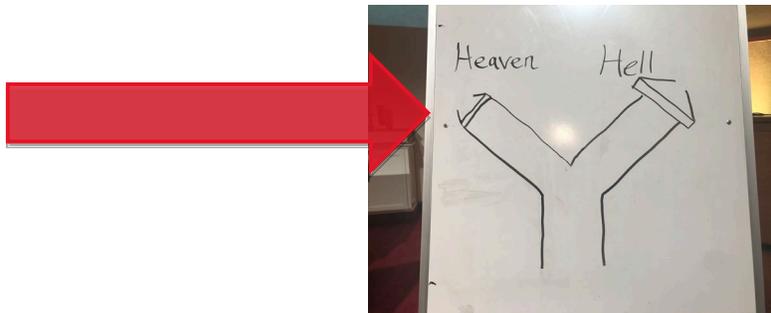


If we have not had the chance to meet, my name is Rick Methven. I am not one of the pastors here at Faith Church. I understand it is a common introduction for people who stand up here and talk, but it is not the case for me. I have been given the opportunity to speak today as Faith's youth ministry intern, and I would like to thank the Faith leadership and the congregation for giving me the chance to speak to you today. This IS my first-time preaching, but I want to speak today as if it is my last. I humbly ask God to not allow this to be the case, but I want to speak today as though I will never have the opportunity to speak to a church again, this is what I would want to talk about. Today, we are going to dive into something I not only feel our church needs to hear, but Christians as a whole, Christians in our community, and certainly something, as a Christian myself, I need to remind myself of constantly... and it is the idea of bearing good fruit. We will be going over exactly what this is, as we continue. I want to begin reading Mathew chapter 7; a portion of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," and if you have a Bible at home I would encourage you to follow along.

Verses 13 and 14 say this:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Jesus immediately paints us this picture of two paths, and they are not just random roads. He is talking about the road to heaven and the road to destruction, or hell.



This picture that Jesus puts in his audience's minds. This begs a question...how do I end up at this **gate**? It is also the question that I want us all to ponder over. You might think that knowing how to get to heaven is elementary knowledge for any Christian, but I want to challenge you today. I want to challenge our knowledge as Christians, and be sure that we are headed for **"this"** gate.

My goal, when I die, is to enter into an everlasting life spent with my Savior and Creator. I assume this is the goal of everyone in this room, all of you watching at home, and is probably a goal most people on earth would like to achieve one day. And yet, the Bible says few will enter. We do not know how many "few" means, but we do know there are a lot of people in our world who reject Christ, God, and religion as a whole. It is likely those who have not accepted Christ, God, or religion will not make it to heaven.

It is one thing to hear people who choose to reject Christ are not going to enter heaven, but it is completely different when we hear that someone who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior, does not always make it.

We get this from Matthew 7 verse 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 who is in heaven."

This is a powerful verse. There are probably few verses which will be more shocking for any religious person. This is because Jesus is not just saying the “many” people who enter the wide gate are all non-believers. This verse tells us that even people who profess Jesus as Lord, are not always admitted into heaven. In this case, it is not a person who turns away from God, it is someone who professes faith in God, and is unfortunately turned away by God, at the gate of heaven. So, why is this the case?

According to a recent poll in the US, about 78% of Americans believe in God. Would you have guessed that? I would not have. According to the same poll, about 70%, 7/10 people in the US believe that Jesus is the Son of God and claim to be Christians! ...Would you have guessed that? If not, I wonder why... Perhaps because claiming to be a Christian takes little effort, and living the way we are called to live by Jesus Christ is not quite so easy. We can claim to be a lot we are not.

When I was a freshman in high school, I sat beside a lunch table of seniors who offered us chips, in a suspicious Tupperware dish. We thought nothing of it at the time, and my entire table of peers took the chips gratefully. They looked like my favorite type of chip, sweet and spicy chili, so I made sure to take one with a lot of seasoning. After eating the chip, I realized that my mouth was in great pain. All of the seniors at the table laughed; and I saw one of them pull out a black bag labeled ghost pepper seasoned chips...

---See those chips looked just fine to me! But once I got to know them a little better, I soon learned they were not everything they looked or claimed to be.

Looks can be deceiving, and that is the danger of comparing ourselves to other Christians... Looking at their lives and thinking “I’m better than them and they’re a Christian” doesn’t get us anywhere. It is dangerous because, when it comes to the gate of heaven, God is not deceived. So how do we avoid the same fate as the people Jesus describes in this verse?

I would like you to underline two words, if you are taking notes or have a Bible in front of you...The two words to underline are SAYS...and DOES.

“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 who is in heaven.”

What Jesus is making abundantly clear here, is that one’s final destiny is not determined by what you say...it is determined also by what you DO.

Entering the kingdom of heaven is not JUST about profession. It is about obedience as well.

I would like to make two clarifications before moving on:

1. Profession is not only a good thing, but it is necessary... **Romans 10:9** *Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord*
2. Good things do not get you into heaven! We can’t earn our salvation. **Isiah 64:6** *says even our righteousness is like filthy rags.*

What Heaven requires is a profession of faith, backed up by obedience. James makes this very clear for the life of a true Christian in James 2, verses 14-18...

James 2:14-18 ...

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

James is not saying profession in faith is meaningless. He is saying it is meaningless, if it is not accompanied by deeds.

This is what Jesus says about it...

John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

What determines a genuine disciple of Christ from someone who only professes Jesus as Lord?...Fruit!

