

PP The King and His Kingdom-*The Cautions for a Disciple of Christ*
Part 31-Matthew 7:21-23

10/14-15/2017

It's hunting season and I often remember a local farmer in my town who each year, set up a fake looking 10 point buck about 125 yards off the road in his field across from his house
 Each year, hunters would drive by and see it, pull over, take out their gun and shoot
 The hope that they could get a quick trophy buck was too enticing to ignore, even though illegal
 But the most interesting part of this was that the farmer, John Fox, was one of our town judges
 And many an illegal hunter met him face to face in the courtroom
 Jesus is about to give His second caution, and this too will involve a courtroom, a Judge, and many people as fake as that decoy buck

“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.” 7:21

Someone asked me last week if I thought that false prophets knew they were false, and my answer was that except in rare cases, I believe they were and are, self-deceived

PP The double use of ***‘Lord, Lord’*** is intense, which marks their profession as intense

All across America churches will feature a part of a worship service called the Altar Call
 The pastor closes the sermon, music typically begins, and people are exhorted to come forward to make a decision for Jesus Christ

I've been asked many times why we do not often do altar calls at our church
 Interestingly, Jesus didn't employ the altar call, which was in fact invented 300 years ago
 George Whitefield, Jonathon Edwards and John Wesley passionately called people to come to Christ by faith, but they never even heard of an altar call

Altar calls at first were for the spiritually interested to gather for insight, counseling and prayer
 In the 1800's, Camp Meetings began with multi-day meetings in Frontier States (Kentucky and Tennessee), and people would cry out, shriek, swoon and weep with what were believed to be evidences of the Holy Spirit

These began to diminish and in 1805, altar calls were started to measure spiritual responses
 The Father of altar calls was Charles Finney, who called fearful sinners to come forward and sit on an 'anxious bench' where he would ask them to decide then and there to get saved

PP Finney believed that *"A revival is not a miracle. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means"*, the preacher convinced the person to decide for Christ

So to bring people into the faith, the preacher needed to learn the right technique

While Finney fathered the altar call, Billy Graham perfected it, and it was the means for my own father's moment of salvation

While a person may become saved by a prayer at the altar, it is never entered into without faith in Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord

PP ***“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (Master) and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9***

There are some who argue a person must believe Christ as Savior, but it has no bearing on salvation whether they see or are willing to submit their lives to Him

They make a false distinction between being a follower of Jesus and His disciple

That is however, a foreign concept in the Jewish culture in the days of Jesus, and I'll explain

Just after the time of Christ, there was a change in how the title '*rabbi*' was used
 Famous teachers Hillel and Shammai were not called Rabbis, just their name with no title
 It was after 70 AD that teachers were known by the title Rabbi, which is why the era after that
 time became known as the rabbinic period

Prior to this period, teachers who gathered disciples were called '*sages*'

But you may right now be saying hold on, didn't people call Jesus Rabbi?

The answer is yes, but in a different sense

It was common, even before Jesus was born, for disciples to address their teachers as *rav* (In
 Hebrew, the b and v are often interchangeable), which meant '*master*' or '*great one*'

Rav was the same word a slave would use to address his owner, but when you add an *i*, making
rav-i-the *i* meaning '*my*'-you get '*my master*', or '*my great one*'

After 70 AD this became the title of a Jewish religious teacher, but in Jesus' day, *rabbi* was the
 used more often in the older sense of '*my master*'

It was the House of Hillel, or Shammai, indicating the view of the *rabbi* as the disciple's father

PP *"[the scribes and Pharisees] love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call
 them 'Rabbi.' "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and
 you are all brothers."* **Matthew 23:7-8 NIV**

That one Master was Himself, and He expected the obedience of His Talmid, His disciples

In other words, if His disciples were going to honor Him with a special title, it was expected to
 be accompanied by their obedience to Him

PP *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"* **Luke 6:46**

When Jesus said '**Follow Me**' to His disciples, it was a Jewish idiom that meant *Come and be
 with me as my disciple and submit to my authoritative teaching to become just like me*

But here, Jesus said many were asking to be His disciples, promising to submit, saying '**Lord,
 Lord**', but they were mere words that didn't translate into obedience

This moves us to ask the question likely on our minds: *Does Jesus mean that salvation is
 something that we gain by working for it doing the will of God?*

The answer is absolutely no, and it will unfold very subtly in the next two verses

And let me address that subtlety for a moment

In the Bible, revelation tends to be progressive and the gospel clearer as the biblical story unfolds

This is true as you start from Genesis and move toward Revelation; from Matthew to Revelation;
 and even from the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew to the end

In fact, Matthew as well as the entire Old Testament must be seen through the lens of the cross
 and resurrection, which hasn't yet happened at the time of this sermon being preached

PP *"Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of
 Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long
 ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made
 known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the
 obedience of faith"* **Romans 16:25-26**

