

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt. 18

Jesus now concludes His Sermon on the Mount, the opposite way of how he started. He began with the beatitudes, but now He ends with four warnings.

1. Choose the Narrow Gate

Matt 7:13-14

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Years ago, Led Zeppelin had a huge hit with the song, "Stairway to Heaven". In were these lyrics, "Yes, there are two paths you can go by, but in the long run, there's still time to change the road you're on."

Like most people who buy into Eastern philosophy, they believe that there are multiple paths to heaven. Also, like most people, they think there's plenty of time to make up your mind which road to choose.

Jesus is clear that there is only one way, and that way is narrow and hard. This world's philosophy is to "go along to get along". Jesus says that we need to make a choice even though it may not be the popular or easy choice. The easy choice only leads to death, eternal death. The time is now to make the choice. No one has tomorrow guaranteed.

2. Choose to Bear Good Fruit

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Today, we have people telling us that every depravity, deviancy, and aberration is normal and should be accepted if you really call yourself a Christian, because after all, being a Christian is about love and not judging. It all sounds nice and reasonable, but it goes against the teachings of the Bible. You don't have to have the gift of discernment to know that these are false teachings. Jesus tells us that they are wolves in sheep's clothing. So how do you know the difference? Look at their fruit.

The life of these modern-day prophets (media influencers) and the results of their influence on others are the fruits that will show whether or not their message is consistent with the Kingdom of Righteousness. It's easy to pull out a verse out of context to bolster your message, but is it consistent with the whole Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation?

No one is perfect. Not me, Charlene, Kevin, Lou, or anyone in leadership. From time to time, we'll make a mistake, but hopefully we will quickly repent and correct it. However, you can look at our lives over a period of weeks, months or even years and see the consistency of our fruit.

These other prophets are a flash in the pan and soon their fruit becomes evident. Woe to them because God won't let them get away with their lies and blasphemy forever. Ultimately, they will be accountable to God and they will suffer the wrath of hell, the eternal lake of fire, separation from God for eternity.

3. Choose to be Known by Him

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

But it's not just in the media that you find these wolves. They're easy to identify. More and more I see videos on YouTube exposing many of the mega-preachers of our day and the subtle lies that they are preaching about wealth, sexuality, sin and their focus on positivity rather than the Gospel.

People will follow them because they are great preachers, and they seem to have great gifts and may even do mighty works. None of these things are proof of the Father's will because they come from a place of greed and selfishness. They might have done these things in His name, but the source was not His Holy Spirit.

As we've seen in Matthew, Jesus has tremendous compassion and patience for sinners of all kinds.

The people that make His blood boil are people who are supposed to be religious leaders who are more interested in fame, power, and status, than they are with serving God and communicating His message to the people. In His sight, they are the worst sinners of all because they used the Gospel for their own benefit.

Paul says this of those who serve as elders in the church, ***"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching."*** (1 Tim 5:17-18)

While this is true of those who serve faithfully, those who abuse their positions to preach a different Gospel will find themselves tossed aside and suffering the same eternal fire as those who reject Christ.

While this is a warning to leaders, this is also a warning to those who choose to follow those leaders. Just confessing the name of Jesus is not enough if it is not accompanied by a repentant heart.

4. Choose to Build Your House on the Rock

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Jesus brings his Sermon on the Mount to a close by telling them a parable. He calls His audience to decide between Him and the religious establishment. He draws a dividing line between Himself and any other foundation for life, any other religion, any other philosophy. Those who believe in Him will obey Him and do His will. God's love language is obedience.

The rock is that He is talking about is not only acknowledging that He is the Christ, but also walking in obedience to His will.

Later on, in chapter 16 Peter will say this about Jesus, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** (Matt 16:16). Jesus says that on that truth, on that rock, will He build His church.

We have to not only believe but obey His words. That is the only solid foundation.

Those who obey will yield good fruit. Those who obey Him will be wise.

James 1:5-6

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Conclusion

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Every week you hear me preach. Sometimes, you might even be moved, or it might spark something in your head that you hadn't thought about before.

That is all well and good.

Jesus had just spend the great part of a day preaching and it says that they were astonished.

They were impressed because he talked like someone with authority who knew the material firsthand. He wasn't quoting other rabbis, He was talking as someone who represented God Himself.

I remember that before I received my Doctorate, I had to stand in front of a panel of other Ph.D.'s and defend my thesis against all their questions. At first, it was a little intimidating, but I soon settled in because I knew that material backward and forward because I had written it. At the end, they told me how impressed they were.

Jesus spoke with authority because He spoke on behalf of the Father and was of one mind with Him.

All that is great, but being astonished by what He said, is not the same as making a decision to follow Him and obey His words.

I challenge you to make a decision to make your tomorrow different from your yesterday by choosing to follow Christ and obey His commands.