

So, a man dies and goes to heaven. St. Peter asks him, “Why should I let you into heaven?” The guy says, “Well, I always tried to help other people.” St. Peter says, “Give me an example.”

“Well, says the man, once I was in a roadside diner. A group of guys were in there bothering this little old lady. They had knives and guns and were scaring everyone in the place. So, I stepped up to the leader and spun him around and punched him the face and said, ‘Hey! Why don’t you leave that little lady alone? And while you’re at it, you and your filthy friends clear out of here and get on your bikes and ride away.’” “Wow!” said St. Peter, “That was pretty brave, when did that happen?” “Oh”, said the man, “About five minutes ago!”

Today is it everyone, today is the day we wrap up our sermon series on that sermon of all sermons, The Sermon on the Mount. As I said last week, we could spend so much more time in this sermon. But after 8 weeks, I think it’s time to move on.

Jesus has a lot to say about who and who will not enter the kingdom of heaven. As we see from our reading today, this sermon closes with a parable. A much beloved parable. One worthy of a song. But he covers a lot of other ground before it. Jesus officially begins winding this up in verse 13 of this chapter. He offers several comparisons of those who will get this message and those on whom it will be lost. He talks about the wide gate that’s easy and the difficult narrow gate that leads to life. He talks about false prophets, wolves in sheep’s clothing. He talks about how to determine good fruit from bad fruit.

Then we get to the closer statements. How are we to respond to all of this knowledge that Jesus has imparted in these last 3 chapters? In verses 21-27 Jesus gives us the ideal responses. There are correct ways to profess and correct ways to hear what Jesus just taught us.

We need to add the reading from verses 21-23. “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 in heaven. 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?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you who behave lawlessly.’

What is Jesus saying here? There is more to salvation than just talk. Our final destiny isn't settled just by what we say today, tomorrow, or even the final day. What counts is what follows our verbal profession. What counts is our moral obedience. Do we walk the walk of the talk we talk?

There is nothing wrong with a verbal profession. It is needed. It is necessary. Our salvation is a result of confessing with our mouths and believing with our hearts. A true profession is impossible without the Holy Spirit.

So, what is wrong with this profession then? ‘Lord, Lord’. It seems to be totally above board. It is polite. It is orthodox. Those professing Lord are saying that Jesus' father is God which makes Jesus the Judge. Lord is a divine title. It is a rendering in Greek of the Hebrew word Jehovah. It is fervent to say Lord. In this passage we are not hearing a cold or formal Lord. We are hearing an enthusiastic Lord, Lord! This is a speaker that wants to draw attention to their zeal and devotion.

This is a public confession. Part of this confession involves extreme examples of profession. These are people who have engaged in prophecy, exorcisms, miracles. Their claim? In the name of Christ they have openly and publicly confessed, they have prophesized, they have cast out demons, they have preformed mighty works.

How could you ask for a better Christian profession? What could possibly be wrong with this? Everything is wrong. Because this talk is a talk without truth. This profession is a profession without reality. It is why Jesus can honestly confess. “I never knew you”.

Verbal profession is not the same as moral profession. Lip service doesn't mean life service. These followers are better at saying than doing. We are challenged here. Its not enough to do

many miracles. Our everyday behavior is what matters. In our everyday behavior we are asked to be more. Mere verbal profession just isn't enough.

Saying and not doing is one thing. Now we are presented with what it means to be a hearer and a doer. In our passage today we see a clear indication of what that looks like. We have it in the form of two builders.

The first builder. This is a wise man. This is a man that digs deep. This is a man who builds his house on a rock. The other builder is a fool. He could not be bothered with a foundation. He rushed to build on the sand. Once the houses are built, you might be fooled. They both look exactly the same. Same porch, same shutters, same windows, same gables, same roofs. The differences, the foundations are invisible.

It's only when a ferocious storm arises that the invisible is made visible. When the house built without a foundation is decimated, while the house built on the rock stands firm.

To be clear, Jesus is not contrasting professing Christians to non-Christians. Nope, nope, nope. Jesus is speaking directly to Christians. The determiner for these spiritual house builders is this...those who hear these words of mine. Those who hear these words of mine. And then Jesus gives the measuring stick. There is a difference between those who hear what Jesus teaches and put it into practice and those who do not.

Storms are the measuring stick. Storms will make the invisible visible. Storms leave carnage for those who are only hearers. Doers will find enough left to rebuild.

We never know when the storms of life are going to hit. Just look at US Airways Flight 1549. It was January 15, 2009. For the first 100 seconds of the flight everything was perfectly normal. These were the words of Sully Sullenberger as he described the events that would later be coined "The Miracle on the Hudson River. It was the thump, thump, thumping of geese smashing into the engines of the plane that turned this unremarkable flight into the ultimate

challenge. Because of Sully's quick thinking, skillfully landing that Airbus A320 on the Hudson River, all 155 passengers and crew lived to tell another day. On this day it wasn't just intellectual or verbal knowledge that saved the day, it was putting all of that into action. That fact that Sully is a man of faith shouldn't be lost on us.

Church family here are the facts. Neither intellectual or verbal knowledge of Christ is enough. Yes, these are essential, but they are not a substitute for obedience. We can say nice, polite, orthodox and enthusiastic things. We can hear, listen, study, ponder, and memorize Jesus words until our minds are stuffed. But that's not that challenge. Jesus is asking us to do what we say. Jesus is asking us to act on what we know.

Make no mistake, the closing of this sermon on the mount. It is not a play on good works. Salvation is and always will be ours by the grace of God. But Jesus is closing this most sacred of sermons with an important point. Those who truly hear the gospel and profess faith will always obey him, expressing their faith in their works.

So now in our Last Thoughts, here is the question. What foundation are we going to build with?