

How to Recognize Counterfeit Faith

Matthew 7:21

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Today, as we come back to the Sermon on the Mount, we come to what I consider to be the most unsettling passage in the entire Bible. It is a passage with great eternal significance, filled with warning, filled with caution to everyone who would name the name of Jesus Christ.

In the final section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is warning against the dangers that would keep us out of heaven. You will remember that in verses 13 and 14, He commanded His hearers and by extension those of us here today to enter through the narrow gate. Seek for the narrow gate that leads to heaven, He says, because there is a wide gate; there is a broad way that leads to eternal destruction and that is where many people travel. You, He says, look for the small gate; the narrow way that leads to eternal life because there are few who find it. Jesus is giving us matters of great eternal significance. You could not possibly; if you spoke for a thousand years; you cannot overstate the importance of what He is saying in this passage because the consequences are eternal and the consequences apply to every man who has ever lived.

Now, what He does here, having given us that exhortation to go through the narrow gate, He starts to give warnings against the dangers that would keep us out of heaven.

Last week, in verses 15 through 20, He warned us against false teachers; those who look like servants of righteousness, but are actually angels of the devil. You have to discern those teachers and turn away from them as you seek the welfare of your eternal soul. You have to strive to enter through the narrow gate and there are those false teachers who are calling you to turn away all in the name of righteousness—these men and these women are wolves in sheep's clothing, Jesus says.

Now today, we are going to turn to a different kind of danger. Jesus is going to focus on a different danger that would keep you out of heaven. This one is more personal; this one is more searching. It is the danger of self-deception about the reality of your salvation; a danger to which, He says, many will succumb.

And my prayer is that God would use this time to awaken many of you who may be slumbering in sin, thinking that things are okay when things are not okay.

That is what is on the mind of Jesus as we come to this passage. Matthew chapter 7, verse 21—sobering words, Jesus says:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name performed many miracles.” And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.

Jesus, in this passage, is looking forward to the Day of Judgment. He is looking forward to that time when men will stand before Him and He will declare their eternal destiny. He had said in verses 13 to 14 (and we talked about this just recently), He talks about the ultimate outcome of life; the ultimate outcome of your eternal soul. He says there is a way that leads to destruction and there is a way that leads to life—one of two destinations. There are no other alternatives—there is no third way. It is either destruction or it is eternal life. It is so stark, beloved; it is so very, very stark. And Jesus says men will stand before Him and He will declare their eternal destiny to them.

And He goes on to say that judgment is going to turn out differently than what many people are expecting. Many people, not just a few, not just a tiny handful, many multitudes of people will be shocked as they are turned away from heaven and banished to eternal destruction in hell. Judgment will not go as they had expected. They are going to stand before God; stand before the Son of God thinking that they were going to be entered and welcomed into heaven, only to find that they were turned away. And their first step into eternal destruction will only be the beginning of an eternal punishment for their rejection of Christ and their sin against God; and they will be shocked at the outcome.

It is one thing to go to hell knowing that you have chosen to go there—you hear people talk that way. Just recently I was counseling with someone who was in the process of abandoning his spouse. And he said, “I know this is going to send me to hell and I don’t care.” Oh, how trivial; how can anyone be so superficial and flippant with their eternal soul, beloved? It cannot be so with you that are here today. No—God has brought you here today to hear how you can avoid that self-deception and know that you are on the road to eternal life. This is the only question in life that matters, beloved. I mean, honestly, and we have said this so many times, life could be rotten here on earth, but if you enter into eternal life, it all comes out well in the end; and all of a sudden nothing in life has mattered. But it goes the other way as well; everything can go well in this life, but if you end up in eternal destruction, nothing in life matters. Jesus says, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?” We have to take this seriously; we have to take these things to heart. Beloved, it is essential for you not to be numbered among the many that Jesus turns away.

