

Lighthouse: Beware of Castles in the Sand¹

Matthew 7:21-27

November 18, 2017

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Christmas is coming, so turn to the person beside you and ask them three questions:

- 1.) What is something you really wanted for Christmas when you were a little kid that you aren't interested in getting this year?
- 2.) What is something you want this year that you anticipate you won't care much about in 5 years?
- 3.) What is something you will probably want 20 years from now that you don't really care about today?

Please open your Bibles to the end of Matthew chapter 7. Today I want to talk about something important. In fact today I want to talk with you about the most important thing; the only thing you will care about a hundred years from now.

And bar nothing the most important thing on your mind a hundred years from now will be your salvation. So the question today is "are you saved?"

Now you say "my salvation, what do you mean?"

If you went to the doctor today with some pain in your abdomen and they found a rare form of cancer with almost 100% death rate, that would be bad news. But then imagine that your doctor just happened to be the leading doctor in the kind of cancer. And through surgery he was able to take 100% of that cancer out. You would say she saved you. Right?

And if you were trapped in your house and it was on fire and one of those great men in yellow showed up, found you and dragged you out of the house we would say... [He saved you]

And the Bible teaches us that all people are lost in sin, all of our hearts are rebellious and treasonous against the God of the universe. And because of this we have a terminal illness if you will, and if left unchecked it will kill us. Against what we want, the house will burn down on us. We will be swept out to sea never to return. And that means every one of us is in need of salvation.

Now the good news is that God looked down at us in our lost and desperate state and made an escape rout so we don't have to suffer the consequences of our rebellion. God sent His Son, Jesus, who came to earth, lived a perfect life in our place and then died a brutal death crucified on the cross paying the price for our

¹ This message based off Pastor James MacDonald's sermon "Are you saved?" on Youtube. Accessed June 11, 2014.

rebellion. And if we accept what Jesus did for us; if we put our trust in Him for salvation, and give ourselves to living for His glory, then we are saved.

So let me ask you, have you done this? Are you saved? But then let me follow that question up by asking “how do you know you are saved?”

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And actually it is this second question that is going to be our main one today. And it is a question I think is particularly important because most people in the church that I’ve asked this question to have responded by telling me how to get saved. “Well you just have to confess your sins and believe Jesus is your only way to salvation and you are saved.... Just like that.” Or they tell me when they got saved: “In 2010 I was at Ness Lake and I put my hand up after chapel.”

But neither of these are the right answer. Just knowing when you prayed a prayer or just knowing what you need to believe to become a Christian is not the same thing as actually getting saved.

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If I asked you if you knew how to get to Vanderhoof probably all of you could tell me. “You just head west on highway 16 past Walmart and you bump into it.” But just because you know how to get to Vanderhoof does not mean that you are in Vanderhoof now – thank goodness right?

But as we are going to see, Jesus says it is the same thing with salvation. Just because we know how to get saved, or we know when we prayed a prayer doesn’t mean we are actually saved.

And so on that note look with me at Matthew chapter 7 starting in verse 21

[Read Matthew 7:21-23]

This is a very sobering set of verses. Here Jesus makes clear that some spectacular looking people are not actually Christians and will not enter the eternal kingdom of heaven. In fact, verse 21 says only people who do the will of the Father are saved. So we need to figure out what that is because then Jesus describes a bunch of people who look like they are doing God’s will but actually aren’t. So just look at their resume’s:

First of all, all they are people who profess Jesus as Lord. That means they believe in Jesus. On top of that they also do all sorts of Christian service. Some of them prophesy, or you could say preach Christ into the lives of people around them. This is something every Jesus follower should do.

But the list goes on and gets pretty extreme. Some of these people have spiritual healing ministries and cast out demons. How many of you have done that? And others have done many miracles in the name of Jesus. How many here would say “Yes, I’ve done many miracles.”

So these are some very impressive looking people who if they were at Lighthouse we would never suspect that they might not be saved. So think the best of us. Think of someone right now who is doing more service for Jesus than you. Jesus says don't take it for granted that they are even saved. And because even they might not be saved, then think about yourself very seriously too. You might not be saved.

And that is Jesus' point. In this text Jesus speaks to us and says "the wide road that leads to destruction that we talked about last week isn't just for crazy sinners out there who don't believe in Jesus, some of us are on it right now.

Now wait a minute you say, I thought Romans 10 says

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

That means just pray 'the prayer': Jesus I believe in you, come into my heart and be the Lord of my life... Just believe and you are in, right?

[Tape balloon up on music stand and grab pellet rifle.

This is my grandfather's air rifle. I grew up shooting with thing. It packs a good punch. You can hunt squirrels with this, or even cats – if you are close enough. So by a show of hands how many of you believe I can hit that balloon on the first try?

How many believe this strong enough that you would be willing to hold this balloon while I shoot at it? Keep your hands up.

