



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS



Things Your Mom Can Say...But You Better Hope Jesus Doesn't

Tim Badal | May 11, 2014 | Matthew 7:21-23

The Upside-down Kingdom Series, Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount, Part 29

Please turn in your Bible to Matthew 7. I confess that I am not going to be doing a Mother's Day message today but my message will have all kinds of stories about moms. I'm going to share one right away. I know some of you think that a pastor's family—his kids and everything at home—is perfect. Let me assure you: that's not the case in the Badal home.

Just a few weeks ago I was at an elder's meeting and got a call from my youngest son. My six-year-old son called the church office and said, "I need to talk to Dad." When I got to the phone he said, "Dad, I want you to come home. I know you have an elder's meeting but I want you to come home right now."

I said, "Son, what's going on?"

He said, "Yeah, it's not good Dad. You need to come home."

From some of the ambient noise in the background I could tell Mom was having a tough day. So I told Luke, "I'll finish up this portion of the meeting and then come home."

He said, "Good, Dad. It'll be good that you're home."

When I got home, I heard the same ambient noise still going on as I walked through the door. There was an argument going on between my middle son and my wife. My middle son is our justice-oriented, very passionate, always-right son. Neither he nor his mother was giving in and that's when I quietly stepped in to have a conversation with our son and let Mom have a bit of reprieve.

So I took him upstairs and he was angry. I don't even remember what they were actually arguing about—I know Amanda was right—but he was visibly upset. He kept saying, "Dad, don't make me say it. Dad, I don't want to have to call her Woman but I will if I have to."

I said, "What in the world are you talking about 'Call your mom Woman?' Where did you get this?"

He said, "I learned it in Sunday School. Jesus called His mom Woman and I'm not afraid to call my mom Woman."

Let me remind you, he's eight years old. I was tempted to call his Sunday School teacher. At some point, my son had heard the story of the wedding in Cana from [John 2:1-12](#) where Jesus said, "*Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.*" Knowing that I needed a wise statement for my son I said, "Do you know what? If you call your mom Woman, then you are going to meet Jesus. We'll just leave it at that."

So as we celebrate moms we recognize that we also have to deal with difficult matters in our homes sometimes. Before we get into our very difficult passage, I want to share a word from your elders. As a group of men we want to share our heart with not just the moms of this church but all of the ladies, from the oldest to the youngest. Let me share this message for you from my heart:

I want to say thank you to the moms in our midst and to each of our ladies. In all of your beauty and glory you show us God's grace and love through your obedience to Him. Village Bible Church is immensely blessed because we have such wonderful women who use their gifts and abilities to make this place an oasis of God's love and compassion.

But as one who oversees the place of your soul let me remind you that the devil hates you and wants you to hate yourself. He wants you to believe his lies that your significance is only found in your looks and the things that you do. Our world has done a masterful job of making you fall for these lies. So no matter where you find yourself today, what you have in your past or what you're dealing with in your present, we want you to know that God loves you. He longs for you to embrace Him and see Him as absolutely glorious. Stop listening to the lies of the devil and stop embracing the pattern of this world.

Ladies, your identity isn't about who you are as a mom, a wife, a career woman, a homemaker, the most popular kid in your class, the best dressed or the most likely to succeed from human standpoints. Find your identity primarily in the most important place: as a daughter of the Most High God. It's because of that—and what you have meant to us—that we say in one collective voice, "We love you!" We rise together as a congregation and call you blessed. Thank you for showing us Christ. Thank you for showing us the love He has called us to show one another. Amen.

Now this is probably the first time in all of Christendom—we're making history—that this passage will be preached on Mother's Day. As I read different studies on this passage in the Sermon on the Mount, commentators say this is the most sobering of all passages in all of Scripture—and I made the decision to preach about it on Mother's Day. I realize that I am doing a cultural no-no by preaching a tough text on Mother's Day, so I want you to know I do not speak under my own authority but under the authority of the two most important moms in my life: my wife and my own mother. I sought their advice about preaching this passage on Mother's Day and they both—in their own way—said, "Tim, make us proud. Preach the Word. Preach Jesus."