I want to give you three keys to avoiding spiritual self-deception so that you can know that you will be not numbered in those who God turns away; numbered among who said, “Lord, Lord,” and heard Him say, “Depart from me, I never knew you.” This might be

the most important passage in the entire Sermon on the Mount if you could be so crass as to compare one part of God’s word to another. The first key to avoiding spiritual self-deception is to understand this; the whole section here is built on this reality and yet it is somewhat just beneath the surface here—it is the structure, it is the foundation of everything that Jesus says here.

1. Jesus Christ Rules over Eternal Judgment

Look at verse 21 with me again. Jesus says:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter.

Understand this; there is two aspects of this, Jesus rules over eternal judgment that I want to bring out for you:

(1) Jesus Christ defines the conditions of eternal life

Jesus Christ defines the conditions of eternal life; He says what it takes to get in and these are the people that will be turned away. Who is this Man of Nazareth that assumes the prerogative of defining who goes into eternal heaven and who gets sent off to eternal hell—who is this Man that walked on the face of the earth and says, “I’m going to tell you who is going to heaven and who is going to hell.”? Jesus rules over eternal judgment. He says, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’.” Jesus says in this passage, these people enter into heaven and these people don’t. He is asserting sovereign prerogative over the eternal destinies of every man who ever lives—that is a statement of absolute sovereign deity. He speaks from His own authority; the gate to heaven goes through Him and no one else. Jesus said in Revelation 1:18, “I have the keys of death and of Hades.” So Jesus Christ defines the conditions of eternal life—it is up to Him.

Now, along with that, a corollary point:

(2) Jesus Christ delivers the final verdict

He delivers the final verdict. Look at verses 22 and 23. We are going to pass through these verses again in a few moments. But I just want to highlight the centrality of Christ in this passage because we get so wrapped up in the fact that “all these people are going to be surprised and isn’t that tragic” that you lose sight of who the central figure in this passage is—it is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus says in verse 22, “Many will say to me on that day ‘Lord, Lord’” (verse 23), “and then I will declare to them...” They are saying one thing and Jesus says something different back to them, “I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.”

And so Jesus, for all of the ways that He has been dumbed down over the years through poor teaching and weak teaching and turned into someone soft and cuddly and all of that, Jesus here makes it clear that the time is coming when He is going to sweep away many

people with the condemnation, “I never knew you; depart from me.” “I find you unfit for the kingdom of heaven.” Six times in these three verses, He uses the singular first-person pronoun, I, me, and so on. It is Jesus Himself who is rejecting their appeals.

Understand this beloved, just to clear away a little bit of confusion; we are not going to meet Peter at the Pearly Gate. This verse alone; this passage alone is a death blow to Catholicism. We are not going to go through the Pope; we are not going to go through Mary; we are not going to go through any of their other saints or anything like that. It is Jesus Christ who rules over eternal judgment and He has not delegated it.

You can see this in other parts of the book of Matthew. Turn over to Matthew chapter 25. The whole point here beloved is we need to take Jesus seriously; we need to tremble before Him; we need to fear Him. Speaking again of judgment, Matthew 25, verse 31, Jesus says:

When the Son of man comes in His glory and all of the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne(He is talking about Himself in the third person here), all of the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left; and the king will say to those on His right, “Come you who are blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”.

Skip over to verse 41 to see echoes of what He said in His opening sermon in His ministry that we are looking at this morning—verse 41 of Matthew 25. Still speaking of Himself, He says:

Then He will say to those on His left, “Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Verse 45—you know the story about how He was a stranger and they didn’t invite Him in; He was hungry and they didn’t feed Him. Verse 45, He says:

Then He will answer them, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” These will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Jesus Christ, speaking on His own authority, not appealing to anyone else, says, “These will go into eternal life; these will go into eternal judgment.” Jesus Christ, beloved, rules over eternal judgment—that is very clear.

