**Matthew Sermon VII**

**Entering the Kingdom**

Last week:

Matthew 6:1-18 (Although we should let our light so shine before people…) Do not let your religion be a performance to draw attention to yourself. Do it for God, not self.

Matthew 6:19-34 Kingdom priorities.

v. 20 Do not store up treasure on earth. Store them in heaven.

Matthew 6:22-23 The eye is the lamp of the body.

If you see the kingdom of God correctly—the need for undivided loyalty, then you get the whole enchilada—all else will be clear.

Matthew 6:24 You cannot love both God and money.

Matthew 6:25 Literally “Do not give a thought to your life.” This is an incredibly high standard.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

This week:

I. Do not judge

II. Entering the Kingdom of God.

Matt 7:1-5 Seek first the kingdom. Have incredible kingdom standards ever before you, but do not judge those who are still working on it.

v. 2 “With the measure you use…” If you are “hard” others, then God will be “hard” on you.

Romans 2:1-4 v. 3 “Passing judgment.” v. 4 you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience.

To “judge” is to pass judgment. It is to assume bad motives when you are not sure. Judging motives.

God has chosen to not judge you—at least for now. So be merciful!

Dictionary: “To have a bad opinion of someone’s behavior because you think you are better than them.”

Application: We tend to judge people in areas we are relatively strong in.

You are a neat person, but you are not very good at taking personal initiative.

So, you judge people based on neatness and ignore their personal initiative.

You are passionate about social justice, but weak on conviction about sin. You judge those who are not passionate in this area, but fail to notice that you have some real weak points on sin.

You are knowledgeable about the Bible, but have an anger problem. You think, “How could that person be so weak on knowing Scripture? But fail to make an issue out of anger in people.”

Let’s form some conviction about our own weaknesses and acknowledge the strengths in others.

But Matthew 7:5 If you do this, then you will be able to help people to grow—to work on the speck.

“The problem is not the diagnosis, but the failure to begin judgment with yourself and to judge based on your strengths, not your weaknesses.”

Matthew 7:6 Do not judge, but do make wise judgments. (also v. 15-20 you can tell a tree by its fruit)

Wise judgments. That person has an anger problem. I better be careful.

That is not judging.

This person is a hopeless cause. I am glad I am not like him. That is judging.

Right now, that person does not seem to be open. I will put my time and effort into person Z. To make a reasoned judgment is not to judge.

This person I am studying with is very likely not saved.

It would not be smart to loan my car to person X. He or she can earn back my trust, but…

This car salesman is trying to manipulate me. (I know this type. They are worthless)

vs. This person is hopeless. This person deserves God’s wrath. This person cannot change. Weak Christian.

I am not judging this person, but wisdom says to be careful.

When we study with people… This is a heart issue for us.

Show wise judgment but do not judge. This is not always an easy distinction.

Matthew 7:7-11 God answers consistent, fervent prayer. Covered elsewhere.

Matthew 7:12 The Golden Rule. So… This serves as the summary of Jesus statements about Kingdom ethics beginning all the way back in 5:21-48. Jesus is the first to formulate this rule. It is not the rule of Islam or Hinduism or Judaism.

They say do not do to others what you would not want done to you. This is passive, not active.

In summary of Jesus’ expansion of the Law and the Prophets:

Would you want your enemy to love you?

Would you want people to give you the benefit of the doubt about your motive?

Would you want another man to lust after your wife?

Would you want someone who is angry at you to settle the matter?

(aside: In marriage, apply the Platinum Rule: Do to others what they would want you to do to them)

Matthew 7:13-27 How to get into the kingdom vs. how to live in the kingdom (5:1-7:12) (Enter through…)

7:13-14 Small is the gate, narrow the road, and only a few find it. This seems pretty judgmental. It seems narrow-minded. Q: How do you feel about this?

v. 13 wide is the gate and broad (easy) is the road.

Wide and easy vs narrow and hard.

Which road are you on?

What does this mean? It means what it says.

How many in Merced are true disciples of Jesus—are saved? Very few!!! 10%, 5%, 2%? Less?

