

Crossroads Community Church

Sunday March 8th, 2015

The Sunshine this morning gave us a glimpse of Spring; as sure as the sun rises every day so is the Lord faithful in every season of our lives. We worshiped with gladness and heart, Pastor Don shared announcements and prayed, "Dear Father God we ask for you ever present guidance to be with us, lead us on the straight path to eternal life and help us stay on course despite the storms that may come, in Jesus name Amen."

It has been an enlightening and beautiful journey through Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. As we conclude today we will observe Matthew 7:13-27. Jesus presents us with two paths to choose from and both are eternal however not both lead to happily ever after, "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it," Matthew 7:13,14. One promises eternal blessing in God's presence the other eternal misery and destruction. Jesus says it is easy to enter the wide easy gate and many find it as it offers no restrictions and anything goes much like we see in the world around us today. This path promises pleasure, riches and we can just hit cruise control without any diligence, and we are sure to find lots of company along the way but it leads to destruction. Is this the kind of life God wants for us? This life may seem all fun and carefree but it soon becomes empty. It is much more difficult to attain God's standards, as in the story of the young rich ruler who thought highly of himself and thought he was a pretty "Good Guy" keeping the rules, but when Jesus asked him to give up all he had, help the poor and follow Him He turned away disappointed, (Matthew 19:21-22). Now let us not tie our knickers in a knot, this doesn't mean every single Christian will be asked to sell everything and give it away, Jesus has different callings on each of us and they usually deal with whatever it is that seems to have a higher value in our hearts than Him. We ought to be willing to give up whatever it is that He asks as we should never let anything come between us and God.

The way to eternal life with God is different; it begins with a narrow gate which is Jesus himself. There may be only one that can enter at a time but there is enough room for all of humanity if they choose to enter, (John 10:9). It is true by today's human standards, Jesus may seem narrow minded when He claims to be the only way to God, (John 14:6). As the Way He is our path to the Father, as the Truth He is the reality of all God's promises and as the Life He joins his divine life with ours for eternity but we must choose Him. It won't be easy, we will have to leave baggage behind, our arrogance, pride, selfish wants and we will have to relinquish our will to conform to His. We will face sacrifice, tribulation and persecution all for His sake, (Matthew 16:24, Acts 14:22, 2 Timothy 3:12). When we are questioned and judged for the way we live we shouldn't get weary as we continue to live the way we know we should we are pleasing God and that is enough because He loves us and He sent His Son to die for us when we were still lost sinners, He did this so we may have life and have it more abundantly.

We can all remember through the last century the countless so called prophets and evangelists predicting the end of the world, they deceived many poor souls with their appearance of good and holy, but turned out to be a wolf in sheep's clothing, Jim Jones comes to mind if you can remember that far. Jesus forewarned us about false messiahs and prophets, (Matthew 7:15, 24:24). It may be difficult to spot but usually they are very self-centered, self-serving, and self-promoting. Their teachings are quite radical, they inspire death, destruction and hatred behind a veil of apparent love and peace and they don't profess Jesus as God nor do they preach the Gospel of Salvation through Christ. They promote immorality, greed and lies, (2 Peter 2:1).

We know what a false prophet looks like, so how does God measure a Good one by? In scripture we often hear of fruit, it signifies goodness and prosperity, figuratively it often was used to determine whether a person was good or bad, "we can identify a tree by its fruit" was often heard, (Matthew 7:16-20). In God's Kingdom fruit are not material things but spiritual attributes, (Galatians 5:22-23). Now some may say they are good and don't need Jesus or the Church because they pride themselves by the good they do. As Christians we believe that any good we are able to do is by God's grace and mercy, and we could never match the goodness of Jesus and His sacrifice for us. When we do good more often than none it goes unnoticed by man but acknowledged by God himself and that is more than enough. Despite our imperfections we continue to do good because we are empowered by the Spirit of God, it is not of ourselves and this is what brings God the Glory. So when we apply this measure to evaluate a teacher of God's word we will see it reflected in their daily lives. Their actions will match what they preach and they will be walking closely with God, their relationship with Jesus will manifest in all they do.

Beloved how can we reflect this kind of fruit you may ask? We need to know Jesus, spend time with Him in the Word and in prayer, we need His constant flow of power to live as we should, learn from Him and obey. That is the strong foundation He was talking about in His parable of Matthew 7:24-27. The more time we spend with Him the more our behavior will change for the better; we will be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above ourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, and keeping our spiritual

fervor, serving the Lord. We will be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. When storms of life come we will be able to stand on Jesus our Rock, and when others see, they too will believe! Asherey Shalom!
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