Jesus was disclosing or making known the mystery kept secret in the past

Let's follow the subtle hints and we'll see two of them

PP i-*The self-deceived are their own defense attorneys*

True believers will not be declaring before the throne of Jesus all they have done for Him
They will be praising Him for all He has done for them

But for these false disciples, the motivation for their pleading will be terror and foreboding

“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?’ 7:22

They’ve already heard the judgment of Christ, and they become their own defense attorneys

Job longed for, pleaded for someone to mediate his case before God

PP “There is no arbiter [mediator] between us, who might lay his hand on us both” Job 9:33

What Job longed for was Someone Who can lay His hands on both Holy God and sinful self

PP “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” 1 Timothy 2:5-6

The ‘*many*’ standing one day before Jesus will have no one to mediate, no one to defend them

PP “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son” John 5:22

Friend, you and I will each stand one day before Jesus, and I would ask you, what is your confidence?

Will you appeal to your religious activities that you performed with seemingly good results?

People listened to your teaching and you made a difference in their lives

You helped the poor, started churches, organized relief efforts, went on mission trips

But you have no mediator and the evidence is you are left to defend yourself

How different for the Christian who will not need to defend self, for Jesus has no condemnation for you

You had come to Him in faith, trusting His death and resurrection to take away your guilt

You will not need to speak on your behalf, or claim your good works

You will be rewarded for what you have done for the glory of Christ and ushered into heaven

PP ii-The self-deceived are rejected by Jesus

“And then will I declare to them,” 7:23a

‘*declare*’ means confess and was a legal action in a court of law

PP The self-deceived professed their allegiance to Christ, but He confessed He never knew them

We are used to wondering if someone knows Jesus, but here, the critical question to ask is, does Jesus know that person?

‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ 7:23b

God has all knowledge and there is nothing He doesn’t know, so what does Jesus mean here?

PP ‘*know*’ here is relational knowledge, intimate, familiar knowledge

The emphasis is on ‘*never*’, so Jesus says, *I have never, at any point had a relationship with you*

The evidence is that these people were ‘*workers of lawlessness.*’ 7:23c

I need to remind you that Satan is in the business of deceiving people

PP “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

False prophets and teachers and pastors are the devil’s work-force

PP Saint John Chrysostom said in the 4th century, “*The road to Hell is paved with the bones of priests and monks, and the skulls of bishops are the lamp posts that light the path.*”

But no person will be able to offer a defense to God that the devil made them do it

People are deceivable because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved

What this means is that there is in every person, a nature of sin hostile to God

The problem is sin, and sin is much deeper than a behavior, or doing what we shouldn't do and not doing what we should do

Sin is more than a mistake, more than a misdeed

To recognize that you are a sinner is to understand that these mistakes and misdeeds are typical of me, not accidents or aberrations

To be a sinner is to be flawed at the deepest level of human-ness

Beatrice Webb lived in the late 1800's and early 1900's and was one of the main architects of the British welfare system

The industrial revolution was emerging, technological advances were exploding

There emerged that age-old confidence in the ability of mankind to better themselves

It's the lie called *humanism*, and it was peddled by liberalism in and out of the church

Beatrice was no exception to the excited believers in the inherent goodness of men and women

PP “*Somewhere in my diary—1890?—I wrote ‘I have staked all on the essential goodness of human nature...’ [Now thirty-five years later I realize] how permanent are the evil impulses and instincts in man—how little you can count on changing some of these—for instance the appeal of wealth and power—by any change in the [social] machinery...No amount of knowledge or science will be of any avail unless we can curb the bad impulse.*” Beatrice Webb

People can reform some habits, like addictions or stealing, but they cannot remove the bad impulse, the flawed, deep part of every person that is inclined toward evil and not good

It is as Kris Lundgaard said, ‘*the enemy within*’, the ‘*evil at our elbow*’

The bible calls it the sin nature, and it will never bend the knee to its only Savior, Jesus the Lord

An altar call by itself won't change that nature, and neither will the work-around of fabricating self-righteousness by doing religious and good things

The answer is the good news of the gospel

Jesus became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God

The moment you turn to Jesus in faith, the Father takes your sin and charges it to Jesus as if He committed all your sins

In the same moment, He takes all the righteousness and innocence of Jesus and credits it to you, as if you lived the sinless, blameless life of His Son

But this legal transaction isn't just a decoy buck out in a field mimicking the real thing

He gives you a new spiritual engine that moves you in new directions, powered by the fuel of the Holy Spirit, so you will learn to want to do what God says you ought to do

This is obedience powered by God's grace that says, ‘**Lord, Lord**’ and does the Father's will

And when you stand before Him, there will be no need to defend, no fear, for He has no condemnation of you

He has rewards for you, and one of the greatest rewards will be the treasured words, *'Well done...well done, my good and faithful servant, my true disciple'*

My greatest concern as a pastor is that some of you could be part of our church, believing you are saved only to discover when you stand before Christ that you were self-deceived

PP ***"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"*** **2 Corinthians 13:5**

Do you believe in Jesus, trusting Him for your salvation, and are you living out evidence of that?

Let's pray