

Does Jesus Know You?

Scripture Text: Matthew 7:21-23

Introduction

Last week, we read about a great sermon, the second recorded sermon of the Apostle Peter. In that sermon, Peter wrote how essential Jesus is for our salvation. Scripture declares that no one is good or seeks God (Romans 3:10-12). All people have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23, 5:8-10). And, the result of sin is death and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). You are a great sinner. You have broken God's law and are separated from Him. But thanks be to God there is hope. God has provided the only Way for salvation, to heaven and to eternal life. There is a name above all names, name that provides salvation. There is a Savior who is greater than your sin. His name is Jesus Christ. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we *must* be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Today, I would like to speak to you about another great sermon. I know this week there has been a lot of talk about Billy Graham, who delivered many great sermons during his life. God used Mr. Graham to share the Gospel to so many people in so many places. He certainly preached great sermons and receive many great responses from people who trusted in Christ as their Lord and Savior. But, there was an even greater preacher. Matthew chapter seven is the last section of the most famous sermon in history given by the most famous preacher of all time. It was the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where He gave the people several warnings. He warned them about not judging others. He encouraged them to ask and to seek God. He mentioned the most famous of "rules", the Golden Rule. Then, Jesus warned the crowd of several things.

The Choice of Twos

Jesus concluded His Sermon on the Mount giving *four basic warnings in twos*:

There are two gates and roads for people to choose, a wide one and a narrow one, and few will find the narrow one which leads to life (vss. 13–14);

There are two kinds of prophets, a true one who does good and a false one who is a ravenous wolf in sheep's clothing. Jesus described these prophets as good and bad trees, one that produces good fruit and the other that produces bad fruit (vss. 15–20);

There are two kinds of disciples, one who does the Father's will and enters heaven, and the other who works lawlessness and is unknown by Jesus (vss. 21–23);

Finally, there are two foundations for life, a firm one based on the Word of God, and an unstable one that represents not obeying the God's Word (vss. 24–27).

It is in context of these four warnings, and specifically the good tree and the bad tree that Jesus talked about who will enter heaven and those He never knew.

Who Enters the Kingdom of Heaven?

Who wants to go to heaven? Everyone wants to go to heaven, but not right now. When I was young, I did not know much about Jesus, but I knew I wanted to go to heaven. I knew I did not want to go to the other place. Of course, at a young age I was not thinking about death and eternity much. I thought I had plenty of time. The truth is that we are not promised another day. We are not promised another hour. Each one of us could leave this place, leave this life, and enter eternity. The question is: Which eternity will you go - to everlasting life or to everlasting death? When Jesus mentioned about the false prophets being bad trees, He also revealed their fate. He said every diseased tree bears bad fruit and will be cut down and thrown into the “fire”. The only thing bad trees are good for is *firewood*, a striking metaphor of the future judgment for false prophets. Then Jesus talked about true and false disciples. Look at the following verse.

Matthew 7:21 *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.*

Does this passage scare anyone? It probably should concern many people. If you are someone interested in going to heaven, you will want to understand this passage. Jesus clearly stated that not everyone who calls Him “Lord” will enter heaven. There will be people who call Jesus “Lord”, but who will not enter heaven. We will take a look at the meaning of that statement in a moment, but first, let us consider who will enter heaven. Who does God allow into His kingdom of heaven? According to this passage, those who will enter heaven do the will of God the Father. What really matters to Jesus is those who do the will of the Father. This probably begs the question, “What is the will of God?” Throughout Matthew, the “will of God” means obedience to God’s commands by following Jesus. We see something like this elsewhere. Look at the following passage.

Mark 3:31–35 ³¹ *And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.* ³² *And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.”* ³³ *And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?”* ³⁴ *And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!”* ³⁵ *For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Some people do not understand Jesus responding to His earthly mother in this way, but Jesus was using this moment to teach an important truth about who is His true family. The true family of Jesus included those who were sitting around Him. They were those who were following Him. They were also those who were *doing the will of God*. Those who had chosen to follow Jesus were His true family and they were doing the will of God. This is the will of God, that we follow Jesus and have an intimate relationship with His Son. These are the ones who will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Calling Jesus “Lord” is Not Enough

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.” Apparently, there will be some who call Jesus “Lord” who will not enter heaven. This may seem puzzling since one of the explanations for becoming saved is to call upon Jesus and to confess Him as Lord. Look at the following verses.

