

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
Sermon by Keith Marcy, April 3, 2022
Matthew 7:24-27

The passage in Matthew 7:24-27 is the closing paragraph of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In it He calls for action, 'If you keep these words of mine your faith will survive when the storms of life threaten to undo you.'

And there is a warning, 'If you hear what I have said, but shrug off the principles I set down, your faith will not survive when life gets tough.'

Verse 24 begins with the word, 'therefore.' It is an adverb modifying the verb 'hear' but also acts as a connecting word to what Jesus has said in the body of His sermon.

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine..." What words? The words of the Sermon on the Mount. Please turn back to Matthew chapter 5. Jesus went up on a mountainside. His disciples, not only the 12, but a crowd of followers, came to him. Verse 2: "And He began to teach them saying..."

This morning we do not have time to go through His sermon verse by verse, but we need to look at the helpful headings the New International Version of the Bible added for our benefit. In this sermon, Jesus often uses hyperbole – or exaggeration – for emphasis. He also makes statements that are not to be taken literally, but He used them to emphasize the seriousness of a situation. Not long ago Pastor Monika taught through the Beatitudes, so we will not look at them in detail. To summarize verses 3-11, we could say, "Blessed is everyone who seriously desires to cultivate a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

The next heading is '*Salt and Light.*' My summary statement is:

Just as a tiny bit of salt improves the taste of food, so godly conduct of Christians will make the world a more pleasant place.

The Fulfillment of the law:

If a person strives to obey the 10 commandments and teach others to do the same, they will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Murder:

Even to have murderous thoughts about another person is wrong; in fact, to degrade someone by calling them a fool is akin to murder.

Adultery:

Men, if we look at a woman lustfully, we have committed adultery. And here is an example of hyperbole. If your right eye causes you to lust, gouge it out. This would be a gruesome sight – eyeballs lying all over the place. Jesus did not mean this literally. He was emphasizing the seriousness of letting our evil thoughts run rampant, or, of enjoying our evil thoughts.

Divorce:

Allowed – but only for marital unfaithfulness.

Oaths:

Mean it when you say ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ Be honest. There is no need to emphasize your statement with oaths.

An eye for an eye:

Do not retaliate evil for evil.

Love for enemies:

These verses brought me to an abrupt halt. Can you think of anything more cruel than to say to a family in the Ukraine whose house, and perhaps their whole city is a heap of rubble? I turned to the internet to Christianity.com and found a lengthy, but balanced commentary on these verses by Danielle Bernock, under the title, “What does it mean to love your enemies.” I gleaned these two statements from her article:

“Loving our enemies does not mean allowing them to continue to hurt us. That would be a failure of loving ourselves as God loves us.”

and

“Loving our enemies means seeing them as human beings in need of the Father’s love.”

Next, I lump 3 headings together,
'Giving to the needy'; 'Prayer'; and 'Fasting'.

Do all three, quietly, without show. Do not expect the praise of men.

'Do not worry'; and 'Ask, seek, knock'.

Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch lady who survived a Nazi concentration camp in World War II. Her simple faith expressed in her book, 'The Hiding Place,' has been an inspiration to me. Regarding our needs, she said, "God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. When you need something, He will sell one and provide for you!"

Judging others Matthew 7:1

Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

Many people – church people – stop there. Consequently anything goes. There are no absolutes.

Put it in context with the verses that follow. My summary statement is this, "wear the same spectacles when you look at others as when you look in the mirror!"

Skip to Matthew 7:15 *A Tree and its Fruit*

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. Judge them by their work; recognize them by their deeds. Do they abide by the Book?

Jesus' own summary statement is very blunt:

Verse 21-23: 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he 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 perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Back to verse 13&14 *the narrow and wide gates*.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

And now we are back where we began at verse 24.

‘Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice...’

What words? Jesus is referring to those just spoken to the crowd – The Sermon on the Mount. We have looked at it quickly and I made summary statements. I encourage you to read it this afternoon – Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. We have covered it so briefly.

Verses 24-25:

‘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.’

To accept these words of Jesus is to accept Him as Lord of your life. If He is Lord, He is the foundation of your faith; He is your rock. He will also be your Savior. Do you need a Savior?

When I read Jesus’ Sermon, there were many times I cringed, because I know on many of the points we covered, I do not measure up. I need a Savior. In two weeks we will celebrate Jesus’ resurrection. We will remember that when He died on Good Friday, the curtain in the Temple was torn from top to bottom – a sign that God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice for the sin of all who believe in Him. And now God does not see me covered in sin, but clothed in the purity of Jesus Himself.

But I did not finish Jesus’ Sermon – not yet. Look at verse 26. “But everyone who hears these words of mine...” notice this group ‘hears’ the words – “but do not put them into practice...”

They hear, but the words mean nothing. They do not accept the teaching of Jesus; neither do they accept Him as their Lord. You cannot have Him as your Lord if you do not accept His teaching. If He is not their Lord, they do not believe; if they do not believe, He is not their Savior.

‘They are like the foolish man who built his house on the sand, the rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.’

Opportunity for reconstruction! In my Children's message I referred to a big 2 storey house in the Holland Marsh north of Toronto where one end had sunk about 2 feet putting the house on a very weird angle. The ground was too soft to support the weight of the house. It did not have a firm foundation. Two years later we drove past the house again. Construction machinery was there. The house had been jacked up so it was level and they were pouring a new foundation. The house had a second chance! And so it is that with God, there is another chance as long as you have breath you can turn and believe Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount. You can strive to obey His teaching for your life making Him your Lord. He will also be your Savior.

Until He comes, or until we die, we have the opportunity to come to Jesus; to rebuild our house – our lives – on Him, the firm Foundation.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 we see an example of people who had turned from going their own way to following Jesus. Paul wrote:

'Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolators nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. **But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

It is possible to be changed by the Holy Spirit.