. The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and they beat upon that house and it did not fall because its foundation had been established upon the rock. 26. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them shall be compared to a foolish man who was of such nature that he built his house upon the sand. The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and they beat upon that house and it fell -- and its fall was tremendous (lit. "great").

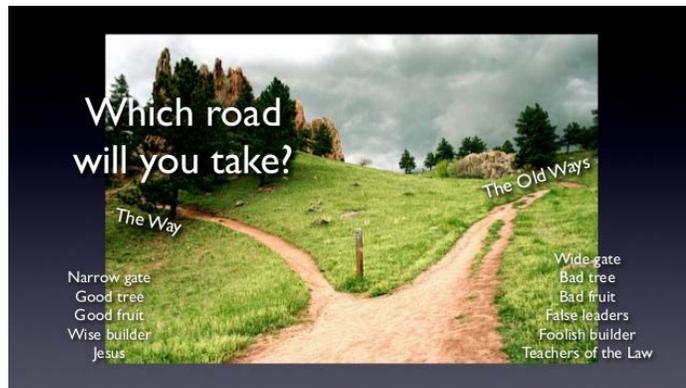
28. When Jesus came to the end of these words the crowd was astounded by His teaching because He was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scholars (taught).

This is the concluding section of the Sermon on the Mount. In these paragraphs Jesus compares and contrasts those who demonstrate God's kind of righteousness with those who do not. He calls for decision. Will His followers choose the narrow gate and road or the expressway? Will they become teachers who are like good trees which bear good fruit or like sick trees which bear rotten fruit? Will they choose to build their lives on Christ, the solid Rock and stand through the storm, or on the sand beach and get washed away by every wind that blows?

V. **God's new humanity, who have power over pride, discern the right choices.** - (7:13-27)

A. **Jesus teaches about the choice between the two gates and the two roads.** - (7:13-14)

13. Always enter through the narrow gate because the gate and the road which lead to destruction are both wide and easy and many are entering it, 14. but because the gate and the road which lead to life are both narrow and hard (difficult) only a few are finding it.



The Road of Life is the like a broad smooth highway similar to interstate highways or autobahns in America or Europe, but though it is wide and smooth, it has many dangerous turns and slippery sections. It leads to the city of eternal death. However, along that road there is a narrow turn-off leading through a narrow gate to a narrow and rough road with many hills and valleys, turns and switchbacks. That road, in spite of its difficulties, leads to the city of eternal life. Most people take the easy road, the superhighway to hell, doing what comes naturally, being led on the path of least resistance by their selfish sinful nature. The majority of the world's people miss the narrow road and end up in eternal hell, separated from God and all His blessings, but all must make the choice whether to take the narrow road or to bypass it.

For most of us, this is a daily choice; shall I take the easy way or shall I choose the narrow, more difficult way? Making the turn and going through the gate could be a lifetime choice which sets the direction of our lives when we are old enough to make moral choices and old enough to choose the way of Jesus; but even then, we must continue to make choices each day and sometimes each hour or each moment of the day. Our daily prayer ought to be that we will make the right choices throughout the day and night. Usually the easy choice is not always what is best in the long run. Young people need to be taught the value of hard choices and to delay personal satisfaction and gratification for the benefit of their future life.

B. The two kinds of fruit trees contrasted. - (7:15-23)

In this section Jesus gives a warning concerning the fact that there are many people in this world who will deliberately try to deceive and mislead others into making the wrong decisions. They are false prophets who appear outwardly to be as innocent as sheep, but they have the inward nature of wolves. It is up to us, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to discern who is a real sheep and who is a wolf dressed up like a sheep!

15. "Watch out for false prophets who are of such nature that they come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are voracious wolves.

This is a continuation of Jesus' teaching on the necessity of discernment. "Let the buyer beware!" This is a famous saying. It is true that God's people are not to be judges, but we are to have enough good sense to be careful of those who want to deceive us or trick us into making decisions which will bless or benefit them, but not us.

In this regard it seems that there are many television evangelists or itinerant preachers in our world today who enrich themselves at the expense of the "sheep" who follow them. If we have doubts about the integrity of these evangelists, we need to investigate those to whom they may be accountable for their finances. Ask for a financial report. One such famous televangelist is reported to have several lavish homes and numerous expensive cars and other luxurious trappings of the wealthy. False shepherds "fleece" the sheep.

Jesus teaches us about two kinds of fruit trees contrasted. - (7:15-23)

This is Jesus advice on discerning between true and false prophets. The test of their true nature comes in the inspection of their fruits. We must beware that we do not become victims of deceit which means that we need to become good discerners of character. We do that by becoming good fruit inspectors!

16. You can really tell who they are by their fruits. People do not gather grapes from thorns, do they? Nor figs from thistles! 17. So then, every good tree produces good fruit and every bad tree produces bad fruit. 18. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, neither can a corrupt (rotten) tree bear beautiful fruit. 19. Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20. So then you will really know them by their fruits.



