

A New Kind of Obedience | Week 8

Greetings Mercy Church! As always, it is a blessing to be with you this morning. If you are new with us, I want to say welcome. We are so glad that you're here and if you are new, I want to take a moment and catch you up on where we have been. Over the last eight weeks, we have been in the Sermon on the Mount. This is the most famous sermon that Jesus ever preached, and as we have walked through this, it has been incredible.

We have pointed out a lot of things throughout Jesus' sermon, but we believe that the thing Jesus wanted the hearers to walk away with can be summarized in an idea.. We need a new kind of obedience. In this series, we learned that what we really need is not more obedience to God, but rather we need a whole new kind of obedience. We need an obedience that flows out from the approval that we already have in Christ, rather than obedience fueled by a search for his love. There is a big difference. As Christians, we don't obey God in order to earn favor, we obey God because we have favor. God's commands are good, but when you obey out of religious duty it smothers your love for God, and you could eventually fall into the trap and you will say things like, "well, I tried this Jesus thing, and it just didn't work for me. I did everything Jesus asked. I'm a good person, why do I feel so empty?" You feel empty because you need to understand this new kind of obedience.

Today, we're going to be walking through Matthew chapter 7:13-27. But before we do that, let me share with you a quick story. Around two years ago, I went on a missions trip to South Asia. One of the things that I needed to do was get my money changed from U.S. dollars to rupees. When we got to the money changing station, and I handed the gentlemen my cash he started examining my money. But the way he did it was fascinating, one guy starting rubbing the money with his fingers. He went bill by bill and rubbed his thumbs on it. I asked him briefly what he was doing, and he said that he could tell if it was fake by touch. Of course there were other ways they examined these bills but that was the first test. This guy examined my money to see if it was real or counterfeit. When I was getting engaged, I went to a diamond dealer, and he taught me all about how he examines diamonds to tell whether or not it's real or counterfeit. You and I play the real or counterfeit game all the time. We see something incredible on youtube, and we say, "that's not real! That's fake."

But in Matthew 7:13-27, we see that Jesus wants us to know true faith. Like any good teacher, he uses metaphors to get his points across. All of these metaphors point to the fact that Jesus wants us to be able to tell the difference between true faith and counterfeits. This is extremely important for everyone in this room. Now, we're going to need to buckle up this morning

because Jesus is going to be saying some counter-cultural things. He will talk about Himself being the only way to salvation, false teachers, he will talk about people who will think they are saved but are not. This is a hugely counter-cultural, but that's okay, because the Bible is counter-cultural, no matter what culture you come from.

So, let me pray as we get started...

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. 14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it. (CSB)

He is saying that there is one way that leads to salvation. There is one gate, and it is narrow. The gate is found in Jesus Christ. But there is also a wide gate and this wide gate leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. Those who go through the wide gate are those who believe that salvation can be obtained apart from Christ. When they seek it, it leads to their destruction.

This is a difficult truth for many people. It's often what turns people off to Christianity. Jesus is clear that there are no other ways to salvation. There is one gate that leads to salvation and its through repentance and faith in Jesus. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the father but by me." Again, Jesus is the narrow gate and in verse 13 he tells the hearers to: Enter through the narrow gate. Don't go through the wide gate, that leads to destruction. By destruction, as we will see later, is eternal separation from God in hell.

I know that for some of you, you might be hearing this for the first time you might be saying, "Seriously, why is there only one way? Is God really only going to offer one way? That is so unloving! I can't believe in a God that is so unloving. Listen I hear you, hang in with me. Let me tell you what God did, because there is an answer to that question.

When God created the world it was perfect, but the man and woman that God created rebelled against him. And when they did it broke their relationship with God and in that moment sin entered the world. This man and woman, our representatives, now pass on the curse of sin to every person who is ever born. You and I, at birth, have a sin problem. But because God loves mankind, he sent us a savior. And he sent the thing he loved the most, his son. Think about that, parents. He sent his only son! And because he loved us, he killed his son on a cross, and every once of wrath and anger that he had toward our sin, he put on his son. He crushed his son. Isaiah 53:10 says that God was pleased to

crush his son, and he did it because he loves us. So, Jesus died, but because Jesus is God he rose from the grace defeating death and sin. And if we believe this, if we believe in the person and work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection we can be saved and enter in through the narrow gate. Salvation is through grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone.

Brothers & sisters. There was never any intention of making multiple ways to salvation. It cost God too much to make multiple ways. If there were multiple ways, then Christ's death would be meaningless. God gave up everything so that we could be reconciled back to him. If he offered salvation through multiple gates, he would have killed his son for no reason. That can't be! This is why rejecting Jesus is so offensive to God. God gave up his son to die for us! It would make no sense to offer multiple gates. So, if you don't know Jesus. He came for you. Please turn to him. More on that later.

