

Sermon Series: *Jesus Said What?*



I Never Knew You, Depart From Me

Matthew 7:13-23 (ESV)

¹³ "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.

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.

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. 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.'"

Introduction

Life can be quite complicated when you have to choose between a dozen good choices. However, it can become beautifully simple when your choices are limited to just two—what is good and what is bad.

The writer and comedian Robert Benchley said, "There are two kinds of people in the world, those who think there are two kinds of people in the world, and those who don't." There is beautifully simple truth in that sentence. The passage that was just read to us is the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus concludes the sermon with the same kind of simplicity.

As he wraps up his teaching, he calls upon every listener to make a decision. He narrows the field of options down to two and then calls upon the listener to choose. In verses 13-14 he says there are two kinds of gates—one that leads to life and one that leads to death. In verses 15-20, he mentions two kinds of prophets—those who bear good fruit and those who bear bad fruit. And then in verses 21-23 he says there are two kinds of disciples—those who are allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven and those who are not.¹

What Jesus is teaching here is virtually the same as what Moses taught the children of Israel just before he died.

(Deuteronomy 30:15-20 ESV)

¹⁵ "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the Lord your God,

¹ In verses 24-27 he teaches about two kinds of foundations, the rock and the sand, but we will not discuss these today.

obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

From the beginning of time, there has been an understanding that there is a way of living that God blesses and a way of living that he curses. The first words that God spoke to Adam revealed that God blessed obedience with the reward of life and that he cursed disobedience with the punishment of death. This characteristic of God has not changed. It would be contrary to the nature of God and contrary to a true sense of justice to reward both obedience and disobedience with the same blessing, wouldn't it?

We may give the same trophy to both the winners and the losers in our kid's town soccer tournament, but God's standards of judgment is not based upon human definition of justice. If we have the notion that God must base his judgments upon our understanding of what is good and fair, then we have created in our own minds a god that is very different from the God who revealed himself to us in Scripture.



The God who created the world and everything in it is a God who blesses obedience with the reward of life and curses disobedience with the punishment of death. Every human being then has a choice to make—to obey him by doing his will or disobey him by doing our own will.

When we look at life in this way, it becomes very simple. Will I choose the good of obedience or the bad of disobedience? Will I choose life or will I choose death? This is the same choice Adam had. This is the choice we have. Jesus illustrates this choice in three ways: we must choose between two gates, two kinds of prophets, and two kinds of disciples.

Two Kinds of Gates

If Jesus is telling the truth, then all roads do not lead to a happy eternity with God. Jesus teaches that there are two gates; one leads to heaven and one leads to hell. One leads to life and the other death. Here's what Jesus taught to a crowd of people sitting on a sloping, grassy hill near the sea of Galilee.

Matthew 7:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ *"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."*

There are two gates through which we each must each enter into eternity. There is a narrow gate and wide gate. The wide gate is easy to get through, but it leads to destruction. Many people will choose to take this gate because it is not difficult. It has a roomy entrance and it's the one through which the majority of people are entering. Those who go through this gate are deceived. They think its a good choice, but it leads to death. The wide, easy gate swings smoothly, but it leads down to death. This is the way by which most people will go.

The narrow gate is very different. It is hard and unpopular. Not many people will enter by that gate. Jesus says there will only be just a few. Only a few are willing to endure the hardships and difficulty that are required to pass through the narrow gate. But the narrow gate is the only gate that leads to life.

Jesus repeatedly warned that following him would not be easy. In fact, he said that following him would necessarily mean suffering.

John 16:33 (ESV)

³³ *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

Acts 14:22 (ESV)

²² *strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

¹² *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

1 Peter 5:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Mark 13:13 (ESV)

¹³ *And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

Not many people are willing to endure hardship and difficulty for the sake of the name of Jesus. But those who do, will find their lives saved, even if they die in the process.²

On another occasion someone asked Jesus about this.

² (Luke 21:17-19 ESV) ¹⁷ *You will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your lives.*

(Luke 13:23-24 ESV)

23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

The word for strive is *agonazo*. From this word, we have our word 'agonize.' Jesus is saying don't let anything keep you from entering the narrow door that leads to life. Don't let anything keep you out of heaven. Strive to enter. If this is a hard truth, that you have difficulty with, then don't give up striving with it. Don't stop wrestling with your doubts. Keep coming to Jesus and talking to him about this. Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking on his door. Keep reading the Bible. Don't stop reading the Bible.

The truth is in here. This is a hard truth, but Jesus on multiple occasions affirmed it. Jesus taught the Parable of the Wedding Feast to illustrate this truth. The point of the parable is that,

(Matthew 22:14 ESV)

14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

Even though, when compared with those who take the wide gate, the number of those who take the narrow gate is few, there will still be a countless multitude of those who will pass through the narrow gate and be saved.

