

Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew 7:13-29 | Christ the Solid Rock

→ *Survey: Let's understand the background and context of the passage.*

Tonight we will conclude Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as we finish Matthew 7. Jesus is talking to a crowd of Jewish people on the side of a mountain, teaching them about the Kingdom of Heaven and what it means to be Kingdom people. Jesus taught that sin (missing the mark of perfection) isn't just the bad actions that we commit, but begins with our heart posture. He showed us how anger is the root of murder, and lust is the root of adultery. Though we may avoid certain actions, we are still subject to judgment when our hearts are in the wrong place. It's even possible to do righteous actions, like giving, praying, or fasting, for the wrong reasons and therefore miss the heart of the Kingdom of Heaven. Kingdom people are meant to show the world that there's another way to live - a life marked by love, mercy, humility, and all things good. Jesus taught us that Kingdom people store up treasures in heaven and not on earth. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). He also taught that we don't need to worry about tomorrow, for in the same ways God cares for the birds & the flowers, He cares even more for you!

Last week, Jesus continued his radical teaching with something we have heard since we were young - treat others the way you want to be treated. We saw how we tend to be harsh in our judgment towards others, while being merciful to ourselves. To help our brother or sister with a speck in their eye, we must remove the plank from our own first! Thankfully God doesn't judge us with the same harshness we judge each other. Instead, out of His great love and mercy, the punishment we deserve was placed on Jesus Christ.

So, before we begin the study, think to yourself - what are you placing your hope in? Is it in Jesus and what he has done on the cross? Or is it in someone or something else, maybe even yourself? Another way to think about it - where is your life taking you? What path are you walking down? Is it leading you to life or destruction? There's good news for those who have a relationship with Jesus. Let's see what He has to say.

Read: Matthew 7:13-29 (NIV)

→ *Observe: Let's take a close look at what the text is saying.*

1. What 2 types of gates does Jesus mention (v. 13-14)? Where does each one lead? Which one does he want his followers to enter through? Is this where the majority of people go?
2. What does Jesus warn against next (v. 15)? How do they appear? What really are they?
3. What is the distinguishing factor between true and false prophets (v. 16)?
4. What kind of fruit do good trees bear (v. 17)? Bad trees? What happens to them (v. 19)?
5. Who will enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 21)? Who are some that won't enter (v. 21-22)? What reason does Jesus give to those who are not entering the kingdom (v. 23)?
6. How will the wise respond to Jesus' teaching (v. 24)? What about the foolish (v. 26)?
7. What metaphor does Jesus give to help his listeners understand? What is the main difference between a wise and foolish builder (v. 25-27)?
8. How did the crowds react to Jesus' teaching (v. 28)? Why - what stuck out to them (v. 29)?

→ *Interpret: Let's seek to understand the meaning of this text in its original context.*

1. Why do so few people enter the narrow gate and why do so many enter through the gate that leads to destruction? What might be markers of each path? Think about all that Jesus has said in the Sermon on the Mount so far - how does this help understand what he means?
2. What does Jesus mean that false prophets are like wolves in sheep's clothing (v. 15)? Why would Jesus warn against them? What does good & bad fruit look like (v. 16-20) - what would be specific markers of a false prophet? Is there a difference between discerning against false prophets and judging others as we talked about last week? Why or why not?
3. Why were the things these people did not good enough for Jesus in verses 21-23? How does this passage help us understand where salvation comes from? What is the difference between knowing Jesus and knowing about him? What are the people in Jesus' example - those that say 'Lord, Lord' - missing about entering the kingdom of heaven?
4. How does Jesus want his followers to respond to him (v. 24)? When is the real foundation of someone's life proven? Are the houses these men built any different? What is the difference?

→ *Apply: Let's explore where the text intersects with our lives and our world.*

1. What makes it difficult for you to walk through the narrow gate and down the narrow road at SRU? Imagine you're at the gates of heaven - what reasons would you give for why you deserve to be in the kingdom? If you're honest with yourself, what destination are you headed to?
 - Have you surrendered your life to Jesus? Do you know him? Does he know you?
2. What does it mean to do the will of the Father (v. 21)? Are you doing this? Think about the kind of fruit you are bearing. In what ways do you need to change? How does this change begin?
3. Think about a recent or current storm in your life (stress, doubt, loss, hardship, etc.). What did that reveal about the foundation of your life? How can you build your life on Jesus?