

Lord, Lord or Wise Builder

Turn to Matthew 7. This is the last message on the Sermon on the Mount. If we want to live as Jesus said, I do not think there is a more important Scripture than the Sermon on the Mount.

It is not accidental that we get the three chapters of the Lord's Sermon so near the beginning of the NT. All this teaching comes up elsewhere as well, but here it is put together in one sequence.

In Mt 7:12 Jesus says this, *"In everything, do to others as you would have them to do you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."* That also summarizes the beatitudes, and the whole Sermon on the Mount.

That's in 7:12, and after that there is no new teaching about how to live. That's the last teaching in this Sermon on how to live. After that Jesus gives four different warnings to be make sure we take his words seriously. We read the first two warnings last week, the narrow gate, and false prophets, and we'll read the last two warnings today.

The last two warnings of the Lord both have to do with people who are self-deceived. They think they're doing the right thing, they think they are doing the Father's will and receiving the kingdom, but they are not. If we've been paying attention to the Sermon on the Mount so far, we'd be okay. But Jesus wants to make sure.

Not Everyone who says, "Lord, Lord" (Mt 7:21)

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

Calling Jesus "Lord, Lord," and doing the will of the Father, are not the same. That much is clear. The person who says "Lord, Lord" recognizes who Jesus is, knows who Jesus is. They might even be words of worship.

But that is not yet the will of the Father. The will of the Father, my brothers and sisters, is to live out the beatitudes in all our daily life, all our normal contacts. Family, friends, enemies, people we work with, offensive people, irritating people, the authorities, neighbours good and bad. Are we beatitude disciples, or not?

I rolled through a stop sign at a deserted intersection in Steinbach, a while ago, and a policeman was set up some distance away to catch people like me, and he did. There's only one question for me at that moment – will the Lord guide how I respond to that officer? Daily life.

We treat all as we'd like to be treated. We don't do to them what they just did to us. We do to them what we'd like them to do to us. Not complicated, not easy. That's the will of the Father.

Later in Matthew, Jesus told a parable about a father with two sons. He asked the first son to go work in the field, and the first son said, “Yes, sir, I will go.” But he never went. The father asked the second son, and the second son was rude, and just said, “No.” But then he changed his mind and went. So, said Jesus, which one did the will of his father?

It was not the one that talked right. Let’s not fool ourselves by being able to talk right about Jesus. That the person says “Lord” twice, emphasizes how devoted the talk is. But that is not the will of the Father.

Did we not Minister in your Name? (Mt 7:22-23)

*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 in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

Folks, the Sermon on the Mount is not just about the right way to live. In this Sermon, Jesus makes high claims for himself, and none more so than these words. These Jews all knew that there would be a final judgement, and that God was the final Judge. The OT made that clear.

But here, Jesus makes himself the Final Judge. *Many will say to me. I will tell them, I never knew you, away from me.* Jesus says that he is the Final Judge.

Prophets. What does it mean to prophesy? If we looked at it within Matthew, especially the Sermon on the Mount, a prophet is someone who declares the will of God. Jesus twice in the Sermon said he was teaching the same as the Law and the Prophets. In a sense, the whole Sermon is prophecy. In Matthew, preaching the kingdom of heaven is a prophetic role.

Jesus drives out demons, and does many miracles. Later Jesus will send out the twelve to preach the kingdom of heaven, and to drive out demons and do miracles. So we could actually imagine someone doing what the disciples will do, and then saying this to Jesus at the End.

Is it even possible to preach in Jesus’ name, and drive out demons and perform miracles in Jesus’ name, and yet be rejected in final judgment? I do not know. Sometimes Jesus exaggerated to make a point.

But this we do know for sure: that kind of powerful and significant ministry is not yet the Father’s will, it is not yet the narrow gate. These people were fooled by their own great ministry into thinking that was the will of God.

Think about mission trips, short term mission. A group of believers goes somewhere and works for the Lord over there for a short time, and then comes back home. There is good in this. And sometimes it is spiritually a very rewarding time. There’s a sense of adventure mixed in, with the traveling, and we’re serving the Lord not just doing ordinary life. It can be exhilarating.

That's all fine. But then what happens is that we get to think that's really living for the Lord, that's really serving the Lord. We come back thinking this is so boring, this is not serving the Lord, I want this to be more like that. People, the will of the Father is precisely what we do in ordinary life. That is exactly the crucial time for doing the will of the Father.

I do not mean to discourage mission trips. I do mean to say that according to Jesus, ministry like that is not the will of God for us that will count on the final Day. "Lord, Lord, I went on 30 mission trips to serve you." "Lord, Lord, I was a pastor for 30 years to serve you." The Lord will say, "But why did you not do the will of the Father?"

