

week #30

*Upside Down
Aspirations*

SMALL
GROUPS

I Never Knew You

“The truth is that people may fool us for a while but eventually their deeds will expose them, even if they make it to the last day.”

Study

Open It

Explore It

Get It

On 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?” And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” Matthew 7:22–23

I Never Knew You

Mark Driscoll

People tend to be religious by nature, which means they think they can justify themselves in one of three ways:

1st **Loosely religious people assume they are living a good enough life** and that no spiritual devotion or extra effort is required on their behalf for God to be pleased with them when they stand before God at the end of this life.

2nd **Secular religious people work very hard at some social cause** because they think that they’re good people and need to overcome the evil of bad people who are ruining the world.

3rd **Devoutly religious people work very hard at keeping the rules** of a particular religion in an effort to justify themselves as good and obedient people in the sight of God.

Religious people have lived among the people of God since the beginning of salvation history. Because human beings are very good at deluding themselves and each other, this is something we can expect to continue until Jesus returns. Jesus warned us that this would be the case in Matthew 13:36–43 and in Matthew 7, Jesus addresses this very issue.

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Jesus Says There's No Middle Ground

Jesus wraps up the Sermon on the Mount with four warnings that contain a pairing of contrasts: narrow and wide gates (7:13–14), healthy and diseased trees (7:15–20), obedience and lawlessness (7:21–23), and wise and unwise builders (7:24–27). In doing so, He reminds us that there is no middle ground when it comes to faith in Him. People either will or will not respond to His words in faith. For those who respond, His words will lead to life, produce good fruit and a sturdy foundation. For those who don't, their path will lead to "destruction," they will be "cut down and thrown into the fire," and excluded from heaven. In Matthew 7:21–23, Jesus rebukes false disciples who assume their relationship with Jesus was based upon what they did for Him rather than what He did for them.

Beware the False Prophets

Earlier in the chapter (7:15–20), Jesus warns His disciples to beware of false prophets who are like wolves in sheep's clothing. In discerning who these false prophets may be, Jesus says that they'll be known by their fruits. To know these false prophets by their fruit is to know them by the quality of their life and how it measures up to the kingdom ethics espoused by Jesus Christ. In some people their bad fruit is quite evident, but for others, it's not. Some are like wolves with sheep's clothing, which means that some false prophets live and breathe within the church and give the appearance of being Christians when in reality they are not.

The truth is that people may fool us for a while but eventually their deeds will expose them, even if they make it to the last day. In verses 21–23, Jesus explains, saying, "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." Not everyone who calls Jesus "Lord" is a legitimate disciple. There are fakes

out there. This statement acts like a summary statement, which is then illustrated in verses 22–23.

"In That Day" – What Day?

In verse 22 Jesus begins by saying, "Many will say to me in that day." The phrase "in that day" is basically a way of saying "at the final judgment." It is used throughout Scripture in different ways to describe the coming judgment of God, with the final day of judgment at the end of time (cf. Mal. 3:17–18; Isa. 2:20, 10:20; Matt. 24:35, 26:29; Luke 10:12; 2 Thess. 1:7–10).

What is it that these people will say to Jesus on that day?

"In that day" the "many" will address Jesus and say, "Lord, Lord." "Lord" (kyrios) can be used as a customary address to a superior, like "master," "sir," or "lord," but in this instance, it means much more. The use of "Lord" twice in a row demonstrates a level of fervency on behalf of the "many" who are calling out to Jesus. This double usage of kyrios within this context implies that the "many" are not being overtly polite to Jesus but are rather calling out to Him as the gatekeeper into heaven (cf. 25:37, 44). This is why D.A. Carson said, commenting on this passage, "Thus the warning and rebuke would take on added force when early Christians read the passage from their post-resurrection perspective."

What's striking about the fervency by which the "many" approach Jesus is that their words seem to imply that they already know their fate, "But Jesus! Didn't we do this, this, and this?" They ask in a way that assumes a positive answer from Jesus, "Of course you did those things!" There's no reason for us to think that they didn't prophesy, cast out demons, and do mighty works in Jesus' name. All these things could be done by both false and true believers alike (Matt. 7:15; cf. Matt. 12:27; Mark 9:38–41; Acts 19:13–16). There's no reason to doubt that

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they performed deeds that were spectacular, whether by the power of Satan or God. But powerful works are no sure sign of a child of God.

“I Never Knew You”

After the “many” claim the feats they accomplished in Jesus’ name, Jesus doesn’t mince words in His final declaration to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (cf. Psa. 6:8). There are two observations that can be made from Jesus’ words.

First, Jesus says, “I never knew (γινώσκω) you.” Within biblical language the word “know” means more than just knowing facts about someone or something, it “denotes a relationship.” Jesus isn’t saying that He never met these people or didn’t know who they were. He is saying that He never knew them in a way that made them a part of the true family of God.

Second, even though the “many” performed miraculous feats, Jesus calls them “workers of lawlessness.” All their religious activity was merely a veneer on a life fundamentally opposed to the will of God. In other words, this tells us that the “many” had some sort of lax view of God’s law and were opposed to upholding it.

Justification and Regeneration

The Bible teaches that unjust sinners can be declared just or righteous in God’s sight by being justified, or obtaining justification (Rom. 2:13; 3:20). This legal term appears some 222 times in various forms throughout the New Testament. “Justification” refers to a double transaction whereby God takes away our sinful unrighteousness through Jesus’ substitutionary death in our place on the cross and imputes to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ, thereby giving us positive righteousness (Rom. 3:21–22, 4:4–6, 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8–9; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Second Corinthians 5:21 describes how a sinner obtains righteousness: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Martin Luther rightly called this the Great Exchange. On the cross Jesus took our sinful unrighteousness and gave us His sinless righteousness.