Here's why I love my mom. Here's what she had to say about this wonderful day when we celebrate moms. We were at a soccer game yesterday and I shared with her the text I was going to be preaching. Then I asked, "What do you think? Is it too difficult of a text to handle?"

She said, "Tim, what good is a phone call, a card, flowers, or even the most extravagant gift if we as moms know that people we love are on their way to hell? To preach the Word is the greatest thing any godly mom would want to hear." That's why I rise and call her blessed.

So I'm going to do what my mom said and preach a very tough text. I believe that as we go through this text we're going to hear the grace of Jesus Christ. As difficult as this passage is I pray that we would hear it. We will do so under the heading, "Things Your Mom Can Say...but You Better Hope Jesus Doesn't."

Turn in your Bible to [Matthew 7:21-23](#). We want you to see what Jesus is saying to you through God's Word and not just take my word for it. Then I will read a companion text of the same events from Luke. So let's read God's Word and then we'll ask God's blessing on our time. Here's what Matthew says:

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. ²²On 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?' ²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

Now let's turn to [Luke 13:22-30](#). Here's what Luke says regarding this same event:

²²He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³And 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. ²⁵When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷But he [Jesus] will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' ²⁸In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out."

Father God, we come before You and we do rise up to call the ladies and moms in our church blessed. We're thankful for them. But as important as it is to celebrate the life and ministry of moms, we also know there are matters that are too important to take a break from discussing. This text has been on my heart for some time and I thank You for the allowance of this church to let me forgo some cultural things we do as a church so that I can stick with the Sermon on the Mount for yet another week. I pray that You will speak through me to the hearts of all gathered here through one of the most important texts any hearer of the Word can ever hear and need to understand. Please speak through me in a powerful way. In Christ's name. Amen.

I singlehandedly have locked in sainthood for my mom. If scholars were to look at my growing up years they would sum it all up with two very important words: reckless abandon. Some of you were here for that

because I grew up in this church. For a short amount of time you were on that roller coaster, screaming, “Please let it stop! Please let it stop!” But my mom was there through all of it. Creedence Clearwater Revival must have been speaking about yours truly when they said:

I see the bad moon arising.

I see trouble on the way.

I see earthquakes and lightnin’.

I see those bad times today.

(“Bad Moon Rising” by Creedence Clearwater Revival)

My mom has endured all that and so much more: from the fire that I started in our living room, to a police rap sheet, to public outbursts at school events, concerts and even my high school graduation ceremony, to my very public impeachment as a college student body president. She used to say to me repeatedly, “If I wasn’t there when you were born I wouldn’t think you were my own child.” Before you start judging my mom, realize that I’m only giving you the CliffsNotes version of some of the things I did to that poor woman. On numerous occasions, my mom was brought to levels of total exasperation and would say in a very real sense, “Depart from me. I never knew you, you worker of lawlessness.”

Now we all recognize that those moments are short lived. They pass by quickly. As soon as my mom would have me packing my bags to head for a life in the Soviet gulags, her forgiveness, compassion and longsuffering would win the day. To the chagrin of judges, police officers and Sunday School teachers everywhere I would be given yet another chance.

Our text today tells us that there is a time in the future when we will stand before Jesus Christ and be held accountable for the lives that we’ve lived.

Here’s the problem: our moms may forgive us repeatedly but that won’t help us when we stand before Christ. That’s what our moms are supposed to do. As failed and flawed people they recognize their own frailties, their own issues, their own struggles and offer us forgiveness. But at this time that Jesus is talking about, He makes it clear that there will be no second chances. There will be no do-overs. There will be no, “Well, as the cooler heads have prevailed, maybe we’ve been a little rash. Maybe we’ll change our minds.” No, Jesus is emphatic in what He says is coming. We would do well to be prepared and ready for that day.