How many of you believe strongly enough that you would be willing to hold this balloon with your teeth while I shoot at it?

-please sign this waiver]²

So how many actual believers were in the room?

Jesus says without belief it is impossible to be saved, but there is something more than just a cerebral belief that is essential if you are going to be saved.

James, who was Jesus' little brother, said it this way:

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. (James 2:19)

² Illustration adapted from Francis Chan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXJen-MwLt8> (Accessed November 16, 2017)

So the demons have a mental understanding of who Jesus is. And they take this belief seriously, it causes them to shudder! But how many would agree that demons probably aren't saved, right? And so the question Jesus has for us is are you sure you actually have saving belief?

Certainly it would be the worst to find out the day you died, like the prophets and miracle workers in our text, that you were on the wrong belief train. You believed, but it wasn't saving belief. I can't think of anything more terrible.

And Jesus thought making sure you were actually saved was a big deal too. If you have your Bibles turn a few pages forward to Matthew 13, and we will pick it up in verse 3. Here Jesus tells another story about some people who were saved and other people who looked saved but actually weren't.

[Read Matthew 13:3b-9]

Whoever has ears let him hear. That means do you get it?

Now if you aren't quite sure you do get it, don't feel bad because the disciples didn't get it either. In verse 10 they asked Jesus "why do you tell stories so much, they are kind of hard to understand. And so in verse 18 Jesus unpacks it using small words for them. He says:

[Read Matthew 13:18-22]

So Jesus says there are four types of people. Some people are like the soil of the path. They hear the good news about Jesus, that's the message of salvation, but before anything starts to grow in their lives the devil comes and snatches it away. So let me ask you. Saved or unsaved?

We will just do salvation by popular vote here. What do you think, saved or unsaved?

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Unsaved! It isn't enough just to hear the message of salvation, something has to happen in your life.

How about the people who hear the word, excitedly start to grow, but then when life gets hard they bail? What do you think? Saved or unsaved?

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Unsaved. That's Jesus' point. A moment of belief is not what it means to be a Christian. These people haven't lost their salvation; they were never saved in the first place.

How about the people who get the gospel, grow, but then life gets in the way. There are bills to pay and toys to buy, relationships to invest in, and pretty soon they care more about the things of the world than Christ. Saved or unsaved?

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So far this is a pretty bleak story, but now we get to the fourth kind of soil in verse 23. This is where you want to be.

[Read Matthew 13:23]

This person receives the good news, grows and produces fruit. The fruit is the proof. None of the other soil produced fruit.

Now this isn't works salvation – I've said this before, but grace always starts with God. It comes down to people who don't deserve it. God saves undeserving sinners – that happens first. But grace doesn't leave us where it finds us. It changes us. And very soon that grace starts bubbling out of us to those around us. We start working out our salvation. And it is what happens in this realm, on the horizontal, with our neighbours, with our families; that is the evidence of what has happened on the vertical. Bearing fruit in our lives doesn't save us, but if we bear fruit it is the evidence that we have been saved.

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Back in Matthew 7 Jesus says “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.” Living out God's will on the horizontal realm, doing what God wants to our neighbours and to our brothers and sisters sitting beside us here, is the evidence that salvation has come.

But then we have to ask: “what is the will of the Father then? How do I know God's will for my life?” Because it can't be just good service for God. After all nobody has a better resume of service than the miracle workers Jesus has already said hadn't done the will of the Father.

So what is God's will? What is the Father's will for you? Don't you want to know?

To get this we have to look back at what Jesus has taught throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Nowhere has He said prove you are My disciples by doing miracles – this isn't to say miracles are wrong, just that they aren't the fruit Jesus talks about. Nowhere does He say cast out demons to prove you are with Me – that isn't to say casting out demons is wrong, it just isn't the fruit Jesus is talking about. So what is the fruit Jesus has been talking about that proves He is at work in our lives – that proves we have been saved?

Looking back through the Sermon on the Mount Jesus plainly tells us there are two kinds of fruit He is looking for – this fruit is God's will for you. So first, in chapter 5 Jesus says you need to be more righteous than the Pharisees in order to get into heaven. And then He tells us what this looks like. So the Pharisees followed all the rules on the outside – nobody could accuse them of murdering

anyone or committing adultery. But they didn't understand that what God wants from us – what His will is for us – isn't just to follow the rules, it is holiness.

And so Jesus says His followers don't just not murder or commit adultery they kill their anger; they exhibit the miracle of sexual purity and marital fidelity on all fronts. They speak with truthfulness, they don't get even, and they love their enemies.

Now none of these things are sensational. No one would say "Ahhh! It's a miracle, they didn't have sex outside of marriage. They didn't get angry when I thought they were going to. That's amazing!!" No, what Jesus calls us to is not spectacular, but it is extreme.