Now, here is a point of discernment for each one of you; here is a point of self-examination for every person who would contemplate seriously the reality of their own eternal destination. My friends, do you, in the depths of your heart, in your most fundamental convictions of life, see Jesus Christ as the judge before whom all the world will one day stand? You have to recognize that in order to be able to understand Him for

who He truly is. If you don't see Him as a judge, you had not understood Him to begin with. Do you see Him as the focal point of the eternal destiny of your own soul? Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father but through me." "No other name in heaven has been given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts chapter 4, verse 12).

And so beloved, if you would avoid the self-deception that leads to eternal hell, you should not take Jesus lightly. You should not take Him for granted. Jesus here is teaching for keeps; Jesus is ruling over eternal matters by His own sovereign prerogative. And your soul, beloved, is under His authority. For good or for ill, Jesus rules over your eternal destiny.

Now, the starting point of Christianity is that we are all guilty sinners who have broken God's law. We face His eternal punishment in hell as the consequence of our disobedience. Beloved, people who talk about "Oh, I accepted Jesus" or you know, "I asked Jesus into my heart." What does that mean if you don't have a concept of Jesus being the judge and that we face judgment because of our guilt. You cannot be saved until you understand that you have something to be saved from. And what you and I need to be saved from is the wrath of God at the final judgment; the judgment where Jesus Christ rules.

And so we respect Jesus. There is a proper sense in which we fear Him because of His great authority. We don't treat Him lightly; we don't take Him for granted because He rules over eternal judgment.

Now secondly, many will say that "Jesus is my Lord. I'm okay, Jesus is my Lord. Surely I will not be rejected." Now, that is a crucial point for the possibility of self-deception. Those words "Jesus is Lord; Jesus is my Lord" contain within them a possibility of self-deception that we need to look at very carefully. That's our second point here this morning.

2. Jesus Rejects Empty Words

Now follow me through this point because this is just so crucial. Jesus rejects empty words. Look at verse 21 with me. Jesus says:

Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter.

In other parts of the scripture, the Bible exposes the possibility of empty words. In 1 John chapter 2, verse 4, the Bible says "The one who says 'I have come to know Him' and does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him." There is a very real danger of taking the name of Jesus on your lips in an empty way that is divorced from your heart reality. And because you are saying "Jesus is Lord," you think everything is okay with your eternal soul. Jesus here in this verse disabuses us of that false notion.

Jesus describes the time when He will be standing as it were at the door of heaven and people are appealing to Him for entrance. In that glorious time, in that awesome time, that awe-filled time, people are calling Jesus Lord; they are ascribing to Him deity in the highest authority. In the throne room of God, no one is going to be using that word “Lord” to say anything other than He is master and sovereign.

Now beloved listen, Jesus is Lord and it is absolutely right and proper to call Him that. The Bible says in Philippians 2 that “every knee will bow and acknowledge that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” It is not a question of whether He is Lord or not. The question is what do you mean when you say that. That is the point of potential self-deception because there is obviously something missing in the lives of these people in verse 21 because they are calling Him Lord and yet Jesus Christ sends them away. Oh, this is awful. Beloved this is just awful in its consequences; this is awful to contemplate.

What is the problem here? First of all, understand this; we’re going to make a distinction between what their lips say and what their lives say. Basically, when we consider the fact that Jesus rejects empty words, these people who are going to be sent to hell, Jesus tells us, that their lips affirm Christ. First sub point under point 2 is:

(1) Their lips affirm Christ

Jesus rejects empty words—what did the words say? Their lips affirm Christ. Now listen beloved, basically there are two kinds of people in the world; on the one hand you have a whole mass of humanity who does not acknowledge Christ at all—those people are going to hell; there is no question about that. These people who do not acknowledge Christ in any form are going to hell.

