

Christ Reformation Church

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God's Blessing for Those Walking on the Narrow Way

July 12, 2015

Sermon Text: Matthew 10:40-42

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 1:1-20

Introduction-

Matthew 10:32-42 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (33) but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. (34) "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35) For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. (37) Whoever

loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39) Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (40) "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. (41) The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. (42) And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

In nature, things and systems tend toward deterioration. It is called *entropy* –

(in cosmology) a hypothetical tendency for the universe to attain a state of maximum homogeneity in

which all matter is at a uniform temperature (heat death).

4.a doctrine of inevitable social decline and degeneration.

The visible church tends toward *entropy*. Spiritual death. Not the true Church – though even genuine believers must fight against this tendency. Entropy in the church is called *apostasy* – a moving away from truth. Failure to stand firm in Christ. The “heat” of God’s truth dissipates in the world and the visible church cools right along with it.

History as well as Scripture verifies that this is the case. Church history is largely the account of the visible church moving further and further away from Christ’s true gospel and becoming more and more corrupt and oppressive. Then at certain times you see a revival of true religion as the Spirit of God effects revival. The classic example of this is of course the Protestant Reformation. At such times a great division and separation necessarily occurs as the true sheep remove themselves from or are cast out by the apostate “church.”

The Apostate church is still with us today, the primary example being Rome. However, this impostor has its Protestant form as well and in our day

it is growing stronger and larger. It will not do for us to be ignorant of these things, and we have no excuse to be naïve because Scripture warns us repeatedly to expect the visible church to move toward apostasy and deny the faith.

This morning I want us to look at a few of these various warnings and read the Lord’s encouragement to His people who stand in His truth even in such perilous times.

I. The Large Majority of Professing Christians Travel on Broadway, and thus are not Christians at all

Matthew 7:12-16 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (13) "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (15) "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (16) You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"

Now here is a point that I am trying to emphasize more and more lately.

These kinds of warnings in Scripture are primarily addressed to people who claim to be followers of Christ. Christ is speaking primarily to the Jews here. "He came to His own...I have come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Go back through the Old Testament and you will find that the prophets were sent to Israel with few exceptions. The same is true in the New Testament Scriptures which primarily address people who profess to be Christians.

And so it is here in Matthew 7. Christ is telling us about two ways: the narrow gate, and the way that leads to destruction. He compares and contrasts the two:

Narrow Way	Broadway
Narrow (difficult)	Wide and easy
Leads to life	Leads to destruction
Few travelers	Packed with traffic
True Prophets	False Prophets

These two ways, I suggest to you, are pictures of the *true church* versus the *apostate church*. Not so much the church vs the world, but rather two churches, one true and the other false. From Christ's words here we can confidently conclude then:

1. *Most people* who profess to be Christians do not belong to Christ at

all. We must, therefore, *stop assuming that most everyone who claims the name of Christ really belongs to Him.*

2. *Most people* who claim to be Christians are going to end in hell (destruction).

3. *Most of what claims to be the church of Jesus Christ, is not.* That is to say, most visible churches, "christian" denominations, etc are on Broadway, packed with false believers, taught and led by false prophets.

How can we tell the difference? By their fruits. Not so much by what they say (though that needs to be examined as one "fruit" as well) but by their *practice*.

Matthew 7:20-23 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (21) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

See it again? I cannot emphasize strongly enough how important this is for us to all get hold of. ALL the people the Lord is speaking of judging on that Day here *call Him Lord and spent their lives claiming to serve Him*. Yet MANY are not known by Him at all.

If you have at all bought into the notion that infects the visible church today that assumes most all who say they are Christians surely are, that most everyone is surely going to end in heaven, then you need to seriously re-examine your thoughts in light of Scripture. It seems that in so many local churches and “Christian” organizations today, the only thing regarded as heresy is to doubt someone’s salvation! Do you see that Christ Himself is teaching us to *start* with doubt!!

Matthew 7 is certainly not the only place these kinds of warnings are given –

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. (2) For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, (4) treacherous, reckless,

swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Once more, think very carefully through this text, hearing exactly what it says:

1. The “last days” is the time Paul describes here, and this is a term for the church age, since the day of Pentecost. There are only two “days” or eras in God’s dealings with man. The “former days” and the now, “the last days.” This is not a term for some period of time immediately prior to the return of Christ, a time yet future, but it is the title given to the time extending from the days of Christ to the return of Christ.

2. Now, in our own time, in this present era, believers are going to have a difficult time. *Understand this*.

3. Paul’s description of these difficulties *concern the visible church*. He says that the people who are characterized by the evils he lists, are people who *have the appearance of godliness but who deny its power*. Understand? Paul is talking here about what the visible church will experience *within its own ranks*.

4. This ugly list then applies to people who claim to be Christians. No wonder so many evil things and even atrocities have been committed by people who put themselves forward as “Christians.”