In ordinary life, how are we treating the people in our words? Who are we angry at? It is the difficult people that bring this to the front. Blessed are the meek, and the merciful. Blessed are the peacemakers, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Will I do to others what I want them to do to me? That's the will of the Father.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is very clear. For every one of us, our calling is exactly where we are, our situation right now is our calling. It might change, but no one of us can ever be more called by God than we are right now. And again, no believer can ever be more called by God than they are at this moment. Read the middle of 1 Cor 7 if you don't believe me.

Will we live worthy of Christ today, that is, will we treat people in a Christ-like way today?

And remember, this was designed for the poor in spirit, the people who want this but fall and need forgiveness. But we must not let ourselves be fooled into thinking the will of the Father is anything else. Jesus does not want us to fool ourselves about that.

#### Everyone who Hears My Words and Does them (Mt 7:24-27)

This last warning is to those who hear the Lord's teaching, they know it and like it, but they don't actually do it. They think hearing it is enough.

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them 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. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

The storms here are not a picture of the troubles of life. The storm is a picture of final judgement. Psalm 1 says the wicked will not stand in the judgement. But the righteous will be fine.

Jesus has no interest in someone telling him, “Jesus, that sermon was amazing, you are the best teacher ever, I never heard anything like that, what a remarkable way to live.” Jesus does not need that from me. What he wants to know is, does this steer my life? That is the only question that matters to him.

This all sounds like salvation by works, so let’s talk about that a bit. No one ever earns their salvation, no one deserves it, no one receives the kingdom as any kind of wages or reward for obedience. It is always a gift. It is always good news from God for the poor in spirit. It is always God’s generosity.

But it is only for the people who want him, and wanting him means I will shape how I live according to his teaching, I will steer my life in his ways. That’s repentance. The kingdom is designed for the poor in spirit who also hunger and thirst after righteousness.

No one misses this because they are not good enough. Having trouble finding the narrow gate? Ask, and it will be given. Seek for it, and you will find it. Knock at the gate, and it will be opened for you. There is great help available from God, and great forgiveness when we fail.

But Jesus does not want any of us telling ourselves that we are seeking first the kingdom of God, when we are not. These challenges at the end of the Sermon are the Lord’s way of making sure we do not fool ourselves about that.

“Doing” at the End of the Sermon (7:12-27 – same Greek word)

**Do** to others what you would have them **do** to you.

Every good tree **does** good fruit.

Every rotten tree **does** bad fruit.

A good tree is not able to **do** bad fruit.

A bad tree is not able to **do** good fruit.

Every tree **doing** bad fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter, but the one **doing** the will of my Father.

Lord, Lord, did we not **do** many miracles?

Everyone who hears these words of mine and **does** them is like a wise builder.

Everyone who hears these words of mine but will not **do** them is like a foolish builder.

The gospel has to shape our lives. Let no one ever say, “I cannot live right but at least my right is right.” That’s impossible. Jesus said that all evil actions come from our hearts. We do what is in our hearts. Let’s not fool ourselves. Much better to say we are poor in spirit. The Lord cares about what we do.

### The Good News

There's good news here. For one, as I have often said, you people show this. I know you work to make peace with those being hard on you. You treat others how they would like to be treated. The good news is that you have asked, and you are receiving; you have looked for it, and God leads you to find it. That's so good. Keep doing it my brothers and sisters.

Secondly, it is very good to know this, to know what matters to God and what does not matter very much. Knowing it helps. We do have real energy for God, we have hunger for God.

How will we live that out? Our intuitions often do not take us in the right direction. Obviously Jesus thinks that too, or he would not have spoken so clearly. Thanks to these warnings, we can aim our energy for the Lord in the right direction.

And also, this does not leave anyone out. Most of us do **not** prophesy or drive out demons or perform miracles. If that counted for a lot, we're out of luck. But the Sermon on the Mount leaves no one out. It begins, good news from God for the poor in spirit. That's the opening line, and then it goes from there.

The will of the Father is laid out in this Sermon, and the great and mighty have no advantage at all. If we can get through the first gate, if we can come to God as poor in spirit, the rest follows. And when everything is a terrible mess, go back to the start, good news from God for the poor in spirit, and take it from there again. Amen.

PRAYER: Thank you for being so straight forward, for saying it like it is, Lord, for helping us keep our eyes open. And now, keep being our Shepherd, Lord. We want that narrow gate, and we want that path to life. We want to do your Father's will. We want to hear your words and do them. Thank you that you do not want us to be fooled. We don't want to be fooled, either. Keep teaching us. Thank you that this all is for the poor in spirit.

We want you, Lord, and we want the kingdom of God. We want to treat others as we'd like to be treated. You have come to us and called us, Lord, you yourself invited us to follow you. We are saying "yes" with all our hearts. Take us by the hand and see us through, Lord. Take us by the hand and see us through. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give us the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.