(Revelation 7:9 ESV)

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

Enter by the Narrow Gate

Please hear the command of Jesus, "**Enter by the narrow gate.**" Jesus wants you to join him in his kingdom. He does not want you to take the wide gate that leads down to death and destruction. He wants you to be with him. I beg you listen to his words. Hear the pleading in his voice. Don't die. Why would you turn away from him and go down an easy path that leads you into destruction? Why would you fail to trust him? Turn around today, right now, and run to him in faith. Run back up the hill and take the narrow gate. You'll find him waiting for you with arms open wide. Come home to Jesus today. Don't delay.

Two Kinds of Prophets

Jesus now warns that there are two kinds of prophets. There are true prophets and false prophets.

Matthew 7:15-20 (ESV)

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.

There are two kinds of prophets. There are true prophets and there are false prophets. Jesus says, "**Beware of false prophets.**" "Beware" means "to be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately."³ It means to actively watch out for. There have always been false prophets and there always will be false prophets. There are people in this world who claim to be ministers of God but who are actually ministers of Satan—whether they know it or not.⁴ There are preachers who claim to speak God's word but who actually twist it for their own purposes. They appear as innocent as sheep, but "**inwardly they are ravenous wolves.**" Not all preachers speak the word of God. Not all ministers are truly ministers of God.

Recognize them by Their Fruit

How are we supposed to tell the difference between true prophets and false prophets? Jesus says, twice (v.16 & 20), "**You will recognize them by their fruits.**" You will recognize false prophets by the fruit of their lives. Jesus says, "**Are grapes gathered from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles?**" The answer, of course, is no. Thorns and thistles do not yield grapes or figs.

Grapes and figs are useful for sustaining life. They are food for the body. They are sweet and provide nourishment. Thorn-bushes and thistles cut and wound. They do not produce any fruit. They drain life they do not give life.



Assessing the fruit of one's life takes time. You may not immediately be able to discern whether or not someone is a false prophet, but over time you will. Fruit does not mature immediately but it does over time. Over time you will see the result of one's life and ministry. In order to truly understand if someone is a false prophet, you must look at the result of their ministry. Are people edified? Are they strengthened? Do they give life or take it? Do people thrive under their ministry, or are they stifled?

Jesus says that false prophets "**inwardly are ravenous wolves.**" Wolves seek only to feed themselves. They never labor to feed others. False prophets ultimately think only of themselves

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 332.

⁴ Jn 8:41-44.

and seek to fatten themselves off of the labor of others. Wolves consume and care nothing for the truth, but will say only what is easy for the many to hear.

False prophets will come with easy messages. In the Old Testament the false prophets were those who 1) denied that God would judge sin, 2) they condoned sexual immorality and greed, and 3) during periods of corporate rebellion, they cried out "peace, peace, when there was no peace."⁵ The false prophets of today are not much different. The false prophets of today are those who proclaim as righteousness what God proclaims is sin.

The apostle John helps us identify false prophets. A false prophet is one who denies that Jesus is God's only chosen messiah.

(1 John 2:22-23 ESV)

²² Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

Christ is not Jesus' last name. It is his title. 'Christ' means "God's anointed messiah." God only anointed *one* messiah, not many. Even the demons recognized this truth. Jesus once confronted a man possessed by a demon and the demon said,

(Mark 1:24 ESV)

²⁴ "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are— the Holy One of God."

The disciples also came to believe this. Peter, speaking on behalf of all the disciples said,

(John 6:69 ESV)

⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.

Jesus is the Holy *ONE* of God. Jesus alone is God's holy Son. There is no other savior but Jesus alone. Anyone who denies that Jesus is God's uniquely chosen messiah and his only Son, is not in a saving relationship with God the Father.

1 John 2:23

²³ "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."

This is not a message that false prophet will proclaim. False prophets will claim the exact opposite. False prophets will proclaim a false message. False prophets will never proclaim this truth because it's too hard. It's too narrow. False prophets will proclaim a broad message that

⁵ Jer 6:14; 8:11; Ez 13:10.

is inclusive of all people and all religions. False prophets will proclaim that God is love and he would never send anyone to hell. It is true that God is love. God loved us so much that he sent his one and only son, Jesus, to spill his blood in order to save our souls. But God will not open his arms in love to people who reject his only son, who is the only provision for their salvation. God will send to hell all those who ignore the soul-saving sacrifice of eternal Son.

Two Kinds of Disciples

It is a hard truth that not everyone will get into heaven. And Jesus makes this abundantly clear.

Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)

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. 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.'"

One of the most dangerous situations you can be in is when you think you're safe and yet your standing on the edge of a life and death situation.

My brother worked a summer in the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina. Late one afternoon he and some friends hiked up into the mountains. They reached a lookout as the sun was setting and stopped.



As night was beginning to fall, a mist began to settle in around them. Mike saw a rock some distance away and he decided to walk out to it to take in the view. As he started for the rock he had to pass by one of his coworkers seated on a rock beside him. She quickly put out her arm and stopped him saying, "What are you doing?"

He replied, "I'm going walk over the that rock on the edge of the cliff for a better view." She breathlessly said, "This is the edge of the cliff. You can't walk to that rock." Mike then looked down and looked closely and the realized she was telling the truth. The fog had tricked him. He thought he was walking on rock when truly there was nothing below him but mist and a 170 feet. He thought he was safe, but he almost lost his life.

