

Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 7:13-27

There's a story about a man who was 70 years old attending Columbia University.

That in itself isn't odd. People audit classes all the time.

But this guy? He'd been attending Columbia University for some FIFTY years. *WHY?*

His father had set up in his will that his son would get \$300 dollars a month for as long as his son was in college. So this 70 year old man had spent decades taking every class under the sun, accumulating a bunch of degrees, accumulating more knowledge than most humans ever will.

And yet – would we chalk this man's life up as a success? What was his impact?

Typically you go to school to gain knowledge that you can go into the world and USE IT.

All the classroom lectures this man sat through and the sermons we listen to are similar in one way: **they stimulate the mind.**

In Isaiah 1:18 God says through the Prophet Isaiah - "Come now, let us reason together."

Reason and wisdom help us direct our passion and zeal toward a righteous end.

But a sermon should advance from making us think to making us feel. From engaging the mind to **engaging the heart.** Jesus shows his chief concern throughout the Sermon on the Mount is for our heart.

And lastly- a sermon shouldn't stop with feeling. It should end in action.

The work of the mind and heart should lead to us working our hands and feet.

After all, the goal at the end of our lives isn't to hear

*"well **learned**, good and faithful **student**,"*

It is *"well **done**, good and faithful **servant**."*

But as we noted opening this series: Jesus begins his sermon with blessings.

Jesus' Kingdom Manifesto begins with the word "Blessed."

But then as we come to the sermon's close, what does he close with? Quite a contrast: **Warnings.**

These warnings are metaphors that contrast two of a kind.

Gates and Paths. Teachers. Disciples. And builders.

Two gates and Two roads.

Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

The order is important. Gate. Then road.

The gate speaks to entrance from death to life. It speaks to salvation. It speaks to Jesus.

Jesus in John 10 says: *Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved.*

To get this backwards can lead to a theology of works.

We think that if we choose the road of righteousness and we stick to it we get to enter the pearly gates. We toil on the road to earn entrance through the gate. As if our faithfulness pays the toll.

But Jesus paid it all. And Jesus puts it in this order on purpose. The gate comes first.

The gate doesn't open up to the wedding feast in Heaven.

It opens to a road. Because we aren't there yet.

But it also doesn't open to a Lazy-boy.

Because God has work for us to do, and a work he wants to do in us.

There is justification in Christ, but then there is sanctification for us and in us as we follow Him.

What does this picture of a gate and a road show us should be present in our lives?

Movement.

This idea of paths and movement is important imagery to hold onto, because so often we think of our salvation as **positional** – I'm under the cross so I'm good. I'm under the blood, so I'm good. True... that's justification.

But God's redeeming of us doesn't just call us to position, but to **a process**. One of growth and transformation.

NEXT STEP cards. We all have next steps to take as we live a life of movement.

The end game of this process of sanctification?

It's what Jesus pointed to in the Sermon on the Mount – be perfect as God is.

We won't be perfect this side of Heaven. We'll never arrive. But that doesn't up the stress.

It helps me exhale. It helps me enjoy the journey.

It's not about being perfect today, it's about progressing today.

It's not about getting best today, it's about getting better today.

How can I look more like Jesus today?

Small and narrow don't just speak to measurements, they speak also to difficulty.

Stepping through the narrow gate onto a narrow path is a step of courageous commitment.

“my yoke is easy and my burden is light” – it's a reassurance that he will be with us, as tight as a yoke, as we journey along life's paths, giving us the strength and grace we need to endure.

Two teachers and Two disciples

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

There will be false teachers. Those who mislead and take us off the narrow path.

And tells us how we'll know who the false prophet is.

You'll recognize them by their fruit.

They make the gate wide.

The narrow gate is payment for our sins and punishment through the blood of Jesus Christ.
How do false teachers widen the gate?

Sin isn't that bad.

Jeremiah – three times he talks about prophets who offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. That sin? It's a scratch. Not a big deal.

Indirect fruit of this and a second way we can widen the gate?

We can widen the gate with ***good works***.

If sin isn't that bad than we don't need Jesus, we can balance the scales by being "good enough."
The perks of this is if you don't need Jesus, then he can't tell you what to do.

And even for those of us that love Jesus, the temptation is to buy into what the Galatians did:

Jesus + your works = that's what opens the gate.

It makes sense to our society that champions being self-made.

We want to take credit for our salvation. It appeals to our pride.

All of these examples twist the message of Jesus and attempt to widen what's narrow.

But as it says throughout scripture:

There's a way that seems right to man but in the end leads to death.

You need a proper and accurate lens of the scriptures to discern and judge teaching and fruit.

In John there were people that were ready to put out and even KILL Jesus for being a false teacher!! In John 8:37 Jesus says:

"some of you are trying to kill me because there's no room in your hearts for my message."