1. Confrontation

Jesus has some things to say to us today and they’re going to fall between two contrasts again. To begin, Jesus has a word of confrontation. Last week we learned about false prophets and the doctrines they teach that defile many. Now Jesus seems to address what must be on the minds of everyone in the crowd. Let’s not think that false teachers are the only thing we need to worry about; we need to recognize that our biggest opponent isn’t the devil or false teachers—it’s ourselves. It is important to know who’s deceiving us from the outside. But we need to realize that in our professions of Jesus Christ and the works we do, we can so easily deceive ourselves into thinking we have a real relationship with Jesus when—in the end—we do not.

Jesus passionately and forcefully tells His people, “I want you to examine the teachings and lives of others around you who are teaching false things about Me. But also make sure you’re examining your own life, your own motives and your own desires. Examine why you follow Me and why you do the things that you do for Me.” Jesus is once again reminding us it’s a choice that needs to be made. There are two gates that lead to two ways. There are two types of teachers. Now we’re going to learn that there are also two types of faith.

I want to pause for a moment to make a couple of observations. I want to answer some questions right away:

1. What does “on that day” mean? What is that day? When is it? It is the Day of Judgment.

So what do we know about this Day of Judgment? Turn in your Bible to the Book of Revelation. John the Apostle was part of the crowd when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. He then wrote some of the final words contained in Scripture. In Revelation 20:11-15 John announces a little bit more about that day. John says this after seeing a vision from God about that day that will take place in the future:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

In our passage Jesus declares that on that day many will stand before Him and give an account for what they’ve done in this life. He says there is a contrast: those whose names are written in the Book of Life will enter into the Kingdom of God and those whose names are not in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire. Jesus is talking about a real day—not a hypothetical one—in the future that He has planned. We don’t know if it is today, tomorrow, a hundred years from now or a thousand years from now. We know that God’s promises are true; He is faithful to bring them about and this day is coming.

2. Where will they enter? We need to be reminded that hell is a real place. It is seen in the truth of Jesus saying, “Not all will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” That begs the question, “So where will they enter?” Jesus is clear—and so is John in his writings—that the Kingdom of Heaven is on one side and the kingdom of the lost is on the other. That place for the lost is hell. It’s a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. It’s a place of torment with a total lack of God’s presence, not only for a time but for all of eternity.
3. How many are lost? Jesus makes it abundantly clear in our text that many are lost and on their way to an eternity without God. He doesn’t say there is a couple or a handful; He says there are many. In the context of the broad way that He’s spoken about, He has addressed that “many” means multitudes upon multitudes of people are on their way to destruction. So we need to seek to find ways of communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ with all those who need to hear it.

4. Who is lost? We must understand that this passage addresses not only unbelievers in Jesus' audience but He's addressing unbelievers of all time. That means Jesus isn't just talking to a group of people present at the Sermon on the Mount. He is talking to all unbelievers—even those unbelievers here in Sugar Grove in the year 2014 who are deceiving themselves into thinking they have a real and vibrant relationship with Jesus when in fact they do not. Jesus says the same words from His Sermon on the Mount are words that could be addressed to some of us.

Personal Wishes

How do we get this personal confrontation from Jesus? On that day Jesus will hear people say, "Lord, Lord, did I not do this? Did I not do that?" Jesus says this confrontation will take place in spite of their own personal wishes.

The text doesn't show us a group of people who are waving their fists at God and cursing Him. This is not a group of people who are in complete rebellion against God. These people have a desire to embrace Jesus. You could say they have a desire to sweet-talk Him.

Now sweet-talking or buttering up somebody is part of the human condition. While Joshua is our son of thunder who gets all fired up, Luke—our six-year-old—is our sweet-talker. He is just spot on; he knows just how to melt his mother's heart. The two older boys don't know that they should keep quiet when they don't like what's for dinner. They'll say, "Mom, this is the worst dinner you've ever made. It doesn't taste very good." But Luke will say, "Mom, I just want you to know that this was the best dinner you could have made. Mom, you work so hard." So if you ever see Luke with a black eye you will know it's because he buttered up his mom and the other two kids were vengeful about it.