Jesus here alerts us to the truth that not everyone who thinks they're going to heaven will actually be allowed to enter.

Notice that Jesus claimed to be the one who decides who is allowed into heaven and who is not.

Mathew 7:21 (ESV)

²¹ *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven,*

Isn't it amazing that even at the very beginning of Jesus public ministry he would dare say something like this. *"Not everyone who says to ME, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven..."* Jesus is saying that *HE* is the one who will determine who gets into heaven! Can't you hear someone in the crowd saying, *"Jesus said what?"*

Jesus claimed this more than once throughout his ministry.

(John 10:9 ESV)

⁹ *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*

There's only one gate into heaven and that is through Jesus. There's only one door into the kingdom of heaven and that door is Jesus.

Calling Jesus 'Lord, Lord' does not necessarily mean he will allow you to enter.

Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)

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. 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."*

Prophecy in the name of Jesus does not guarantee you entrance into heaven. Neither does casting out demons, nor doing mighty works in Jesus' name. This is staggering. There will be people who are great preachers who will not be allowed to enter kingdom of heaven. There will be preachers who preached powerful and persuasive sermons in the name of Jesus whom Jesus will not allow to enter his kingdom.

There will be those who cast demons out of people who will not be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. There will be people who have done mighty works in the name of Jesus who will not be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. There will be people who did mighty and magnificent works—feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and giving lots of money to the church—who will not be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. Good deeds will save no one. The people who think they will get into heaven because of the mighty works and good deeds they did will hear the most breath-taking words a human soul could ever hear,

Matthew 7:23 (ESV)

²³ *"I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."*

These are the most terrifying words any person will ever hear. The people who will hear these words are not people who once knew Jesus but then fell away from him. Jesus says, "*I never knew you.*" These are not people who once were saved but then lost their salvation. These are people who were *never* saved. Jesus **never** knew them. People can preach great sermons, listen to and be moved by great sermons, exercise incredible spiritual power, and even do many, mighty good deeds and still never know Jesus.

Mere words will not get you into the kingdom of heaven. Saying 'Lord, Lord,' is not important. Sayers will not get into heaven. Only doers will get into heaven.

Doing the Will of the Father

So how is a person saved? It's not what you say, but what you do that is important. What does it take to know Jesus? How can one be sure that he will enter the kingdom of heaven? Jesus answers in verse 21.

Matthew 7:21 (ESV)

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.*

Those are allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven are those who "*do the will of the Father who is in heaven.*" Well, good grief, isn't preaching in Jesus' name and casting out demons and doing mighty good deeds the will of the Father? Yes. But salvation is not based upon those things. Those things flow from those who are saved, but they are the evidence of salvation, not the ground of salvation. Well what is? What part of "doing the will of the Father" will assure us that we are saved? Thankfully Jesus answers this question.

John 6:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ *"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

Look Upon and Believe in Jesus

All that is required to be saved is to fix the gaze of your soul upon Jesus, the crucified Son and the risen Savior, and believe in him. Look away from yourself and look in faith to him. To gaze upon Jesus is to take in all of who he is. He is the perfect spotless lamb. He is my sacrificial substitute. He is the only sinless one who died in our place. And he rose from the dead after he atoned for all our sins. And he is alive this very day, seated at the right hand of the Father.

If you know you're a sinner, and if you look to Jesus to take away your sins, then he will do that. If you ask him to forgive you and cleanse you, then he will. "*If you confess him with your mouth, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved*" (Rom 10:9).

If you do not believe that Jesus is necessary to take away your sins, then you are not saved. If you think that God will except you because of all the good deeds you've done, then you are not saved yet. You're still standing on the edge of the cliff. If you're thinking that your own good intentions and good works will deliver you safely into the heavenly kingdom, then you are being deceived by the fog of cloudy thinking. If you step out into eternity thinking that God is a god of love and he will never send anyone to hell, then you are at risk of losing your soul and hearing him say,

"I never knew you; depart from me..."

Those are words you do not want to hear.

Conclusion

If Jesus is telling the truth, then there are people all around us who are headed to destruction. We cannot be silent. We must lead people to the narrow door that leads to life. We must actively lead people to Jesus. He is the only door to the kingdom of heaven.

Enter by the narrow gate. Run from the wide gate.
The narrow way leads to life. The wide way leads to death.

Beware of false prophets who only preach pleasing things.
The truth has rough edges. Don't be deceived by false fruit.

Don't think mere words will get you into heaven. Don't trust in good deeds to get you into heaven. Look to Jesus and be saved (Is 45:22). Do the will of the Father by putting your complete trust in Jesus. Then you can know that your soul is eternally safe. The will of the Father that will save your soul is to look to Jesus and believe in him. Trust in his righteousness, not your own.

Let go of everything else so that you can cling by faith to Jesus. Come to Jesus in faith. You do not want to hear him say, "I never knew you; depart from me."

Father give us faith to believe in Jesus.