

The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached
The Sermon on the Mount Series (Part XIV)
“Doing the Will of The Father”

Liturgical Date: Good Friday

Primary Text: St. Matthew 7:21-23 (not assigned Gospel text for Good Friday)

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary text for this evening, Good Friday, is the Second Reading from St. Matthew 7. Our sermon series “The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached: The Sermon on the Mount” continues today with the fourteenth installment. The title of the sermon is “Doing the Will of The Father”.

The verses that we heard read tonight from the Bible hit us hard. Of course, the reading from St. John 19 about the crucifixion and death of Jesus can be hard to hear. The suffering and death of our Savior, not only for the agony that He went through as the only truly innocent man, but when we reflect that He endured all of this for us, saving us from our sins. And the reading from Matthew 7 presents some difficult, even frightening words. As we have heard throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does not hold back. He brings the message from God in passages that challenge us in many ways. The theme of Chapter 7, the last chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, is true judgment. As we have been hearing this week, there are four main contrasts that Jesus brings forth in the conclusion of this great sermon, contrasting the true and the false. And here our Lord and Master brings to us the contrast of the true and false confession of faith. He takes us right to the Last Day, the Day of Judgment, something Jesus often taught about.

And the words here get your attention. In fact, an argument can be made that these are the most frightening words in the Bible. Why? Because as Jesus takes us to this place of judgment, we are told once again that there are many that will not enter the eternal kingdom. They will be told, *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* Yes, the evildoers will be condemned on the day of judgment, we know this. We can understand that. But other things in this verse raise some worry and handwringing. *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven...Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.”* It is also very frightening because those cast away, the ones that Jesus did not know, seem very surprised that they end up where they do. They thought they were “in”, but they really they were “out”.

Is Jesus actually saying that there will be many, not just a few, that will go to hell rather than heaven, even though they professed faith in Jesus and did many things in His name? Yes, that is exactly what Jesus is saying. If you haven't already, now you begin to see why these verses are a strong candidate for “the most frightening verses in the Bible.”

Wait a second. I thought that being a Christian was about professing faith in Jesus? I thought that Jesus just said that if good fruit is produced, then this shows us that one is truly in the faith? What is going on here? There is no contradiction in what Jesus says here. Yes indeed, professing faith is required for salvation. And if one has faith, they are regenerated by the Holy Ghost and will produce good fruit. But these people who are condemned in this passage have neither saving faith nor good fruit.

In understanding this text, it is actually very similar to what Jesus teaches about the Final Judgment later in Matthew 25, with the teaching about the sheep and the goats. In that text, like this one, the condemned also protest. They are surprised about their fate, they thought they were doing well. It is vital to understand two key points as to where the many who have called Jesus Lord still are condemned.

First of all, it must be made clear that being saved not only involves what comes out of your mouth. Yes, we are to make a profession of faith. The Bible attests to that. For example, in St. Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus says this, *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before me, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”* But there is more. Romans 10:9-10, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* Did you catch the other piece besides a verbal identifying of oneself as a Christian? The heart. Saving faith is worked in the heart and then the mouth makes the confession of that faith. Kretzmann wrote, *“A mouth Christianity can never be substituted for heart Christianity.”* These that Jesus says will not enter the kingdom have given *“lip service”* to God, but their hearts are far from Him. They have done some good works, but they still practice *“lawlessness”* or *“iniquity”*. They do not do the will of the Father. Whatever good works they produced, even saying they did them in Jesus’ name, were really bad fruit because as we heard last night only the good tree can produce good fruit.

And speaking of good works, this is the second main point here which shows why these false ones who claim to serve the Lord are condemned. What is their protest? What do they point to as validation that they should be given entrance to heaven? Their works. They say they have prophesied, cast out devils, and done “many wonderful works.” Martin Luther said, *“Those who brag about being the best saints shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* These with the false profession of faith are trusting in their works, rather than Christ Himself. They did good works, but not in faith. They have built themselves up, and we have heard that condemned throughout the Sermon on the Mount, have we not? Way back toward the beginning of this series I said that the very first words that Jesus speaks in beginning this sermon are really the key to understanding the whole thing. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.”* The “poor in spirit” are those that realize their spiritual poverty, their wicked sinfulness, that they can never earn God’s favor by doing God works. Those are the ones who receive and enter the Kingdom of God. In humble repentance they come before God. And God gives them faith. They are forgiven. Repentance and faith are essential. Their hearts are cleansed. *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* The pure in heart can do good works, they can produce good fruit. But those that only give lip service to God and seek to justify themselves by good works are only goats and wolves and are told to *“depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* The ultimate iniquity and lawlessness is a failure to trust in Jesus and His work of salvation. Charles Spurgeon in his sermon notes on this text sums those with a false profession of faith well:

Their tongue was belied by their hand. They said, “Lord, Lord”, but did not do the will of the Father. They used the name which is named by disciples, but did not possess the nature of obedient servants. They prophesied, but

did not pray. They cast out devils, but the devil was not cast out of them. They attended to marvels, but not to essentials. They wrought wonders, but were also workers of iniquity.