But sweet-talking only gets you so far. The people in our passage are trying to sweet-talk Jesus. Let's look at what they say. First, they're very polite to Jesus. They address Him as Lord. They don't come to Him saying, "Whoever You are", or "Mr. So-and-So" or some derogatory name. They speak to Him using the right title. They say, "Jesus, You are Lord." They even do so because of the right beliefs. They say, "We believe You to be Lord. That's why we affirm this Lordship on You." They're saying the right things.

They're also emphatic. They say "Lord" twice. In essence they are saying, "It's not good enough for me to just say Lord once. I'm going to say it again because I want everybody listening to know that I'm not mistaken. You are Lord, Lord."

So we have this public declaration with people who are sweet-talking Jesus. Why in the world would they do so on the Day of Judgment? The text in Luke tells us that they are seeing those who are entering the Kingdom of Heaven and are concerned about not being allowed entry. So they are doing all they can to make sure Jesus hears them loud and clear: they want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. But here's the problem: it's too late.

I learned this lesson when I was in seventh grade. There was a school-wide reading contest in my junior high during which we were supposed to keep track of all the books that we read. There was a big chart for us to move ahead and if we read enough books by the end, the school had a special surprise for us. Now I

was not a big fan of school—I loved everything about it except for the studies—so I decided not to waste my time. I figured, “What could the school offer me? It’s probably something really small. Why should I waste my time reading all these books when it’s going to be something like a high-five from the principal? Oh, that’s a wonderful surprise.”

I remember mocking some of my classmates as I saw their stars on the chart moving farther and farther along. They were all excited and kept saying, “I wonder what the surprise is going to be?”

I kept telling them, “You guys are so dumb! There’s no surprise! We’re just pawns in this big system. They get some extra credit or something in their paycheck for us reading books. I’m not going to help them do that!”

Then I remember the day when everyone in my class—except for yours truly—had crossed the finish line. The principal came in and said, “Here’s the surprise: we’re taking everyone who crossed the finish line to Great America.” I kid you not; I was the only student in that middle school who did not pass the test. The entire school got on buses and went to Great America—except me. I sat with the secretary. The only other person in the building that day was the janitor. The principal even read the books so she could go on the trip.

Can you guess what my response was to that surprise? I begged, “Please, please, please, please, please—I will read the books. I promise I will read the books. I will read even more books, just please let me go.” But their response was, “You had your opportunity and you missed it.”

Right now some of you are saying, “I’m not sure the Christian life is really worth it. I don’t know what’s being promised but I’m not going to waste my time. I’m not going to pour my energy into something that ends with God just giving us a high-five.” Do you know what’s going to happen? I believe on that Day of Judgment God will give us a glimpse of what we’re missing. Those of us who are left behind are going to see that it is something glorious. We will be absolutely brokenhearted if we are the ones left outside of the Kingdom of God.

What will our response be? We will get on our knees, draw close to Jesus and say, “Don’t you know what I did? I’ll do whatever it takes.” It’s like me missing my field trip. I said, “I’ll do anything. Don’t you see the things that I did? I did everything. I helped the teacher with this. I helped the teacher with that. I was really good at recess; I passed P.E. and all of that.” But none of that worked. It was too late and it was addressing the wrong issues.

Some of us need to realize that we might be the ones drawing near to Jesus on that day. Some of us think, “When I get there I’m going to talk Jesus into letting me in the gates.” Some of you are great salespeople. You say, “Just give me a couple of minutes with Jesus. I’ll be able to talk my way through it.” You think, “I’m going to share my spiel with Jesus and at the end of the day He will say, ‘Alright, you’re really great. Come on in.’”

Others of you will go to Jesus and say, "Hey, don't you know who I am? I'm so-and-so's kid. I went to so-and-so's church. I was friends with so-and-so. I read so-and-so's books." You think you'll get in by association. But Jesus will say, "No."

Still others of you will show Jesus your resume and say, "Don't you see how much I served? Don't you see how much I gave? Don't you see how I was always on time for church and how many times I attended church? Here's my resume, Jesus."