(but apply the Golden Rule when talking to religious people… That is what you would want). But these are the bare facts!!!

Q: How does that make you feel? What does it cause you to do?

1. Get more people through the gate and onto the road.

2. Make sure that you and those around you stay on that narrow and difficult road.

7:15-20

Who is the false prophet? He whose message, if accepted, would keep you from entering the kingdom of Heaven.

You just have to be a good person.

You just have to “confess” Christ.

It is he or she who preaches easy believism. Just pray Jesus into your heart. Just say a prayer. One who preaches Christianity without discipleship. (see v. 21)

Are some who call themselves “Christians” false prophets? Yes!

How can we know?

1. by their fruit. v. 16-20

Praise the Lord! Halleluiah! Are you giving sacrificially? Who have you shared your faith with? In what way have you served the poor and needy? Whose lives have been positively impacted because of your ministry?

So, if others were to look at you, what “fruit” might they see?

That alone is not proof, and I will not judge, but I can see the fruit.

Note, this is not works salvation!!!!! It is how we can test whether or not a person is likely to be the real thing!!!! We are looking at fruit, which is all we can actually look at!

2. whether they are doing God’s will. v. 21-23 many will be shocked.

Why will so few make it to heaven? v. 21 Because only a very few are willing to do the will of God.

Not all who say, “Lord, Lord!” Jeremiah 7:4-8 Deceptive words…

Ex: That person seems so sincere, but they have never been baptized. How could they not be saved?

Solution, teach them more correctly, then you will discover how truly sincere they are. A sincere, humble person who wants to do God’s will respond in obedience when shown the Scripture.

What about church X? First of all, why are you trying to judge church X? But we can look at their fruit. (but when you do these things, do not judge these people. Let God take care of that)

What about the miracles? Even “charismatic” events prove nothing (although many do not agree). Even miracles prove nothing. Preaching fine sermons means nothing. Writing erudite spiritual books is no evidence. Obedience and fruit are.

So, what do I do?

It is not rocket science, folks. Do the will of the Father!!! (because you cannot control the fruit)

Matthew 7:24-27 Final thoughts.

1. Hear the words.

2. Put them into practice.

Then the rain and the storm and Covid 19 and inexcusable social injustice against people of your race, or rioting and mayhem, your faith will not fall.

Israel/Hamas, Ukraine/Russia war, chaos in our government, deaths in Lewiston, Maine.

Take-home lesson: Do these things!!!!!!

The rock is God, and the way to build on God is to hear his words and put them into practice.

 So, What in Matthew 5:3-7:12 do you need to put into practice?

Do you need to grow in your kingdom attitudes?

Poor in spirit—humble before God

Mourning over things in the world you cannot have

Meek—humble before people

Hunger and thirst for righteousness

Merciful

Pure in heart

Maker of peace

Do you need to grow in your distinctiveness from the world—to be the salt of the earth or the light of the world, to spread the aroma of Christ, even if that makes you the smell of death to some and would lead you to being persecuted because you do not fit in to the world’s pattern?

Do you need to be sure that your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees?

Do you need to have a kingdom ethic in your life?

Not using angry words and working out your differences quickly

Hating lust. Not just right actions, but right heart and mind.

Going the extra mile, turning the other cheek. Being willing to be abused if it is for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Do you need to grow in loving your enemies?

Do you need stop doing good deeds and acting religious in order to be seen by people?

Do you need to repent in the area of kingdom priorities?

Do you need to find ways to put your treasure in heaven not on worldly things?

Do you to increase you love for God and decrease your love for stuff.

Do you need to learn to “not even give a thought to your life,

But rather seek the kingdom of God first and the righteousness that he will give you.?

Do you need to stop being judgmental of others?

Do you need to love as you would be loved?

Do you need to grow in simply doing what the Word of God says?

OK, so let us make some decisions right now. Let us become model citizens of the Kingdom of God.

v. 28 Jesus “spoke as one who had authority” because he has authority.

Why? Because Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. He is THE ONE who the Law and the Prophets foresaw. He is God-in-the-flesh.