When we don't make room for God's word, we can make fatal mistakes.

We must make room for God's word, or we give way for false teaching.

What else should be present in our lives along with God's Word, according to this metaphor?

Fruit.

Jesus goes on to address false disciples:

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. 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?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

These are people who know OF God. They call him Lord, so they even have right doctrine.

But what Jesus says he will tell them is oh so telling.

It's not about knowing OF God.

The ultimate fruit that God wants in our lives is relationship with Him.

Throughout the OT God is said to “know” his people. (Jeremiah 1:5, Hosea 13:5, Amos 3:2)
Throughout scripture we see this reality:

God isn't looking for more obedient slaves, but more beloved sons and daughters.

Two houses

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. 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. 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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Juxtaposes two foundations. Sand and solid rock.

The sand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee is hard on the summer months. It seems solid enough to build on. But a wise builder isn't fooled by surface conditions. A wise builder would dig down some ten or so feet to find bedrock and start building there.

Two modern versions of this teaching:

We need no foundation. We see this in our “post-truth” society that scoffs at absolutes.

Who cares about the facts as long as I feel good?

Who cares about truth as long as I'm happy?

It's the foundation we see beneath the book of Judges, where everyone did as they saw fit.

Second response we see in our culture is that ***any foundation will do.*** We see this in the politically correct pluralism of our society. Let's let various truths coexist.

When the storm hits, only one foundation of the two stands.

Jesus is drawing a line between a foundation built on Him and any other foundation in life.

What is shallow won't stand.

What should be present in our lives?

Building.

I can't build a house.

But I strive every year to get better at building my life. And I can build every day.

You build everyday. And every day is big. Because it all starts with a seed.

Perhaps the most impressive feat in all of history in terms of building and construction:

Noah building the ark. It took him over 100 years.

Jewish tradition states that the first step Noah took was to plant seeds.

Those seeds became the trees that he harvested to build.

It starts with seeds.

Some of us are praying for the big picture. The completed house.
We're thinking so big picture, we forget that God has given us seeds.
We ask for the big moments, God wants us to be faithful in the mundane.
God wants us to start seeing big potential in the seemingly small.

What's your confession about the moment you are stewarding now. Is it "This is small?"
Start telling yourself this is big. This is a seed. This seed is big. This seed has potential.

Reframe the way you think about your day to day building. Mundane meetings. Pulling together
at the table with your family. Talking to your kids in the car. This is big.

Thoughts shape your destiny (thoughts – words – actions – habits – character – destiny)
Reframe your day to day and realize all of this: THIS IS BIG.
It's not about adding pressure.
It's about adding meaning and potential.

We're all called to build, and I believe our calling in Christ is big and beautiful.
But it starts with seeds.

What comes out of seeds? **Roots.** What's important is what's beneath the surface.
It's like the foundation on a house. What's important is what's beneath the surface.
If you don't have roots you'll topple sooner than later.
Your foundation- what's beneath the surface- will either support you or sink you.

The religious leaders that taught a surface level, external righteousness looked good on the
surface. But that kind of teaching, while solid on the surface, is shallow.
It encourages compliance, but not character.
Ritual, but not relationship.

What comes of it?
"It will collapse with a mighty crash."

This isn't how many a preacher would finish a sermon.
But at this point in Jesus' ministry he was drawing a line in the sand.
A choice either for or against Christ had and has eternal consequences.

Remember we noted when we opened this series:
The crowds were present at the beginning and Jesus withdrew to begin teaching.
There were two distinct bodies of people:
The disciples who it says came to him. And the crowd that hung back.

But apparently crowds had been drawn in. They were listening and overhearing.
And it says they were amazed.
Note: it doesn't say they were changed. It doesn't say they were repentant.

Who are you? The crowd? Amazed and amused?
Or the committed disciple, drawn to Jesus?

Jesus has just said he doesn't want us to hear and be amazed.
He wants us to hear and obey.
To step out of the crowd, the wide path, and enter through the narrow gate.

Onto a path where there's movement.
Into discipleship where there's fruit.
Into building... and recognizing it starts with a seed.
And all metaphors flowing from the first... a gate.
A gate into life.
A gate that is Jesus. Nothing more. Nothing less.

We've looked back again and again in this series, drawing parallels to the last time God spoke to his people like this, delivering the law through Moses at Mt. Sinai in Exodus.

But I want us to end by looking forward.
Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, would return to a hillside.
With a cross. To suffer. To die. To take the punishment for our sins.

To open the gate so outsiders can become kingdom citizens, spiritually orphaned can be adopted into his family, and the crowd can become disciples.
Who are you in this picture?
Who are you?