On that day we will try to sweet-talk our way into Heaven and just like my junior high field trip, it will be too late.

Prophetic Words

How do the people try to sweet-talk Jesus? They will do so by sharing prophetic words. Verse 22 says, "*On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?'*" Simply put it is possible for us to preach about Jesus, proclaim His salvation to others, even lead people to the Lord, preach in His church, lead Bible studies, lead in children's Sunday School classes and help people see the love, mercy and grace of Jesus all while being lost ourselves. These people in our passage are saying the right things. This truth should send shivers down our spines. It should cause us to question ourselves with every fiber of our being and say, "Why do I preach Jesus Christ and the grace of Almighty God? Is it for selfish gain? Is it for notoriety? Is it because of some level of duty? Is it because if I don't my parents might be mad at me?"

These are questions I need to ask. Do I serve Christ because my parents are godly and lovely people who have given their lives to serving God? Do I just go through the motions so that my parents will be happy with me? Do I have some warped idea that I would rather have the affection and affirmation of my father who is a preacher than the affection and affirmation of God? Why do I do the things that I do?

I want you to notice something very important within the construction of Jesus' words: He says that people will say, "*Did we not...?*" That's not how we talk in English but the English translators bring that out because the way Jesus says it in the original Greek language is awkward. Jesus is addressing the awkwardness of these individuals who truly believe they are about to enter into the Kingdom of God. They believe they have done all that was required of them and are simply dumbfounded to find out they've been duped into a false sense of assurance and certainty. It is awkward as they say, "Wait a minute! Are you telling me I'm not going in? I've done everything You've asked of me and I'm still not coming in? Wait a minute. Something is wrong."

The 19th century pastor Charles Spurgeon put it this way:

They used the name [of Jesus] which is dear to the disciples of Christ, but they did not possess the nature of disciples...They knew Christ's name, but they had not His Nature. They quoted His name, but they never copied His example. They had never come to Him and trusted and loved Him. They knew His name, but they did not know Him. And alas, He knew their names, but He did not know them. There was no communion—no intimacy between them.

What does that mean for us today? Just because you've prayed a prayer, you've come forward during an invitation, you're a member of the right church, you have the right doctrine or you have served in the

church for your whole life does not mean that you have salvation. These things alone do not bring salvation. While they are all important parts to the salvation story in the life of a believer we must be very careful to hear the words of Jesus. We need to recognize if we are deceiving ourselves about our own salvation and that one day we will try to talk our way into Heaven but it will be too late.

Powerful Works

Talking isn't enough because they begin to speak about their powerful works. They've cast out demons. They've done many mighty works. So not only do they speak a good game but they are using their works to prove why they should enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Wait a minute. How can an unbeliever do mighty works of God and still be lost in their sin? And why do they do these mighty works? Verse 22 says that they did so in Jesus' name, *"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?"*

We know from the Bible that this was common within biblical history. In Deuteronomy 13:1-5 Moses says, "Don't fall for the prophets who do mighty works in order that they may lead you astray from God." So in the days of Moses there were those who were not followers of God but were doing mighty works in His name.

We also need to remember that even the pagan magicians in Pharaoh's court were able to do some of the same works that Moses did.

In Matthew 24:24 Jesus speaks of the latter days and says, *"For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."* So even in these last days there will be some who will be able to do things that look, smell and sound like Jesus when in fact they are not.

Let's bring it closer to Jesus' home. Judas was among Jesus' closest disciples: the twelve. We know from the biblical narrative that all twelve were sent out by Jesus and came speaking of healings, the cleansing of lepers, the raising of dead and the exorcising of demons. Judas would have been part of every one of these works and he was completely lost. This is an emphatic reminder that no matter what you do in the name of Jesus, no matter how much your ministry has positively affected those around you, just doing the right things or saying the right things doesn't mean you are afforded heaven.

That has huge implications for us as a church. Brothers and sisters we cannot be deceived that through the business of our ministry and the positive effects on those around us, our place in glory will be reserved.

