

**SERMON ON THE MOUNT #14 (Matthew 7:13-27):**

**<sup>13</sup> “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

**<sup>15</sup> “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.**

**<sup>21</sup> “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. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’**

**<sup>24</sup> “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”**

In the last verses on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns us against things that can keep a person who has heard the Gospel from ultimately committing their life to the Lord. Firstly, there are two roads, a wide road that is easy now but leads to destruction and a narrow road that is hard now but leads to life. Many take the easy road while a few take the hard road. The hearers are left with a choice of which road will they take?

There are two trees. Good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit. What fruit do we bear? In other words, what do your words and deeds reveal about who you are? Then there are two ways to call upon Jesus. Some call upon his name and even prophesy and perform wonders in his name, but they do not know him and are not saved. On that last day, when all stand before Jesus, the Judge, there will be one question. Do they know Jesus as saviour or not?

By using the language of two, Jesus invites us into a deep stream of biblical thought. Early in the history of Israel, the Lord began to tell his people that there two ways of life. One could live in a covenant with him and be blessed, or one could follow the world and be cursed. Moses presented

this choice to Israel this way, <sup>26</sup>See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— <sup>27</sup>the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; <sup>28</sup>the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

Joshua challenged Israel, <sup>15</sup>But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:15. Some Israelites were interested in the pagan gods of Canaan but as Israel's aging leader he made his choice known, “but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Jesus was speaking to a large crowd when he said “Enter through the narrow gate”. Most of the people in the crowd were disciples but only in a loose sense, they were not fully devoted Christians. Of course, there were none of these until after the resurrection and Pentecost. Jesus wanted them to follow him but not by deception so he told them the plain truth. I like the comment of Daniel Doriani, he says, **Jesus says this road leads to life, but before it ends it is narrow and hard. To this day, many are lightly committed to Christ need to hear the same word. On the broad, easy road, people do as they please. The way of Christian discipleship is hard.**

<sup>9</sup>I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. John 10:9. <sup>6</sup>Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6. Jesus was speaking about faith in himself when he said, <sup>14</sup>But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Matthew 7: 14. The way to life and heaven is as narrow as Jesus himself.

This is recorded in Luke's Gospel, <sup>24</sup>“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Luke 13:24. It is not enough to listen to the words of Jesus about this gate or to study its architecture. It's not even enough to praise it. It is not enough to stand by it. It must be entered. That means everyone who comes under the preaching of the Gospel must make a personal decision to enter Christ. The true gate is hard and the way that leads to it is hard. If you are to become a believer, you must decide. There is no other way.

Both the easy and the hard road lead somewhere. One day life ends. The easy road leads to destruction. The easy road makes no demands, but its rewards are fleeting. The hard road makes great demands but offers great rewards. To do or be anything great, we must pay a price. Every quest eventually becomes hard.

Next Jesus warns us about false prophets. <sup>15</sup>“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup>By their fruit you will recognize

them. **Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?** <sup>17</sup> Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. **Matthew 7:15-20.**

He says that there are false prophets in the world and that if a person turns from Christ to such teachers, these teachers will lead them away from truth and from the source of salvation. According to Jesus the danger is not so much in the fact that there are going to be wolves in the world but there are going to be wolves who have disguised themselves as sheep. In other words, the danger lies in the fact that there are going to be agents of the devil in the church, The Apostle Paul puts it like this, <sup>14</sup> **And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.** <sup>15</sup> **It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.**

This is a very sobering thought to think that the enemy can operate from within the church. This is where the elders and pastors operate as shepherds protecting the church from wolves. I also like how we as Baptists see the church organised. It's not from the top down but from the members up. This should offer much resistance to false teachers from within the church. Any pastor is accountable to the elders and the church and not an end in themselves.

In verse sixteen, Jesus compares false teachers to thornbushes. <sup>16</sup> **By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Matthew 7:16.** Thorn bushes bear small dark berries that resemble grapes at a distance. However, if you examine them closely, you see that they are not grapes but berries. So too, with false prophets. We distinguish truth from false by examining the fruit of their ministry and patterns of their life. As Jesus says in verse seventeen, <sup>17</sup> **Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Matthew 7: 17.**

Jesus warning about false prophets is connected to the next warning aimed at his disciples. <sup>21</sup> **“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.** <sup>22</sup> **Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’** <sup>23</sup> **Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:21-23.**

Now, Jesus is talking about those who falsely profess Christ. He rather dramatically in verse nineteen says, <sup>19</sup> **Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** In verse twenty-three he judges those that are in this category, <sup>23</sup> **Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:23.** These warnings apply to us in

two ways. First, Jesus describes false prophets so we can be watchful. Second, he warns disciples neither to succumb to their influence or follow in their footsteps.

False prophets appear to be church leaders. Jesus says they claim to teach God's word and prophesy in his name. Jesus says they also perform miracles and cast out demons. An example of this is Judas. He preached, cast out demons, and walked with Jesus for three years but he did not follow Jesus in a personal, saving way. Daniel Doriani in his commentary says, that, **there are two signs of genuineness: doing the will of the Father and knowing Jesus.**

**<sup>24</sup> "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."**

We now come to the last words of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus pictures the difference between those who hear his teachings and do them and those who hear his teachings and do not. He draws a picture for us which most of us know about a wise man who builds his house upon a rock and a foolish man who builds his house upon sand. Basically, it's a matter of foundations.

A life built on Jesus will stand even in the attacks of the enemy and the challenges of life. These will come to us, but we will stand firm as long as we get our foundations right. Notice verse <sup>24</sup> **"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.** In this verse Jesus does not say, "a rock" he says, "the rock".

So, what does all this mean to you personally? What is the most important message of the Sermon on the Mount? It is the person of Jesus of Nazareth himself, the Son of God, who spoke as no man has ever spoken before or since. He lives as he preached and he died and rose again that he might offer us a full and perfect salvation.