The fruit of a tree is determined by the nature of its root. If the root is good, the fruit will be good; if the root is bad, the fruit will be bad. Each tree produces fruit consistent with the nature of its root. In people this refers to the nature of the heart, the spiritual root of each life. We are all born with a root which is contaminated by sinful selfishness which leads to deceitful, proud and selfish actions. This bad root requires a transplant of healthy roots into the base root. This happens when we not only trust in Jesus as our Savior, but also allow Him to direct all the attitudes of our hearts and minds and the activities of our hands and feet. The warning is that those trees with bad roots which produce bad fruits are destined to be cut down and burned in the fire! The implication is that we must allow the healthy root to grow and produce good fruit in our lives so that we will be blessed and will bless others with our good fruit as good prophets/teachers do.

According to the first few verses of this chapter we are admonished not to judge others but to judge ourselves and to discriminate between those people who have the nature of the dog and the hog and discern real sheep from those who are disguised as sheep but are wolves on the inside and also

between those who bear good fruit and those who bear bad fruit. We are taught by Jesus not to become judges but rather to become fruit inspectors with discerning powers to discriminate!

21. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but on the contrary the one who (continually) does the will of my Father in heaven. 22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in your name, haven't we, and in your name have cast out demons and in your name done many works of power?' 23. And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you; keep on departing from me, you who are doing lawless things.'

Real obedience is unselfish and leads to blessing. Selfish partial obedience leads to rejection. A good example of this is the story of Saul in I Sam. 15. Through Samuel the Lord had commanded Saul to wipe out the Amalekites “and totally destroy everything that belongs to them” (15:3) in fulfillment of Gen. 14:7 and Ex. 17:8-16; however, Saul spared the Amalekite king, Agag, and the best of the sheep and cattle. Then he went to Carmel and set up a monument in his own honor (15:12). When Samuel finally caught up with him at Gilgal, Saul claimed to “have carried out the Lord’s instructions” (15:13). Samuel, however, knew that his obedience was only partial and that he and his men had saved the best of the animals for themselves after sacrificing some to the Lord, and had spared the king to torment and execute him later. Saul proclaimed his innocence of any wrongdoing, but Samuel said, *Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams* (15:22). Because of his failure to obey completely and unselfishly, Saul was rejected as king of Israel.

The point in this paragraph is that people may be able to deceive or fool other people, but they cannot fool God! He knows everything about us, including our very inmost attitudes. Some may claim to have served God by prophesying in His Name and even by casting out demons or doing other works of power such as healing the sick (think again about televangelists who claim healing powers). We can never know the motives driving these people, but God does. He knows that they have no real relationship of faith and love with Him. He therefore sternly rebukes them and refuses to acknowledge them as being part of His family and service team. He says He never knew them in any loving and personal way and therefore they are commanded to keep on departing from Him. They are already departing from Him; their destiny is therefore to continue in the direction they are already going – away from Him and away from heaven. We determine in this life where we will go and what we will do throughout eternity. There is no biblical teaching involving an intermediate place after death from which

people can be prayed into heaven by others who are still living. Therefore we must make wise choices while we can in this life.

C. Jesus teaches us about two kinds of houses contrasted. - (7:24-27)

24. Therefore, whoever is of such nature that he listens to these words of mine and does them shall be likened to a wise man who was of such nature that he built his house upon the rock.

25. The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and they beat upon that house and it did not fall because its foundation had been established upon the rock. 26. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them shall be compared to a foolish man who was of such nature that he built his house upon the sand. The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and they beat upon that house and it fell -- and its fall was tremendous (lit. "great").

Our final destiny for eternity is based on choices we make while we are living. Among those choices is the choice to build our lives on a firm foundation, Christ Himself being that foundation (1 Cor. 3:11).

When we were serving the Lord in Lebanon (1960-1987) we sometimes attended the National Evangelical (Presbyterian) Church in Beirut. The national pastor of the church always finished his sermons by quoting these verses and urging the people to build their lives on the solid rock foundation of Jesus Christ. This is a very appropriate way to close any sermon. It is the way Jesus chose to close His Sermon on the Mount.



The illustration is very apt and appropriate because everyone who had ever watched the building of a house knew that He spoke the truth. No one would want to build a rock house (that was and still is the normal building material in use in the Middle East) on sand. The sand, if it was there because the builder wanted to choose that location, had to be dug away and carted off until the solid rock under the sand was revealed. Anyone who was too lazy to carry off the sand and get down to the solid rock could

not have any assurance that his house would stand through any storm. In fact, it was certain to fall apart and crumble into a heap of rocks very quickly when any storm struck.

Conclusion. - The crowd is amazed because of Jesus' authority in teaching (7:28-29).

28. When Jesus came to the end of these words the crowd was astounded by His teaching because He was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scholars (taught).

The scholars in Jesus' day did not dare teach with such authority. They could not because of their reverence for former scholars who had already written down their comments and views concerning the interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures. They had to refer to those previous scholars and either agree with them or put forth their own arguments in defense of any disagreement they had with them. Jesus, however, had no problem ignoring all the former and present scholars because He directly presented the teaching of God Himself! No wonder the people were so amazed! How refreshing it was to hear directly from God Himself the meaning of His inspired Word!

We, too, are amazed at the audacity of Jesus as He said “. . . but I Myself, I say to you, this is what God's Word means!” How powerful is His blessed Word! May we heed it every day and obey it and build our lives upon it!