2. Condemnation

So what happens to those who desire to enter the Kingdom of God? What happens to those who have said all the right things and done all the right things? Who have so deceived themselves from the truth and the narrow way of the gospel? Jesus has a word of condemnation for them. Jesus' words are not very pleasant

but let's make this clear: on that day Jesus will not sit as a mild mannered, meek Rabbi but He will stand as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Enthroned around Him will be myriads of angels who will sing to one another, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty*" ([Revelation 4:8](#)).

Departure

Jesus' condemnation begins with a departure. He says in [verse 23](#), "*Depart from me.*" Once again we see a great contrast here. Remember everything is two ways: two roads, two gates, two kinds of teachers, two types of faith and now two types of responses.

On that day people will come and desire to embrace Jesus. They will say, "Jesus, come here. Draw close to me, Jesus. I want to be near You. Let's be buddies. Jesus, I've longed for this day." And as they are trying to cozy up to Jesus, He will push them away and distance Himself from them.

This word "depart" (*apochōreō*) has been the most powerful part of my study this week. It speaks of a violent and abrupt separation. This departure isn't just the short-lived kind like when your mom got really angry with you and called down thunder from Heaven, "Oh, you're going to rue the day you did this. Oh, there is pain coming your way! Just wait until your father gets home!" Even in those moments with our mothers, compassion would cause them to relent. Longsuffering would cause them to turn away from their wrath and say, "You're grounded but only for a short time. Then you'll be brought back."

The departure to hell given here in our passage is in the present imperative. "*Depart from me...*" indicates that Jesus' command to the unrighteous is a total and forever separation.

When Jesus says, "*Depart from me...*" He is literally saying, "When you think you've gone far enough away from Me you're only half way. Keep going." He is saying, "Get lost. I want nothing to do with you. I have no time for you. I have nothing more to say."

Jesus spoke Aramaic. My dad is an Assyrian and he speaks Aramaic. So I called him and asked, "Dad, what would be the word in Aramaic for 'depart'?"

Without knowing what text I was working on, my dad started articulating it. He said, "Tim, the word 'depart' is a pretty powerful word in Aramaic. It literally means, 'As far as you can go, I want you there. Get as far away from me as possible.'" He also said that the word depart wasn't a word used by people very often because it is such a harsh word. Then he said, "Do you know what? The best word picture I can think of from the Scriptures is when the Psalmist [says](#) our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west."

Based on the word Jesus would have used in Aramaic, the promise He gives to the redeemed is that your sin is thrown as far away as the east is from the west. It's as far away as you can imagine. His promise to the unredeemed is, "You will be thrown out of the presence of God as far as the east is from the west." Wow. These are powerful words from Jesus.

Let me give you one more thing about the word “depart.” It speaks of total disrespect for the one to whom you are speaking. That means Jesus is totally unconcerned about the one He is casting out of His presence. He means serious business. Why would Jesus do this? Isn’t Jesus about love and forgiveness?” Yes He is—for a season. That is why Jesus says, “I am longsuffering. I am patient that all may come to a saving knowledge of God and repent.”

Jesus’ grace, love and mercy are being shown to you right now so that today will be the day of salvation because on that day there will only be judgment.

Declaration

Jesus will state a declaration on that day: *“I never knew you.”* Here’s another contrast. People are declaring that they know Jesus and Jesus is declaring to them the exact opposite, “I don’t know you.”

What’s the cause of this declaration? The word “declare” is the Greek word *homologeō* which is often used by someone speaking authoritatively about bad behavior. It’s an emphatic declaration. Jesus is about to pass judgment from His seat as Judge, Jury and Executioner.

When Jesus says, *“I never knew you,”* we should underline the word “never.” It’s a nullifying word. It means there was no time in your existence that you ever knew God or God ever knew you. So these people were not once saved but now have fallen into sin thereby losing their salvation; they were never saved at any point in the past. They never experienced true and real salvation because genuine salvation can never be lost. So Jesus says, “I didn’t know you.”