Now on the other side here, you have a group of people who name the name of Christ; who name Him as Lord. There is a distinction here; Jesus is speaking to this group over here in this passage; He is not addressing those who do not know His name. Now in this group over here, what you have to understand is that there is a breakdown into two sub sections of these people who name the name of Christ. There is a section who truly knows Him as Lord; and then there is this other section; where it is just an empty word to them; there is no true spiritual reality to their naming the lordship of Christ. Jesus is addressing and showing that there is a separation even among those who call Him Lord; that is key to understanding this passage. Those who do not confess Jesus as Lord will most certainly go to hell, but what about the people who call Him Lord?

Now listen, let’s step back from it for just a moment with those thoughts in mind. Romans 10:9 says:

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Only those who put their faith in Christ will be saved from eternal destruction. Part of saving faith is a confession of His sovereign lordship. But here it is with the name of

Jesus as Lord on their lips and they are sent away—how can that be? How can the Bible be consistent in its message if people are calling Jesus Lord and they are sent to eternal destruction?

Here is the problem beloved; here is the issue; here is what you can look for in your own life to discern whether you might be self-deceived. You have to evaluate, secondly, the fact that for this group of people that Jesus sends off into eternal destruction, their lips affirm Him, but:

(2) Their lives deny Him

Their lips affirm Him, but their lives deny Him. Look at what He says at the end of verse 21. He says there are these people who call me Lord, Lord, but not all of them are entering the kingdom of heaven. Why? Because the kingdom of heaven is reserved for those who not only call me Lord, but also do the will of my Father who is in heaven—that's the meaning of the passage.

Obviously, what this is saying is, Jesus is going to turn away people from heaven regardless of their confession of His lordship if they do not the Father's will. There has to be, if a confession of the lordship of Christ is true, a corresponding lifestyle that conforms to the reality of that confession. If the lifestyle is empty; if the lifestyle contradicts the lips, beloved, listen to what the life says not what the lips say. That is what tests the reality of a confession of the lordship of Christ. He says it is limited; admittance to heaven is limited to those “who do the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Now we are going to deal with the complexity of that in just a moment. Here is an important question in light of what Jesus said. What is this will of the Father that He is talking about here? If my confession of Christ's lordship has to go beyond a mere verbal ascent and somehow be reflected in the reality of my life; reflected in the doing of the will of the heavenly Father, what is Jesus talking about here?

Beloved, this is important. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, you need to understand the will of the Father in the entire context of this sermon. Jesus delivered this sermon on one occasion to a group of hearers who heard Him. And what had He been talking about before He started giving these warnings? That is the expression of the will of the father in the context of this sermon. It is what He has been talking about throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

Now, turn back to Matthew chapter 5, verse 3 where Jesus says:

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

You have to start your understanding of the Sermon on the Mount at that point. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is restricted to those who are poor in spirit. He is talking about people who recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt and they have no righteousness of their own to commend themselves to God—that is the starting point of

this whole sermon. And what that means is that when He talks about doing the will of the Father, He is not talking about people who say that “I have a righteousness of my own because of my own works that entitles me to entrance into heaven.” This is not talking about a works-based salvation at all. The starting point of the sermon frames the discussion to exclude that possibility; this is not about salvation by works at all because Jesus is speaking to people who say, “I have no righteousness of my own.” People who truly say that; people who truly repent, come to Christ and put their faith in Him and submit to Him as Lord because of their spiritual desperation that says, “I want to be free from sin; I want to be delivered from the wrath of God; and Jesus, because you are Lord of everything eternal, I come to you as my only hope of deliverance.”

Now, beloved, from that point; from that opening point in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus goes on to describe the nature of true repentance and how true repentance flushes out in the life of one of His disciples. And what He teaches us is that true repentance; true saving faith; the only kind of faith that saves (get this), inevitably and always resolves in internal character change—that’s the whole point of the Beatitudes. It results in a heart obedience to the law of God, not just external behavior—that’s the point of the rest of chapter 5. True repentance, true saving faith results in a sincere devotion to our heavenly Father, not hypocrisy. True saving faith makes God and His kingdom the first priority of life. True repentance and true saving faith fundamentally trust God in the face of earthly anxieties.