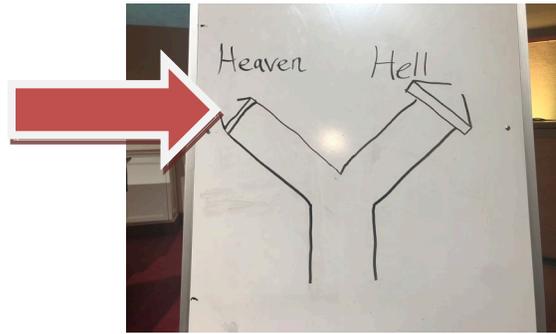
Bearing good fruit, acting on our faith, is what displays what we proclaim! Jesus teaches that some of His followers are lovely, fruit-bearing branches of himself... but others are useless because they bear no fruit. He is talking about Christians. He is talking about people who consist of profession, but are without practice, words without deeds, people who are all leaves and no fruit.

Bearing fruit is our demonstration of faith, and it is necessary for entering heaven. Being obedient to God, not falling away from His teaching after accepting the message He gives us is our demonstration of faith in Him.

How do you tell your parents you love them? Not by saying "hey mom and dad I love you" and then turning your back, walking to the kitchen, opening up the china cabinet, and smashing your mom's favorite plate off the tile floor! No! You can say you love them OVER AND OVER, but it is not going to mean a thing, if you break a plate every time! You demonstrate it. Love drives obedience. Faith without practice is a contradiction in terms, just as love without obedience is completely impossible. How do we show our true faith in God?... by demonstrating it. Not by living like the world, but by living like Jesus.

Profession is valueless, if it stands alone. It is necessary, but valueless if it stands alone. Let me be clear though... this is not to say that doing good things saves us. We cannot earn our salvation. Obeying God is necessary, but I have to have faith in Him as well! I can be an atheist and go off and do good things for people, this does not mean I'll be saved. I am an atheist!... I can also claim Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and go off and live like the world. Neither of them prove anything about my faith... they go hand in hand. Faith and Fruit.

It's like fishing, you need a hook and a worm. I can throw a worm in the water and bring over every fish in the creek, but if I don't have a hook I'm not pulling in a single one! If I throw a hook in the water, I'm gonna pull in every fish that bites it...except none are going to bite it. If my goal is to catch a fish, I need both.



If my goal, if your goal, if every single Christian's goal is to get to **THIS GATE**.. we must have both faith and fruit.

The Bible says "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

So..how do we begin to do this?

Here's what bearing fruit looks like.. the fruit of the spirit!

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Are these all things that we perfect every single day? No! Certainly not. But here's some good news: When Jesus asks us to bear good fruit, he expects us to fail sometimes. And we will! We are not perfect, but bearing good fruit does not take perfection! It takes repentance.

The passage says If you "remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit." Jesus is the vine, we are the branches. Apart from Him we cannot achieve this. How do we begin to bear good fruit in our lives? By setting our eyes on Jesus. Remaining in Him. Bearing fruit is a result of repenting from living like we never knew Christ. We don't become more faithful by comparing ourselves to the Christians we see living all around us, but by comparing ourselves to the Christian that God wants us to be. There are good Christians to model after, but remember that looks are deceiving.

Faith is not like a flu shot... "Oh I did that, now I'm safe" No, it takes continual repentance, it takes a change in lifestyle. God never stops working in our lives.

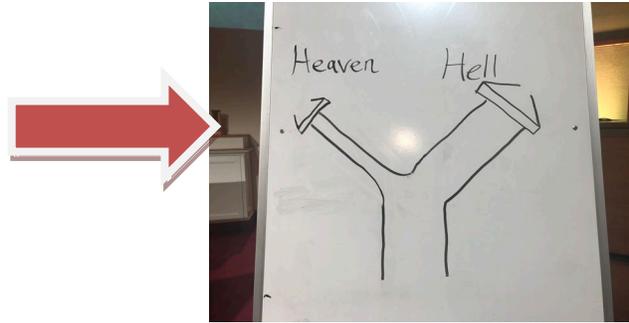
We KNOW that God is working in us when we get off of this road and the holy spirit comes and puts us back on! "When we remain in God and God remains in us," He disciplines us.

When we allow something as big as God to come into our life, we know it. We can be certain of it. If you got hit by a tractor trailer, you'd know it, you wouldn't leave that incident unscathed. If something as big as the God of the universe has entered your life, I promise you there will be a change. The Bible says we will be a new creation. We cannot make this change on our own. If our goal is to bear fruit and be His disciples, He must be working in us.

Jesus said himself:

John 15:4 (second half)

"No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."



I want to close with this final point. The earlier illustration is completely wrong. This is not the illustration of which Jesus teaches during the Sermon on the Mount. It's wrong because Jesus not only says the gate is narrow... He says narrow is the ROAD that leads to life. This part is not to be skipped. Which road are we on? The **narrow road** is the road to life that Jesus calls His followers to follow Him on. We can't take the "wide road" and arrive at the "narrow gate." You can't take I-80 to go to Florida. **Yes**, Jesus forgives, **Yes**, Jesus forgets our past sin, but what does real repentance look like from His followers?

The person who says "Lord, Lord" was not turned away because they were a sinful person, we're all sinful people... they were turned away because their faith was made up of words.

How can you be certain about where you're going if you died right now? It's not just by calling Christ, Lord. Satan understands full well Christ is Lord.

Is Jesus going to recognize our faith, when we meet Him one day? Does the Holy Spirit get us back on track, when we become lost? Is God working in us, so that we may work for Him?
Are we branches that are attached to the vine?

As His followers, my prayer this morning, is for every one of us to begin to recognize what it means to be a follower. Instead of fooling ourselves about where we're going to end up, we would live as Christ called us, putting His will before our own. As His disciples, we will bear good fruit, so that one day we spend eternity where we belong.