But then Jesus tells us that we need to be on guard. And then shares a second metaphor: A tree and its fruit. Lets read 15-20: 15 "Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. 16 You'll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

So, Jesus warns us to beware, to look out, and to be watchful for false prophets. He said be careful because they come to you in sheep's clothing, but they're actually ravaging wolves. Since they will be disguised its essential for us to spot false teachers and their lies.

But before we walk through how to spot them, lets talk about what false teachers are trying to do. So, what are they trying to do to us? They are trying to deceive us to go down the wrong path and to choose the wrong gate. Let's be clear, they are doing the work of their father, the devil. Anyone that seeks to deceive and lie to you in order to pull you away from Christ and toward a gate that leads to hell, is following their true father. Ephesians 2_1-3 says this.

False teachers do this primarily in two ways (I got these two from pastor Kevin DeYoung. He summarized it well):

False teachers:

1. False teachers try to make the wide gate attractive and lure you toward it.

In our context, many will appeal to the idea of tolerance and that there is beauty in a plurality cultural and religious expressions. "Christianity is the white man's religion. It's close-minded. Its teachings are barbaric. Homophobic. It's misogynistic." False teachers, throw smoke screen, after smoke screen, to distract, to tear down, and cloud the truth of the gospel. One of Satan's biggest tool is distraction. He's like, "If I can just keep them focused on anything and everything besides the gospel, I can win." And false teachers are like: Hey, come over here. Look at all the horrible things you have to believe in order to be a Christian. You don't believe that, do you? False teachers are going to call you to follow your heart, to live your truth, to be who you are, right toward the gate of destruction.

2. False teachers make the path to salvation obscure.

There are two ways that false teachers make salvation obscure. **They deny the gospel, or they who add to the gospel.** The deniers are what I just talked about reject core parts of the gospel message, like the resurrection, the virgin birth, or Jesus' sinless life. Those who add to the gospel message say it's Jesus plus works.

Thankfully, scripture shows us exactly what this looks like. Anyone who says the Bible is outdated isn't reading close enough. Listen to this... Galatians was written to counter the "Judaizers" who were false teachers. They said that we needed to add the law to the gospel. So it's the gospel plus works (plus circumcision, and dietary restrictions). We also have the opposite. In the book of James, he wrote to those who were falling to the other extreme, that if we believe the gospel, then we can do whatever we want. Both are false! False teachers deny the gospel, and add to it.

Unfortunately, in a room this size there are people who have suffered from both teaching. Maybe someone told you that salvation was based on your performance. It's not true! Ephesians 2 says salvation is a gift you can have, not something to earn. Or maybe you have been lured by those wooing you toward the wide gate. I promise there are answers to your questions. Come and ask us! We would love to help.

So now we know their schemes, how do we spot false teachers? For the sake of time, I'll just tell you who they are. I've got pictures. Ha, just kidding. So, how do we spot them? You spot false teachers by their fruit.

Jesus says in verse 20 "you will know them by their fruit." You will notice that Jesus changes the metaphor because a wolf can be disguised, but a tree cannot.

16 You'll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

So, Jesus tells us to be fruit inspectors. In Galatians 5:22, we see that the fruits of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. Do they walk in the Spirit? Please don't mistake giftedness for Godliness. Just because someone can draw a crowd, it doesn't make them Godly. Godly people bear Christ-like fruit.

John Stott says that there are 2 ways to test a false teacher when it comes to examining their fruit. The fruits of the Spirit perfectly mirror Christ's life so...

Fruit test:

1. Character and conduct.

Is their life characterized by Christlikeness? No one lived the fruits of the Spirit like Christ. So, do they display the meekness and gentleness of Christ, in love, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control? If so, then they probably aren't a false teacher. However, time is a good indicator of this. Time always reveals. Sin has a way of exposing itself.

Do they deflect the praise of man and redirect it to toward God? Does it seem like this teacher is in it for God's Glory or their own?

2. The content of their teaching.

What are they actually teaching? Are they teaching the Bible? Now, I want to be careful here. Every teacher, including myself, is a sinner. We're not perfect. We may not explain every text as well as we would like. We need to be charitable and honor those who bring us the word. 1 Timothy 5:17 says that the elders who direct the affairs of the church are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. But, there are those who twist scripture, lie, and deceive. So ask yourself, where is this teacher getting this from? If it ain't in the Bible, you should be concerned.

I'm also not saying that we need to blast teachers that might disagree with us on secondary issues. For example, I have close friends who are Presbyterians. We disagree on Baptism. I think my friends are dead wrong about Baptism, but they're not false teachers. False teachers deny the gospel. They deny the core tenants of our Faith. The Trinity, salvation by grace through faith, the virgin birth, Jesus' sinless life, the resurrection of Christ. If those things are denied, then we know they are false teachers.