And the Sermon on the Mount makes it clear that only those who have that kind of transformed life are true Christians. Everyone else is an imposter, no matter what they say about Jesus—they are imposters; they are counterfeits; they are not truly saved to begin with. That, beloved, is the distinction that Jesus is calling to light in this verse. A true confession of Christ as Lord results in a transformed life. That is part of the evidence that this is a real confession. Absent that transformation, the confession is not true; it is not sincere; it is not true to that person. While they say Jesus is lord and that in itself is a true statement, the fact that they are trying to make it sound like Jesus is my Lord, that is where it is false.

Commentator Alfred Plummer said this:

The outward ascription of honor to Christ is worth little unless there is also inward loyalty to His will.

J. C. Ryle said:

Do we truly repent; truly believe on Christ and live wholly and humble lives? If not, in spite of all of our privileges and profession, we shall miss heaven at last and be for ever cast away. We shall hear those awful words, “I never knew you; depart from me.” It will then be proved that to be saved means something more than making a profession. We must make a practice of our Christianity as well as a profession.

Beloved, Jesus had this very principle in mind when He said in Luke chapter 6, verse 46:

Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?

Why this trampling upon my holy name? Why this false confession of my lordship if you do not obey me? That is just fundamental.

Now beloved, let's be clear here. I've said it before, but I need to say it again lest I be misunderstood. We are not saved by our works. We are saved by grace alone; through faith alone; in Christ alone. But beloved, true faith results in a transformed life. The book of James says that "Faith without works is dead." But that kind of faith cannot save anyone. So let's apply this. Some of you like me came from tradition where there was a heavy emphasis on walking an aisle or raising a hand as the proof of true acceptance of Christ. And I have talked with many people who have loved ones and families who are living lives of gross sin, but these dear people, out of an understandable love for their loved ones would disregard the whole testimony of their lives and say, "Oh, but he accepted Christ when he was young and all will be well." Beloved, that's not true; that is not true. A confession that is followed by an empty life is exposed as a confession that was never true to begin with.

And I know that this gets right into each of our kitchens with people we care about. But beloved, we don't do anybody any favors if we neglect what Jesus says here in a misguided effort to try to boost someone we love into heaven by giving them an affirmation that their lives are not worthy of. People like that; we need to gently say to them, "Why do you call Christ Lord and not do what He says?" This is tragic; this is the very thing that Jesus is trying to expose and warn people against. And when church leaders or well-meaning family loved ones say, "Oh, but you know, he walked the aisle when he was ten." That approach is very misguided and blunts the edge of what Jesus is saying here. We cannot do that, beloved; we do not have the prerogative to blunt His warning. We need to call people's attention to this warning not hide it from them and give them a false assurance that they are not entitled to and that is not ours to give because Jesus rules over eternal judgment not us.

We are always going to be on the safest spiritual ground, beloved, when we are being most faithful to what Jesus Christ Himself has said. And not only is that the safest ground, but is where our loyalty and allegiance must go. I must be loyal to Christ more than I am loyal to my family members who profess Christ and yet deny Him with their lives.

Because you see beloved, no one should trust in the fact that they prayed to receive Jesus when they were little; no one should trust in the fact that they walked an aisle or raised their hand if the spiritual realities of the Sermon on the Mount described is foreign to their life experience. If that confession has not transformed into a heart love for Christ; it is not transformed into a heart priority that says, "God, you are more important to me than anything else," that confession is not true. And countless numbers of people who are in that condition cannot be affirmed in it, beloved and you can't affirm yourself in it if

that's your life because you are just living on borrowed time; you are living off a lie that has a shelf life and is going to come to an end. And the day will come when people like that will stand before Christ on the authority and on the word of Jesus Himself, He says there will be people like that that I refuse entrance into heaven.