If you have a personality that gets angry easily you don't just get over that. If you have struggled with lust it doesn't just go away because you want it to. If you have enemies you don't just start loving them by default. This is extreme. God's will for your life is you go all in trying to look like Jesus.

When you are doing this then this is the evidence you are saved. This is the fruit that the Holy Spirit is alive within you.

Then in chapter 6 Jesus talks about the second kind of fruit people grow to do the will of the Father. And so Jesus talks about spiritual disciplines like giving, praying and fasting. These too are both completely extreme and totally unspectacular.

When it comes to giving most Canadians think it is crazy to be generous. In fact only 23% of Canadians give anything to charity at all. And of those 23% who give the average Canadian donation is \$123 a year. That's in spite of the fact we are some of the wealthiest people on the planet.³

So why is giving so low? Because giving your money away is not something people do unless God is at work within them. If God isn't at work in you then you have to hold on to what you earn because it is your hope for the future. Only if you have hope in God can you be truly generous.

Now lots of you don't even have jobs yet, but you've got money. And so I want to encourage you to make giving a regular part of your life, not because God needs your money – He doesn't – but out of a desire to please God with what you have.

Then Jesus talks about prayer and fasting, and it's the same thing. Jesus calls His disciples to pray and do other things like fast in secret – without anyone, except for God seeing.

³ <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/what-canadians-give-how-charity-depends-on-where-you-live/article16065426/>

But the reason we don't do these things is that they seem like a waste of time. It doesn't make sense to wake up early or stay up late or take time out of the middle of our busy day in order to spend time talking to a God who doesn't speak audibly back to us. What's the point?

And the point, Jesus says, is that the will of God for our lives – this is God's will for you – God's will is that we live trying to please Him, not the people around us. So when we impresses people – “wow Pastor Dan is so spiritual, he can really pray”– that is the reward we get. That's not God's will. But God's will is that with everything we do we try to please God. That's evidence that we are saved.

So we are going to have a discussion here about what God's will is for your life. So here it is again. People who are saved are those who do the will of the Father. And the will of God is not that you get this job or that job, or date this girl or that girl. None of that is God's will for you. The will of God the Father for your life is that you produce two kinds of fruit. First, you live a life of obedient holiness, not trying to get as close to sin as possible without falling in, but trying to look like Jesus with everything you do.

And the second kind of fruit is your motivation. With everything you do are you motivated by a desire to please God, not impress the people around you. This is God's will for your life.

So ask the person beside you, what are the two parts of God's will for our lives, and what do they mean?

[Discussion]

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Jesus finishes her Sermon with one final illustration. Look at verse 24.

[Read Matthew 7:24-27]

Friends Jesus wants you to win at life here and now as well as for eternity. He wants you to be a wise builder who builds your life and places your security on the rock that does not shift. He doesn't want you to be a fool who hears the words of Jesus but doesn't do anything with them.

And so Jesus urges us all, make sure you are saved. Don't just believe the right things about God, give your life to trying to look like Jesus – pursue personal holiness, and do it to be recognized by Him, not the people around you. This is His will for you. And your doing this or not is the only thing that is going to matter to you 100 years from now.

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Would you stand with me? I'm going to pray for us in a second, and then we are moving from here into our regular interactive worship time. So we have stations set up around the church for you to check out.

If you are someone who realizes you need to be saved. Maybe you've been believing all the right things about God, but you haven't been living for Him. Then I want to encourage you to go and pray with one of the people at the back – that's the most important thing today.

But I also want to talk about a new station we are adding today that is going to be here every week. One of the ways we do the will of God is by shining His light into the lives of the people He has placed beside us.

Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and then He left us here, full of His Spirit, to give His salvation to the people He has placed us beside. So drawing people to Jesus is one of the main ways we please God.

And the Lighthouse leaders were talking about this the other day, and we want to make this a big emphasis at Lighthouse. We don't want to just exist for ourselves. Jesus hasn't just saved us for ourselves, He has saved us for the world. And we want to be the light of Christ in this city. And so while you are standing there right now I want to challenge each of us here to think of one person who God has put in your life, who needs Jesus.

Maybe that's a friend of yours who grew up in a Christian home, but isn't following Jesus now, or maybe it's someone who doesn't know anything about Jesus at all. Just think right now of who that might be.... Have you got someone?

What we are going to do every week is have some paper and pins up here by the cross, and you can just go write their first name on a piece of paper and pin it to the cross. And while you are doing that pray two things. First pray that God will draw this person to Himself – because God is the one who saves people, not us. But second pray that He will give you an opportunity to look like Jesus to that person. Jesus uses us to draw people to Himself.

There is one more part to this, if you can't think of someone who needs Jesus, then come write your own first name on the paper, and as you pin it to the cross pray that Jesus will open your eyes to who He wants you to look like Jesus to. Because God's will for all of us is that we look like Jesus in the places He has put us. So everyone should come and put at least 1 name on the cross.

Let me pray for us, and I'll set you loose.