The mass, we say again, of visible Christianity is *corrupt*. I heard someone say once that the Christian church is the most corrupt organization in all of history, and if you think about the word “corrupt” you will see that this is true. “Corrupt” means rotten. It means something that is not what is originally was and is not what it is supposed to be. Now Christ’s true church, His remnant, is incorruptible and is growing more and more holy. But the visible church is quite the opposite as a whole (happily there are a few exceptions, yet not even the purest visible local church is without some stain of corruption).

Paul goes on to warn and exhort Timothy –

2 Timothy 4:1-4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (3) For the time is coming when people will not

endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, (4) and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Do you see once again the very same thing? Who is it that Paul is talking about? Who are the people who reject the sound truth of Christ? It is obvious. They aren’t the pagan people of the world. They are rather the professing Christians Timothy is going to have to deal with in the local churches! People who claim they are Christians!

I was talking to a young pastor recently. He isn’t a pastor now, having been sorely and wickedly treated by professing Christians in his last church. His entire heart is to teach and preach God’s Word and pastor Christ’s people, but he does not want to go back to being the pastor of a typical local church. Why? Because he knows what awaits any genuine, godly pastor who is going to faithfully preach God’s Word in the typical local church. He isn’t willing to put his wife and family through such turmoil again.

So, what is happening today? Churches are “accumulating for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.” These are the guys they love and the church grows more and

more corrupt. Over and over again the Lord warns us of these things and we must turn from our naiveté about them and be wise.

Here is the very same thing spoke by the Lord through His prophet, Micah, to the Lord's own covenant people:

Micah 2:1-11 Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. (2) They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. (3) Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster. (4) In that day they shall take up a taunt song against you and moan bitterly, and say, "We are utterly ruined; he changes the portion of my people; how he removes it from me! To an apostate he allots our fields." (5) Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD. (6) "Do not preach"--thus they preach-- "one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us." (7) Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Has the LORD grown impatient? Are these

his deeds? Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly? (8) But lately my people have risen up as an enemy; you strip the rich robe from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war. (9) The women of my people you drive out from their delightful houses; from their young children you take away my splendor forever. (10) Arise and go, for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction. **(11) If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink," he would be the preacher for this people!**

See that last phrase? It is the same thing Paul is telling Timothy. In these last days professing Christians are going to increasingly want a preacher who preaches things that agree with their own sinful lusts and passions. Here, Micah says that this nation of spiritual drunkards would love it if a pastoral candidate came along who said "the essence of my theology is a gospel of wine and strong drink." HIRED!! Praise the Lord!!

II. Encouragement For Those Walking the Narrow Way

Now, this sounds all dark and dreary and depressing, right? Well it is

darkness certainly, but we need not be depressed – we can be righteously angry and zealous to expose it for what it is. We are, after all, blessed by the Lord for hungering and thirsting after righteousness. And Christ has left us with some very encouraging promises as we travel the narrow way in these dark days. Listen:

Matthew 10:40-42 "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. (41) The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. (42) And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

This is a remarkable thing. It comes right after Jesus has said that He did not come to bring peace, but to divide. His gospel divides at the most intimate level of human relationships. It's the narrow way or Broadway, not both and we all have to decide.

Now, when we choose the narrow way, when we step out in real faith and follow Christ, there are things we lose. Father, mother, sister, brother, son,

daughter – family. Very often this is the case and it was always the case in the Jewish world. Follow Christ and the Broadway Christian Church you used to be accepted in will expel you.

But there are things that we gain that far exceed any losses. Look at it:

1. Choosing the narrow way means that we receive those who are traveling it, and thus we receive Christ Himself.
2. Choosing the narrow way means that when a prophet comes along, that is to say, when God's Word in truth is spoken, taught, proclaimed, written – *narrow way Christians will receive it*. The sheep know the Shepherd's voice. And their reward will be the same as if they were that prophet chosen by the Lord!
3. Choosing the narrow way means that we receive and embrace as brothers and sisters in Christ those *righteous people* who are traveling that way. We receive them because we are one of them! And their reward is OUR reward.
4. Choosing the narrow way means that those traveling it aid and assist "little ones" on that road because they belong to Christ. These are not necessarily children (though they could be), but they are little in the sense that they are not "great ones" or

“big shots” in the church. *That is to say, people traveling the narrow way recognize that in that Way, the least are the greatest. There is no celebrity worship in Christ’s true church!* Once more, notice that Christ assures such a person that “he will by no means lose his reward.”

Necessarily then, in days such as this when the visible church has grown so corrupt, real believers are going to find themselves standing with a few. With the remnant. With those on the narrow way. And when we find ourselves in that position, Christ tells us that we can rejoice, knowing that our reward from Him is secure. We really are on the road to life, even though the mass of what claims to be the Christian church today rejects us.