God help us to avoid that self-deception for ourselves and God help us that we would not affirm someone else in that deception because we were unfaithful to Jesus' words here. God help us; this is too important.

But beloved, it is not just empty words that will deceive us. Jesus rejects empty words—yes. Third point today:

3. Jesus Rejects Empty Works

He rejects empty works. Look at verse 22. People come to Him and say:

Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name; and in your name cast out demons; and in your name performed many miracles?"

They are getting the point that they are not getting in and they are protesting against their exclusion from the kingdom of heaven. Many of these people, if this is Jesus picturing the Great White Throne Judgment here; many of these people have already suffered for their sins between the time of their death to the time that they have their audience with the king. And now they have the time to verbalize their thoughts on this and say, "Lord, how can this be? Look at all these great things that we did in your name."

(1) They did works

Beloved, it is emphatic; they say this three times, "in your name; in your name; in your name" and it is emphatic by the way the Greek sentence itself is structured. They are protesting His name; they are saying, "This isn't right; there must be some mistake here. Can You go back and check the ledger again, Lord, because it was in Your name that we did many, many things here. How could we be condemned if we had done supernatural things in Your name?"

Now it is interesting that in this passage, Jesus doesn't contest the point—that's not even the point of discussion. He doesn't enter into a discussion about whether it is true or false or whatever. Whether those things actually happened is not even relevant; it is not even relevant. If it was a court room, there would be an objection, "Judge, this is irrelevant" and then objection would be sustained. How can that be? How can people do miraculous things in the name of Jesus and get turned away? Because their works were empty. They did works, but, second sub point is:

(2) They did not love Christ

They did works, but they did not love Christ. Look at verse 23, Jesus says:

And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.

We are going to focus on that little phrase, Jesus says, “I never knew you...” Now, when He says that, He is not saying He was ignorant of their existence—“Where did you guys come from? I’d never seen you before.” No, no—it is not that at all. Jesus is omniscient; He knows everything about everyone. So when He says, “I never knew you,” He is not saying that they were foreign to His mental comprehension. He is saying, “We never had a real relationship. I never knew you. You never loved me and we never had that reciprocal relationship that comes from a true shepherd with one of his true sheep—you are foreign to the flock.”

And here is the source of self-deception for these people, beloved—people like this. This is the source of self-deception for everyone who says when they are asked “Will God let you into heaven?” And they say, “Yes, I’ve lived a pretty good life.” This is the source of self-deception; they are using the wrong standard to evaluate spiritual reality. They say, “Because I did these things, this proves that I belong to your kingdom. Because I did these things, this proves that you should let me into your heaven.”

Now why are those works empty? Why is it that it carries no weight before the throne of Christ? It is because beloved, that those actions did not flow from a heart that had been transformed by grace and that is shown by the fact that they never knew Christ; they never loved Him; they never truly bowed their knee to Him; they never trusted Him; they were absolute strangers to Him even if they used His name to go about their business. Write this verse reference down—1 Corinthians 16, verse 22:

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.

Listen beloved, these people that we are talking about with the empty works; they are being turned away for a most fundamental reason. They want into the kingdom of heaven, but listen, they do not love the king—that’s it. That is it—they do not love the king and therefore, what would they assert to say that “I should be in His kingdom.” They don’t love Christ. So why do they even want to be there? They prided themselves in their works, but they never had allegiance to the one in whose name they supposedly did those works.

Beloved, as I thought about this passage over the past few days, I have come to this conclusion. When you first read this passage, there is a certain sense of being uncomfortable; a sense of unfairness that could creep into your thinking. “Yah, look at all these, they said the right things; they did some things and Jesus turns them away—this is an outrage that these people would get turned away.” You want to know where the real outrage is? The real outrage that is reflected in these lives; the real outrage here; and the reason why this judgment is so fitting and so just is that these people presume to take the holy name of Jesus as Lord on their lips and did nothing to show any allegiance or love to

His name. They took His name on their lips while their hearts raged against Him—that is an outrage; that deserves eternal judgment.