When Jesus says, *“I never knew you”* it speaks not of a casual relationship but one of total intimacy. When you read the Old Testament, it speaks about sexual intimacy between a husband and wife by saying, *“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain” (Genesis 4:1).* The sexual intimacy and knowing of a spouse is the same thing. In our passage Jesus is saying that to know Him is to have a level of real and true intimacy—not sexually but in terms of the depth of the relationship.

Here’s the big question for us: are you simply hanging out with Jesus because He brings you something? That is not knowing Him. Are you simply dating Jesus? In other words the jury is still out. You like Jesus and there are some things He says that you really enjoy but at the end of the day you’re not really sure if you want to commit.

Is Jesus simply an insurance policy? You make sure your payments are on time and keep track of the different requirements you need to fulfill so that you’re covered if there’s a fire. Jesus says, “That is not knowing Me.” Simply hanging around Jesus, being around people who love Him, liking Him yourself, admiring Him or having a “Jesus life insurance policy” for the Day of Judgment are all things that fall terribly short of what it means to know Jesus.

The best way to explain what it means to know Jesus is an anonymous poem engraved in a cathedral in Lubeck, Germany that echoes Jesus’ sobering declaration. Notice some of what it says:

Ye call Me Master and obey Me not,
Ye call Me Light and see Me not,
Ye call Me Way and walk not,
Ye call Me Life and desire Me not,
Ye call Me wise and follow Me not,
Ye call Me fair and love Me not,
Ye call Me rich and ask Me not,
Ye call Me eternal and seek Me not,
If I condemn you, blame Me not.

Many of us will say, "Wait a minute. What kind of Jesus is this? Doesn't He understand that we're trying to do our best?"

Jesus says, "Are you really?" Can you affirm those things? Can you say, "He is my Master, He is my Light, He is the Way, He is my Life, He is my Wisdom, He is the Fairest, He is the Richest and He is the Eternal One." And if so, do you obey Him? Do you see Him? Do you walk by Him, live through Him, follow Him, love Him, ask of Him and seek Him? You can't just say or do things in light of what they may do for you without bowing the knee to Jesus.

Damnation

Jesus declares to these people, *"I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."* In that declaration He gives the reason for their damnation. He calls them *"...you workers of lawlessness"* or iniquity. Those people who did mighty deeds and said prophetic words are not given a "nice try" or a participation trophy. They are given an assessment that will ring true in their unredeemed ears for all of eternity: they're workers of lawlessness.

I want to make this abundantly clear: the profession of Christ and a continual lifestyle of lawlessness are not compatible. You can't love the world and love Jesus at the same time. As Jesus stated earlier in His sermon a good tree will bear good fruit. So the question is, "Are you bearing good fruit today? Is it seen in your life?"

Jesus is not teaching sinless perfection. He knows that even the greatest of genuine believers will fall to sin in our physical flesh. We may even fall to a pattern of sin for a period of time. But Jesus is talking about those who practice lawlessness. Amidst all of their prophetic words and powerful acts, they continue to willfully commit sin. There's never been a genuine change of heart. There's never been a moment of repentance. They still enjoy their sin.

When a true believer sins, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that faith from God brings will well up in them as a total grief over their sin. They will confess their sin and seek to turn from it because they know that it has grieved the heart of Almighty God.

To be Christ-like means to grieve over sin and the affront that it brings. These people in our passage say all

the right things and do all the right things but never repent from their sin and turn to follow Jesus Christ. That should cause us to examine ourselves more closely.

3. Calling

So what's the good news? Here's the grace and the gospel: there's a calling. In verse 21 Jesus says, *"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."*

Do you want to avoid all of this? There's a calling. Mother's Day is the busiest day on our calendar for phone calls but the most important call you can make or receive today will not be from family or to your mom. It is a call that you will accept from Jesus Christ Himself. It's the call to bow the knee to Him.