I do feel the need to expose a particular false teaching that is killing the church in America and around the world: Prosperity Gospel. The prosperity gospel promotes a form of Christianity that is completely unbiblical. I won't share names, but let's expose their idea. It sounds something like this, "If you just believe more then you will be more comfortable. If you pray enough, God will bring you a comfortable lifestyle. We will send you this vial of holy water, if you send us a donation of this amount. If you have enough faith you will get everything you want." Prosperity gospel, preys on people! It keeps people enslaved to their philosophy, because if we just hold on a little longer, your blessing is almost there. Keep giving us money. Wrong! Listen, vs. 19 says that every tree that doesn't bear fruit will be thrown into the fire. God will judge false teachers according to what they have done, and the people that they have led astray.

Listen church, as Christians, we're not promised prosperity in this life. We're promised suffering. We're called to pick up our cross and die to ourselves. When we gave our lives to Jesus, we surrendered all rights to him. A blank check. He's got the keys. The only the prosperity we're promised for believers comes after we die, and we stand before our Father, and he says well done!

Unfortunately, due to these false teachings and false teachers, we have Christians who don't feel secure in their salvation. They walk around worried to death that God is mad at them and that they don't have favor because they sinned. And there are also people who think they are okay with God when they are not. They think that because they are a "good person" or because they are better than the next guy, surely he would let me in.

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' 23 Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!'

Jesus takes us to what we will all one day face. Judgment day. Jesus said that on this day, not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord,' will enter into heaven. Only the ones who did the will of his father will be allowed entrance (i'll explain more on that in a minute). And a lot people are going to say, wait, Lord, look at all of these things I did for you. I'm a good person, I promise. My good outweighed my bad. I even prophesied in your name, drove out demons in your name, and did miracles in your name. And then Jesus said to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!

Wow! I mean this could knock you off your feet, right. What?! Jesus is saying that there are people who are going to be completely shocked upon meeting Jesus on Judgement day. This means that there are people out there and people currently in this room that think that they are okay, and they aren't! This has got to be one of the most frightening verses in all of the Bible.

But the question is, if they have done all of these things why doesn't Jesus let them in? Because they've got it all wrong. Notice their rebuttal, Look at what we have done for you, Jesus. No, church come close and lean in. A Christian who truly understands the gospel would never show up to Jesus and show him our good works. Because on that day we know that they mean nothing. When we get there and are asked why we should be let in, we can confidently say because Jesus performed in my place. Because of my sin I needed a righteousness that's outside of myself. Jesus lived perfectly for me, and on the cross my sins we're placed on him. I didn't do a thing. All I did was receive the gift he offered.

So, If you are a Christian, and this verse gives you unrest. It's probably because you have momentarily forgotten the gospel. You have fallen back into Jesus plus my works will earn favor. Stop! Christ purchased salvation for you. Stop and rest in the gospel.

This week I met with one of our college students, Trey Williford, and he said something so simple but profound. He said, "**The gospel is the first thing you learn when you become a Christian, and it's the first thing you forget when you're a Christian.**" Ha! So true!

So, Jesus said in verse 21 that "only the one who does the will of my father will enter into heaven. What is that? Let's look at 24-27. "**24 Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.**" So, Jesus is telling us that a wise man builds his house on the rock...

25 The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash."

We see here that there is a storm where wind blows and rain falls, and pounds the house. What does this storm mean? It's the storm of Judgement day (Isaiah 28; Ezekiel 13). He also just what he finished talking about judgement in the previous verses. We all have a house, but where is our foundation? Is it on the rock or on sand?

So, Jesus is telling us that a wise man builds his house on the rock and the foolish man builds their house on sand. So, when you build a house you build on a foundation that you know will be strong. The problem is that the wise man and foolish man are both confident in their foundations. Why do I know that? No one purposefully builds on sand, by sand it means destruction. Unfortunately, some will think they have built on the rock but it will be sand.

So what is the rock? The rock is obedience to Jesus Christ! The first piece of obedience is that they follow Jesus' call of salvation through narrow gate. If you repent from your sin and surrender your life to him and follow him is the first step in obedience to him.

But what is the evidence of someone who has built their house on the rock? Vs. 24 tells us: **24 Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.** The evidence of someone who has built their house on the rock is that they live in this new kind of obedience! The one who obey Christ's commands, simply because they love Him is the evidence that they have placed their house on the rock. True followers of Jesus know that Jesus performed perfectly in their place, so we're free to obey Christ out of love, not duty. We radically obey him in everything because we're in love! All we want to do is please our daddy in heaven, because we're so thankful. And when we die, we will get to heaven and he will say "Well done, my good and faithful servant." So, Christian. Remember, the gospel. Jesus performed for you. So just love him. Obey him in Joy! Your house is on the rock.

But if you don't know Jesus, please beware. You're building your house on sand that will not stand up to judgement. If you think that being a good person will get you through judgement you've built on sand. If you think that your good works will earn you a spot, you're foundation is sand. But there is good news for

you. Today you can put your foundation in Christ! Jesus lived the life that you could never live. He died the death that you deserve because of your sin, and he died for you. He died for your sins. All you need to do is turn to him. Believe that he died for your sins and came back from the dead to reconcile you back with the father that made you. Please do that today!

Let's pray: