

A Study Of The Book of Matthew
Sermon # 31

“Empty Words From An Empty Heart”

Matthew 7:21-23

My wife and I had a tremendous lesson in the brevity of life yesterday. We turned down a country road and I noticed a man walking across a field with his tractor in the background. I commented to Debbie that I thought he was having a “Hamby Day” because it looked as if his tractor had broken down after making one round in an attempt to mow his field. We heard sirens as we completed our task and then we returned about 45 minutes later by the same route we had traveled earlier. We arrived on the scene as the EMT’s and law enforcement arrived in that same field. There on the ground lay the same man, whom they now covered with a sheet. In that brief time another soul left this world headed for eternity. We found it a sobering experience, as we talked about it we hoped he was ready!

“Writer Vance Havner, in one of his books told a story about a husband who came home from work one afternoon to find that his wife was visibly upset. He said, **“Honey, what’s wrong?”** She said, **“This after-noon a man came to our front door and rang the doorbell. I didn’t recognize him, but he was well-dressed so I opened the door. He said, ‘Good afternoon, ma’am. Could I ask you a question? Do you know Jesus Christ?’** When he asked me that I was so flustered that I shut the door in his face, and I’ve been thinking about his question all afternoon.”

Her husband got upset and said, **“Honey, why didn’t you just tell him that you and I are charter members of our church, that you’ve been teaching a ladies Sunday School for 20 years, and you sing in our choir every Sunday? Why didn’t you tell him that?”** She thought for a moment and said to her husband, **“That’s not what he asked; he asked if I knew Jesus.”**

(quoted by David Dykes. “You Might Be Religious But Lost If.” www.gabc.org)

“Never were there so many millions of nominal Christians on Earth as there are today, and never was there such a small percentage of real ones... We seriously doubt whether there has ever been a time in the history of this Christian era when there were such multitudes of deceived souls within the churches, who truly believe that all is well with their souls when in fact the wrath of God abides on them.” He then goes on to add, “I know of no single thing better calculated to undeceive them than a full and faithful exposition of the closing verses of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount.” [Arthur Pink. “An Exposition Of the Sermon On the Mount.” (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950) pp. 377-378]

Dr Billy Graham estimates that as high as 85% of the people who attend church regularly are not born again. Dr. John MacArthur maintains that in spite of the polls which estimate that 50% of Americans identify themselves as born-again Christians that *“on the basis of the Bible’s description of true believers and the fact that so few really come on God’s terms, those estimates could not be remotely correct. By Scriptural standards, it is hard to believe that even half of the church mem-bers in the United States are true believers.”* [John MacArthur. *“The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7”* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) p. 474]

We are in the midst of a study of the most famous sermon in the world, by the world’s greatest preacher. It is “The Sermon On the Mount” preached by Jesus. We are in reality finished with the body of the sermon and have since verse thirteen been involved in a study of the conclusion of that sermon. Jesus is giving the reasons that can keep a person from committing their life to Him and being saved.

First, in verses thirteen and fourteen there is a failure to understand that a personal decision and commitment are required. Then in verses fifteen to twenty He pointed to the danger of being deceived by false teachers. And now in verses twenty-one through twenty-three He points out a third danger; a danger that lies within one’s own heart, **the danger of self deception.**

Now beginning in verse twenty-one the Lord says, *“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!’*

First, Their Sincere Profession (7:21-22)

“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.”

The phrase *“not everyone”* indicates that some of those Jesus is talking to are true believers, but not all. Their declaration *“Lord, Lord”* is genuine but not from the heart. These people are literally going to be aston-ished when they stand before the Lord. This group includes people of good character, people of with good intentions, people with the right vocabulary (they know how to talk the talk), even people who have done good things. These people profess to be Christians but in reality they are not.

So what sort of people are those who say, *“Lord, Lord”* and yet the Lord says they *“shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven”*? Apparently He refers to a con-siderable number of people for He says *“many”* (v.22). Arthur Pink in his commentary says they will include five classes of individuals, I however have combined them into four.

➤ **Nominal** Christians – These are those who are

Christian in name only. They never go to church unless they occasionally show up at Christmas and Easter. Yet if you were to ask them they would affirm that they are Christians. But in truth it means little more than they are not an atheist, not a Buddhist or not a Muslim.

➤ **Formal** Christians – These individuals at least are regular in attendance at the services of the church. These individuals pride themselves on what they believe but it has no effect on the way they live. But their faith is nothing more than an intellectual acceptance of the facts of the Gospel, but there is no inner reality.

➤ **Hypocritical** Christians – These are individuals who are conscious that they are not what they pretend to be. Aware that they are not really Christians they take great pains to keep from being detected.

➤ **Genuine** Christians – These individuals are the real deal. These are those who are not relying on what they have done but on what Christ did on their behalf. They have repented of their sins, asked Christ to forgive them, and be their Savior and are now trusting that He is able to keep that which they have committed into His hands. (2 Tim 1:12) [Arthur Pink .p. 381-383]

It is not bad to profess Christ as your Savior. It is not bad, it is good and in fact it is not only good, it is crucial to being saved. The Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, *“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* (Romans 10:9-10)

These individuals have confidence that they are saved, but their confidence is misplaced! Notice with me two areas in which it is possible to have misplaced confidence concerning one’s salvation.

- **False Confidence in Doctrine** (v. 21)

What we mean by doctrine here is the substance of what we believe. But you can be Evangelical and not born again.... You can be Methodist and not born again.... You can be Charismatic and not born again.... You can even be Independent Fundamental Baptist and not born again....

Furthermore it is possible to believe all the right things about Jesus and still be lost. It is possible for one to believe that Jesus is the virgin born Son of God, that He died on the cross for mankind’s sin, even that He is coming back one day to judge this world and still not come to the place that you trust that same Jesus Christ as your Savior. Jesus is God but not their God. Jesus is Lord but not their Lord. Jesus is the Savior but not their Savior.

Paul puts it well when He says in 2 Timothy 1:12, “...for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I committed unto him against that day.” What you believe is important! But even more important is in whom you believe.

Another area in which it is possible to have misplaced confidence concerning one’s salvation is....

- **False Confidence in Works.** (v. 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?’”

“Many” here speaks of a large multitude, striking in comparison to the “few” that Jesus says will choose the “narrow way” that leads to eternal life. The time of separation spoken of as “in that day” is the Day of Judgment, specifically the judgment of unbelievers that the Bible calls the “**Great White Throne Judgment**” (Rev. 20:11-15).

Now as these individuals stand before the Lord and realize that they have not met the requirement for salvation, they would if they were able, argue that they have not only believed the right things but they have actively served the Lord. They have done some pretty impressive stuff. They say, “**I prophesied in His name, I cast out demons, I did wonderful works.**” These people appealed to their works to save them! But the Lord makes it very clear here that salvation cannot be produced by works. Paul later declares about salvation “... by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

But as we consider the magnitude of their works we ask ourselves, “**Is it really possible for a person to manifest that kind of power and yet not be saved?**” the answer of course is yes, in fact Jesus warned that during the coming Great Tribulation, “...false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” (Matt. 24:24)

But look at what they say they have done....

- **Prophesied** – “prophesied in Your name”

The term “**prophesied**” (**propheteuo**) signifies speaking in God’s name and can mean either “to tell forth” as in preaching and teaching God’s message or “foretelling” as in predicting future events.

- Cast out **Demons** – “cast out demons in Your name”

Are there any Biblical examples of those who cast out demons etc. but who were unquestionably unbelievers? Yes, in the New Testament, Judas Iscariot, who was clearly an unbeliever, seemingly exercised such power (Luke 10:17) but in the end proved to be unsaved.

Another example and one of my favorite stories about casting out demons is found in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Some Jewish exorcists, the sons of Sceva, decided to use the name of Jesus to cast out a demon as recorded in Acts 19. They said to the demon, **"I command you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches to leave."** The evil spirit replies, **"Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"** (Acts 19:15) Then the evil spirit leaped on them and beat them up and sent them running from the house **"naked and wounded."** (Acts 19:16) These men had reduced the name of Jesus to nothing more than a magic formula.

- Performed Many **Miracles**. **"done many wonders in Your name"**

Jesus does not dispute their claim. It is amazing and sad how many people in our day are looking for the miraculous and ready to fall for those who claim to be "Miracle workers." Miraculous powers no matter how "many" or how spectacular do not give proof of authentic faith. Many in the first century claimed miraculous powers and like the magicians at Pharaoh's court (Ex 7:11) they sometimes succeeded. The truth to be remembered is that not all miracles are from God and not all miracle workers speak from God.

It is not talking but doing, not loud profession but quiet practical godliness that wins the day. In Luke Jesus asked a parallel distressing question, **"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"** (Luke 6:46)

The point is that people who called him **"Lord"** surrounded Jesus on every side; but to call Jesus **"Lord"** is not the test of being a genuine disciple. The test comes when a person hears God's word and acts upon it. **The real test of discipleship is not in the arena of what we say but in what we do.** The declaration of our lips in calling Jesus **"Lord, Lord"** must not be denied by the direction of our lives.

Their Sincere Profession is followed by...

Secondly, Their Startling Discovery (7:23)

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

- When Does This **Happen?** **"then"**

Jesus says **"then"** an adverb of time, denoting that at the time of Judgment He will make the truth known. I think we all realize that there are those individuals in the world who reject Christ, want nothing to do with the Church, who refuse to hear the Gospel and thus are headed for an eternity in Hell. But far more shocking is to realize that there are people who think they are headed for Heaven, but in reality they are not!

- What Does He **Declare?**

These surely have to be the seven most terrifying words in the Universe, *“I never knew you; depart from Me...”* because it is a frightening statement that leads to a terrible separation. Jesus says He *“never”* knew them. Never means not even for a time. The point is that they were not once saved but fell into sin and “lost” their salvation. They simply were **never at any time** saved. Genuine salvation cannot be lost. There are many biblical passages that support that once you are genuinely saved you are eternally secure (John 10).

Jesus says *“depart”* (*apochoreo*) which is a present imperative and indicates separation forever. This of course is the eternal separation from God. It is worth mentioning at this point that Hell was not originally prepared for men but for Satan and his demons. However, men by failing to enter by the **small gate** and **narrow way** through Christ alone by faith alone, leave God no alternative except to send them into this place of eternal separation and torment.

- Why Are They **Rejected**?

The reason for the rejection of these individuals is that they *“practice lawlessness.”* The word translated *“practice”* (*ergazomai*) was used to describe one toiling energetically and diligently in the vineyard. Jesus is not saying that they occasionally fall into sins (which can be the experience of genuine believers) but that they **continually work** (present tense = habitual activity, it is their lifestyle). They actually exert great effort and diligence in order to violate the law! Sadly their end justifies their means!

There is a contrast to be drawn between those who enter into the Kingdom of Heaven because they make it the continual moral practice of their lives to do the will of the Father (v. 21) and those who do not make it to Heaven who make it the continual moral practice of their lives to practice sin (v. 22)

Conclusion

It may be that you have gotten to this point in the message and you have been saying to yourselves while I have been speaking; **“Well, I am not a prophet; I have never even thought about attempting to cast out a demon and I certainly never performed any mir-acles”** and because of that you have somehow convinced yourself that this message did not concern you.

But immediately after my text there is something that relates to you: *“Whoever hears these sayings of mine.”* (Matthew 7:24) Everyone who has heard the message of the Gospel stands convicted. It will do no good to say in the day, **“But, Lord, I always in my pew; I was almost never absent from the services, I was there virtually whenever the doors were opened.”** And all that may all be true; yet the Lord Jesus will not know you unless your heart has truly known Him.

Are you a Christian? Is what you have real? The answer to those questions does not depend on your intellectual beliefs or upon your good works, but upon whether you have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Has there ever been a time when you recognized you were a sinner, repented of your sins and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Savior? Has that experience changed you?

Let me close with this illustration. "We see a strange paradox in our world today. While there seems to be a religious awakening, there also seems to be an increase in wickedness. It just doesn't add up.

*A skeptic sneeringly said, "**The gospel has lost its power. While thousands profess Christ, nothing much is happening as a result.**" But it's not the fault of the gospel. It's because people make a profession but have no possession. It's not enough to acknowledge the truth of the gospel and say, "Lord, Lord" ([Lk. 6:46](#)). Our lives must be transformed.*

*A preacher was walking down a street when he met the owner of a company that made soap. As they talked, the soap maker said, "**The gospel you preach can't be very good for there are still a lot of wicked people.**" The preacher noticed a child nearby making mud pies. The tot was smeared with dirt from head to toe. The preacher said to his friend, "**Your soap can't be very good, for there is still a lot of dirt in the world.**" The man responded, "**Well, it cleanses only when a person uses it.**" "**Exactly!**" said the preacher.*

Is your faith real--not merely a profession, but heartfelt trust in Christ? Do you have a relationship with Jesus that has changed your life?" – [M. R. De Haan, M.D. "[Our Daily Bread](#)," April 5, 1999, (Grand Rapids, MI: RBC Ministries)]

The truth is that anything that does not result in a changed character is not real faith (1 Cor. 7:15)

"Empty Words From An Empty Heart"

Matthew 7:21-23

First, Their Sincere _____ (7:21-22)

_____ Christians – those Christian in _____ only.

_____ Christians –pride themselves on what they believe but it has no effect on the way they live.

_____ Christians– they are _____ that they are not what they pretend to be.

_____ Christians– the real deal.

- False Confidence in _____ (v. 21)

- False Confidence in _____ (v. 22)

"in that day" –the Day of _____ -**"Great White Throne Judgment"** (Rev. 20:11-15).

➤ _____ - **"prophesied in Your name"**

➤ Cast out _____ - **"cast out demons in Your name"**

Examples -Judas had such power (Lk 10:17) and the Sons of Sceva, Acts 19.

➤ Performed Many _____ **"done many wonders in Your name"**

Miraculous powers, no matter how **"many"** or how spectacular, do not give proof of _____ faith. Example - Magicians at Pharaoh's court (Ex 7:11)

Secondly, Their Startling _____ (7:23)

- When Does This _____?
- What Does He _____?
- Why Are They _____?