Justification is accomplished by Jesus plus nothing, because Jesus plus anything ruins everything.

The Bible also teaches that we are dead in our sins and in need of regeneration, which is the biblical teaching that salvation includes God’s work both for us at the cross of Jesus and in us by the Holy Spirit. Or to say it another way, regeneration is not a separate work of the Holy Spirit added to the saving work of Jesus but rather the actualization of Jesus’ work in a believer’s life.

While the word “regeneration” appears only twice in the Bible (Matt. 19:28; Titus 3:5), it is described in both the Old and New Testaments in a number of ways that signifies a permanent, unalterable change in someone at his or her deepest level. I’ve laid this out in great detail in my sermon “Faith and Works,” but if I could leave you with one point on regeneration it would be that it’s like being born again in a spiritual sense.

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Healthy Trees and Diseased Trees

People who are justified by Jesus and regenerated by the Spirit have a life in which their faith is evidenced in good works. Jesus' word picture in Matthew 7:15–20 is wonderfully clear in explaining how regenerated people live. Jesus' point with this warning is that a regenerated Christian is like a healthy tree that bears fruit in the form of good works done as acts of worship out of a new heart that loves God. He compares the regenerated person with a healthy tree, and says the unregenerate person is like a diseased tree that bears bad fruit because his life is simply the harvest of his heart. That is what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 7:21, "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."

You Cannot Meet Jesus Without Changing

In summary, we are not saved by but to our good works. It's not about what we do for Jesus but what Jesus has done for us. Ephesians 2:8–10 says it this way: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Therefore, *you do not have to do good works so that God will save you; rather, if you're justified and regenerated, you get to do good works because Jesus already saved you.*

Perhaps a past experience of mine will help illustrate the theological point in this post. While writing *Religion Saves*, my family and I hosted dinner and a house party for the mainly young guys who work in one of the departments at our church. At one point in the evening I found myself sitting in the living room having a discussion about a theological issue with maybe a dozen young men in their 20s. Each of the men was holding a baby. Most of the babies were held by their fathers, men who love their wives and children. A few of the single guys were also holding babies to give a break to the mothers, who were chatting in the other room. To give you a picture, most of these guys have more than a few tattoos and were regenerated in the past few years, most have played in punk or alternative bands, and all of them have skills in areas such as design, video, audio, and the like.

A few years prior, nearly all of them were single but living with and sleeping with women, looking at porn, drinking too much, and acting immaturity. The difference between their past and their present life is solely due to the fact that God has changed them through Jesus' cross and the Spirit's indwelling, and they will never be the same. The changes in their lives are evidence that they are now connected to the living God of the Bible, and had I seen no change, I would have been hard-pressed to believe that they had become Christians.

why? because you cannot meet jesus without changing.

Open It!

1. How do you respond when you know you are going to have to have a hard conversation with someone? Do you look forward to it, feel a little uneasy about it or freak out about it? Explain your answer.

2. Discuss a time when you were sure that you had excelled at something only to find out you had failed miserably? What did you learn from this experience?

Read It | Matthew 7:21- 23

Read the entire passage before proceeding to the questions below.

Explore It

1. According to verse 21 who will enter the kingdom of heaven?

2. What are some things that people will use to try to persuade Jesus to allow them into heaven?

3. What will Jesus say to those who aren't true followers of Him?



John MacArthur feels that people are deceived for at least four reasons:

- False doctrine of assurance, especially a "quick and easy" assurance from men but not from the Spirit.
- Failure to examine one's self and showing no concern about one's sins.
- Fixation on religious activity in lieu of relationship with the Living Lord.
- "Fair exchange approach" in which one sees something wrong in their life and instead of doing something about it, makes an "exchange" with something right or good in their life, all the while failing to make an honest appraisal of whether or not they are genuine believers.³

4. How do Christians and Bible teachers today promote this deception?

5. What things sum up "the will of my Father in heaven" which we must do in order enter heaven?

6. How do you make sense of the dual message that we are saved by the work of Christ on our behalf and that we are saved by doing the will of the Father in heaven? Are these not contradictory statements?

7. Why is doing the will of God a requirement to entering the kingdom of heaven?

miraculous powers do not give proof of authentic faith. many in the first century claimed miraculous powers. Like the magicians at Pharaoh's court (Ex 7:11), they sometimes succeeded. The claim here is centered around "in your name." False disciples gain public acclaim for themselves. The source of their success is not easily explained. Their lack of faith is clearly evident. They do not act in accordance with God's will. Love for self, not for others, dominates their lives. Jesus claims as His own only humble, obedient servants.⁴

8. To prophesy, cast out demons, and do many mighty works in Jesus' name seems like a strong, spiritual pedigree. Why would Jesus reject anyone who has done these kinds of works in His name?

9. What activities might people today use to convince Jesus when it comes to their entrance into Heaven?

10. What role do our fellow believers have in helping us judge the sincerity of our faith?



How does this sort of accountability get fleshed out in an average week?

Why do so few churches emphasize this type of accountability if Jesus' words are so clear?

11. How does doing God's will relate to knowing God?

12. What do you think Jesus means by His response to such people, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness...?”

13. How can a believer have assurance of salvation in light of such a passage? What things are to bring a believer assurance that they are a true follower of Christ?

14. What do you anticipate you will say “on that day” when you stand before Jesus?

15. How does the totality of the Sermon on the Mount help us to know that we will hear “well done good and faithful servant” when we meet Jesus face to face?

¹ Driscoll, Mark. Treasures on Earth *From Ligonier Ministries, the teaching fellowship of R.C. Sproul. All rights reserved. Website: www.ligonier.org*

² www.preceptaustin.org

³ John MacArthur, Sermon: Empty Words and Empty Hearts

⁴ Disciple's Study Bible