Romans 10:9, 13 ⁹ ...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

What do we make of this? Notice that the passage in Romans refers to “confession” and to “believing”. Confession is acknowledging something is true. Believing involves faith and trust. Thus, there is an outward profession of an inward faith. What if one does not have that inward faith? What if one is just saying the words, saying “Jesus is Lord”, but does not truly believe in Him? Put another way, what if a person calls Jesus “Lord”, but does not really follow Jesus and sit at His feet, like the disciples who were Jesus’ true family doing the will of God? It is possible that people say they follow Christ, but do not. The church must guard against false prophets and false disciples. Someone giving an oral confession of Jesus as Lord does not *always* indicate a repentant heart.

“On that day” refers to the day when everyone will have to give an account to God. We may know this day as Judgement Day. It is a day we will all face. What will you say on that day when God asks you on what basis He should allow you into heaven? What will you say? It is insufficient to just simply say “Jesus is Lord”. You must sincerely confess Jesus’ lordship. You must sincerely believe in Christ as your only Savior. You must commit your life to Jesus and trust in His sacrifice as the only means for salvation. And just like false prophets, you will know false disciples by the fruit they bear. Remember, a good tree must bear good fruit. If the Holy Spirit truly dwells within a person, it will show!

Doing Good Things Will Not Save You

Just as a false confession will not earn you a ticket to heaven, relying on good works will not save you, either. Are you good enough? Have you done enough good in your life to earn your place in heaven? Earlier in this chapter, Jesus indicated that it is possible to determine *true Christians* by their behavior, by what they do or say. A good tree will produce good fruit, whereas a bad tree will produce only bad fruit. Spiritually speaking, those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior, have been transformed by God’s grace, and have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, must produce spiritually good fruit. One who does not abide in Christ, who does not really know Jesus as Lord and Savior, cannot help but produce spiritually bad fruit, or at the most, spiritually counterfeit fruit. It is possible for people to do seemingly good “Christian” acts, good works, but not have a saving faith that puts them in the kingdom of heaven. Look at the following verse.

Matthew 7:22 *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?”*

The world seems fixated on good deeds as a requirement for going to heaven. That thinking has infected the church. There is no doubt that we are called to do good, but we are not required to do good in order to enter heaven. Good deeds *alone* are also not evidence of fellowship with Christ. If we have not already received the gift of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, then none of the good deeds we do will matter in eternity. Mighty works are not proof of the Father's will since they can come from sources other than God, including demons. False disciples may do things in Jesus' name but their activities are meaningless because they deceive themselves and other believers, desiring attention for their own works. The problem is not that there is no fruit, but that their fruit is counterfeit. The false prophets may claim it is genuine, but Jesus knows who are truly His own. Look at the following verse.

Matthew 7:23 *And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."*

On the last day many will call Jesus "Lord" and claim they prophesied, cast out demons, and performed miracles, all in His name. Jesus will not deny their claims but will instead reject them as evildoers. Many will do things "in Jesus' name" but He never knew them. Jesus saying that He "never knew you" show that these people were never truly His disciples. This expression is similar to Old Testament passages in which God's knowledge of His people implies a personal relationship, not merely an awareness of facts. Jesus never knew them with a personal saving knowledge, because they lacked the requirement to enter the kingdom: *obedience to the Father's will*. Jesus even refers to these people in a way that truly shows their heart. He called them "workers of lawlessness". This probably meant that they took a lax view of the law and the need to obey it. Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17), so those who disregard the law are not genuine disciples no matter how many good or spectacular deeds they perform.

It is worth emphasizing, however, that one can never know with absolute certainty the spiritual state of any other individual. Jesus says that He will one day condemn people to hell, something that only God can do. Though these condemned prophets appeared to belong to Jesus, they were never truly saved, for Jesus never knew them. They may have claimed to know Jesus, they may have said they were His disciples, they may have done good things "in His name", but in the end, they never really knew Him and Jesus never knew them. Jesus' disciples must be on guard against these counterfeit disciples who will lead them away from the narrow road of repentance and down the wide street of lawlessness.

Conclusion

In closing, without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, religious words, a simple prayer learned from someone else, or good works, such as attending church, filling positions of leadership in the church, serving on a committee or board, and doing acts of service, even as good as they may be, will have no eternal value. The question is whether you have a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Billy Graham once said, "When you reach Heaven, there will be no opportunity to brag

of your exploits, your ambitions, or the joys of your pleasure; but you will have eternity to rejoice in how you lived your life *for Jesus because of His grace in you.*”

How are you living for Jesus? It is not those who call Jesus “Lord” or do good works that matter to Jesus. What really matters to Jesus are those who do the will of the Father - which at least means following His Son. Are we doing things “in the name of Jesus” without really knowing Him? Does Jesus know us? What will Jesus tell you when you meet Him after this life is over? Will He say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master?” Will He say, “I never knew you; depart from me.” What will Jesus say to you?