And then on the other side, you've got these people with their empty works and all of their works are just designed to build up their own pride and self-righteousness and say on this basis I deserve to be in heaven. You want to go to heaven because of your good works, but you don't love the king? No—no; that doesn't work; it doesn't work that way. And as I look at this passage and spent time on it, never have I been more convinced than I am at this very moment that the judgment on these people is just and right and the only thing that could be done because these people abused and trampled upon the holy lordship and the holy love of Christ and rejected Him even as they were claiming to know Him. Their lives were made a mockery of His name and if nothing else happens in the universe, the holy name of Jesus must be vindicated because He is Lord.

Now, what do we conclude from this? Did Jesus say these words to undermine the confidence of all of us? No—He didn't do that. Again beloved, you have to keep the Sermon on the Mount in its entirety in your mind here. Let's remember some things here. It was in this sermon that Jesus pronounced blessing upon those who were poor in spirit. He pronounced blessing upon blessing on those who belong to His kingdom. He promised reward to those who sought the Father in heaven and said "He would reward you; He knows your need." Jesus in this very sermon said to His disciples, "All these things will be added to you." "Ask and you will receive" "You will know false prophets" There is a strong theme; a strong strand of assurance that Jesus gives to His true disciples in this sermon and He is not trying to undermine that and to turn it here at the end. He is just letting us see that there is only a certain kind of people that can lay hold of those promises and say those belong to me.

And here is a question that we should all walk out of here with. Do you know Christ? Do you love Him? Is your heart's allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know a brokenness of spirit? Do you know a desire to obey God's law even if your obedience is imperfect? Are you trusting in the shed blood and the righteousness of Christ alone as your only hope to be received by a holy God?

If those things are true of you; those deep internal spiritual characteristics, beloved, and then you can face this judgment with confidence even though you know that you are unworthy in your own merit to enter heaven because those are the marks of a heart that has been transformed by grace. Jesus does not intend with this passage to send everybody out, questioning their salvation because He said so much prior to this in this sermon to give assurance of blessing to those who know Him.

But beloved, don't take your soul for granted. Don't rest in empty words or empty works that are not accompanied by a present, living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ because He will expose all counterfeits on the final day.

Beloved, for the love of Christ; for the love of Christ beloved; I beg you; don't give your soul any rest until you know that Christ has delivered you from that awful number of

people who will hear the words “I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.” Don’t take your soul for granted; don’t take Jesus lightly. Bow before His throne and trust in His person and show forth the glories of redeeming grace.

Let’s pray.

Our Father, may you take these words of Jesus in this passage and apply them to each heart that hears according to their belief. Father for those that are spiritual counterfeits in our midst, would you use these words to expose that and bring them into true saving faith. Father just like you did for me that day 25 years ago; you exposed my own profession to b counterfeit. Father you have the power; you have the grace to do that and we ask you for the sake of eternal souls that you would do so even now.

Father for those of us that do know you, Father we thank you for the grace that you have worked in our hearts and we can look at these words and we can understand them; and because of Christ we can say “I’ve been delivered from that; that will not be me on that day of judgment.” For those of us that know you Lord, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts because there was nothing in us that would have caused you to treat us differently; it was all of your grace. And just as your grace has saved us now, your grace will deliver us and protect us when that final time of judgment comes. Father we thank you for that because no matter what else is true of our lives now, in that we are most eternally blessed. You have shown us the narrow gate oh God and we are on the path that leads to life and we thank you and rejoice in that.

So we commend these words of Jesus into your hands to apply them to our hearts as you see fit knowing that you rule over the eternal matters in perfect justice; in perfect righteousness; and you will always do what is right. Help us to follow you in a manner that is worthy of those who look at Jesus and say “Lord, Lord.”

In His name we pray.

Amen