The key to understanding why some will enter the heavenly kingdom and many others will be cast away into hell, is found in the second part of verse 21, *“but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”* This is what also takes us to Calvary on this Good Friday evening. Now some have attempted to twist these words of Jesus into some type of works-righteousness statement. Just as they have attempted to use Matthew 25 to say that good works must have at least something to do with if we are saved or not. But certainly, we know, that this can't be so. The Bible teaches clearly that our salvation is by grace through faith. Our good works can do nothing to earn our salvation.

I said that some have considered these verses the most frightening in the Bible. For me, the scariest verse in the Bible is James 2:10, *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”* What this means is that however much good that I think I am doing, however well that you think that you are doing in keeping God's commandments, however good a person seems, that we are all still lawbreakers. God's standard is perfection. To be holy, to truly do the will of the Father, we must be perfect. And we all sin, so thus we are sinners who cannot be in the presence of a holy God. Scary stuff. The Bible, in James 2:10, and throughout tells us that we have no hope in saving ourselves. The standard is God's, 100% perfection, and none of us can be that good. But this realization of our condemnation, takes us specifically to the cross of Calvary.

In what, or whom, are we trusting for our salvation? Luther in preaching on this text asked, *"You can evaluate everything on this basis: Is this what the Gospel and the Creeds teaches, which you pray every day saying, 'I believe in Christ alone, who died for me', or is it something else?"* Something else will only lead you damnation apart from God. It is Christ alone, who died for us, where salvation is found. Why? Because only Jesus perfectly did the will of the Father. Remember James 2:10 which said if you break one law, you are a guilty lawbreaker? There is only one who has ever lived who broke not a single law of God in thought, word, or deed. And that is Jesus Christ. He died on the cross on Good Friday as a criminal in the eyes of the authorities, but in the eyes of the Father, which is what matters, He was the perfect sacrifice. There was no deceit nor guile found in Him. All of this New Testament giving of the Law that we have heard in the Sermon on the Mount, all of these often hard and difficult things that we have seen that we cannot perfectly live up-Jesus did them all. He did every one of them. When Jesus said in Chapter 5 verse 48, *"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,"* He was the one who did that. When He said to love your enemies, He did that. When He said to treat others as you want to be treated, He did that. And everything else in the sermon too. Jesus did it and did it perfectly. When Jesus was abused both verbally and physically, when He was the victim of an unjust legal system, when He was beaten to a pulp, when He was nailed to the cross. When His life blood exited His body, and it became more and more difficult to breathe. And when at 3 PM, He bowed His head and died. This was the perfect man, the one who is also God, who could be the pure, adulterated one-time sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. His death could be, and was, in our place for our sins.

This was the mission of Jesus. This is why God became flesh and dwelt among His people. Jesus came to do the will of His Father, and He did just that. He came not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (5:17). He came to be the one righteous one (Chapter 6). He came to have the judgment of God fall on Him, that we may be declared innocent at the Day of Judgment (Chapter 7). All this He did for me, for you, out of love. And love for others is the proper motivation for good works, by the way. This is why Jesus, as we heard from St. John 19 this evening could and did say, "*It is finished.*"

But one may still object and say, well Jesus did the will of the Father, yes. However, Jesus said in verse 21 that "he who does the will of the Father" will be the ones who enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That means we must do the will of the Father. Yes, but what does that mean? We can only do the will of the Father because Jesus has done His Father's will in our place. That is ultimately what Good Friday is about. God wants His people to be holy and dwell eternally with Him. That can only be done through the work of Christ. The Christian faith teaches us that we are not saved by *our* works, but we are saved by the *works of Christ*. His work of keeping of the Law, His death on the cross, and His resurrection in defeating death. When we are humble, poor in spirit, we repent of our sins. We receive faith in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. We live here doing good works not to earn salvation, but out of a gratitude for this Gospel given freely to us. Jesus perfectly did the will of the Father, and in faith we receive what Jesus has won for us by His obedience to that will. In this, the kingdom of heaven is opened, and the Father's will is done.

Amen.