In Luke's account of the same passage, Jesus gives two examples: one is a great banquet that is set and the other is a wedding feast where the master of the house calls all to come and partake. Romans 10:13 says, *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* In John 6:37 Jesus says, *"Whoever comes to me I will never cast out."*

Jesus is calling you. So if you sit there and say, "What kind of Jesus condemns people to hell?" then you need to know that He's condemning them to hell because He has called them and they haven't answered. Throughout the entirety of their lives God has cried out from all of creation, from His Word and from the Person and work of Jesus, "Come to Me! Come to Me and you will be saved." Over and over these people have shut the door to Jesus amidst all of their religious activity and now on that last and great Day of Judgment they are changing their minds. They really want to be allowed entry.

So how do you accept this calling? Luke 14:25-35 tells us that coming to Jesus involves three things:

Coming to Christ

First you must come to Christ. You lay out your entire life and say, "Jesus, apart from You I can do nothing. You're the answer. What You have done for me is the answer to my sin. Apart from You I have nothing. I'm spiritually bankrupt. I have nothing to give You. The only thing I have is my sin and I put it upon You, come to You and humbly submit myself to You. You are Lord and Savior. I trust You, turn from my sins and treasure You far above all things."

That's what it means to come to Christ. Have you done that?

Counting the Cost

Then Jesus says you have to count the costs. This won't be easy. From a human perspective it's going to cost you greatly. It means you have to stop living for yourself and calling yourself lord. Not only must you call Jesus Lord but you also must live accordingly. If Jesus is Lord over all, then you must allow every decision, every impulse, every passion, every prerogative and every pursuit to funnel through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. You must recognize daily that your sin is an affront to God. Every sin that we commit is an affront to God that needs to be forgiven by God.

Carrying Your Cross

Lastly Jesus says it means that we carry our cross. We don't do this in our own strength but each day we rise up and say, "Lord, I can't do it without You. I pray grace upon grace in my life that would come from You because You say You will give abundantly without finding fault. I ask for Your wisdom and I ask for Your grace as I try to live out this life. I know I can't accomplish it on my own."

When we come to Jesus, count the costs and carry our cross totally submitted to His grace and love, Jesus will not say, *"I never knew you; depart from me."* With arms open wide He will embrace us and say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant"* (Matthew 25:21).

So we have to examine our hearts. Why are we following Jesus? For what are we using Him? Our future will be determined by the answers to those questions.

Our passage does three things:

1. It encourages true believers that they can have assurance of their faith.
2. It convicts those of us who are self-deceived into thinking they're followers of Jesus Christ when they are not.
3. It challenges all of us to embrace the evaluating words of Jesus now instead of on the Day of Judgment.

Brothers and sisters, following Jesus isn't a game. We need to take this moment, be sober minded and recognize the opportunity God gives today for salvation. In Luke 14:35 Jesus says, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

I pray by the Spirit of God that you would hear God's calling and submit to Christ as your Lord and Savior without any doubt. Then when you see Jesus you will be filled with joy and not regret.

Let's pray.

Father God, we thank You again for this day when we celebrate moms. But even more we thank You for another day to hear about Your grace, experience Your love, see Your goodness and have the opportunity to repent. By Your grace You have given us Your Word. You have given us the opportunity to use our minds, hear with our ears and open our hearts to Your Word. You've given us another opportunity today to come to You with a sincere faith and open hearts.

Lord, today is the day of salvation. This passage reminds us this day will not be forever. At a time of Your own choosing, the time for grace, repentance and salvation will draw to an end and it will be too late. I pray for anyone today who may be deceiving themselves into thinking they are saved when they are not. Stop them in their tracks that they might seek You with all their hearts. Cause us to evaluate our motives, our ministry and the very makeup of who we are so that we may see You in our lives. Without Your grace and mercy we are lost. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a just God.

So on this day when we celebrate mothers, let us also celebrate the salvation You give us and revel in that. I pray that we would use the rest of this day—and all of our days—to honor You and put You first in our

lives in all that we do. Now let us fellowship with one another in Your grace, mercy and love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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