Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Foundations of Grace, Part 2: The Lordship of Christ
Scripture: Matthew 7:13-27
Code: 80-338

In this time period, as I thought about it, and particularly in anticipation for the fortieth coming up, I wanted to reach back and perhaps answer the question as to why God has blessed our church. There's no question about the fact that He has, we have all lived in that blessing. I've lived in it for the duration of my years here. I can honestly say to you that there has never been a moment in 40 years, not a single moment in which I wished that I was not here and wish I wished I was somewhere else. There have been times when I wanted to be used by the Lord somewhere else when I wished I could be two people so I could go somewhere else, particularly in a mission-field environment and minister there. But there has never been a fleeting moment when I have ever, ever thought to myself I wish I weren't here, but I wish I were somewhere else.

It has been a blessed journey. It has been full of all kinds of adventure, all the ups and downs of life. But it has been a profound blessing to my life. And that's the way the body of Christ works. You have blessed me, this congregation has blessed me, the leadership of this church has blessed me. Those who serve here have blessed me, whether we're talking about the senior citizens, one of whom we had a funeral for yesterday, Maureen Klattenburg, and how she blessed my life with her incessant prayers to, I think there were seven little girls under ten who hugged me when I arrived this morning, everybody in between. This church has filled my life with blessing and with love and joy and the same is true of our family. And there are reasons that this church has been a blessing, not only to me but to all of us and to generations who have gone before us in the past 40 years.

And as I said last week, I'm not the explanation, it is the work of God that blesses. And there are, however, some foundations that were laid early in the ministry of this church that I think were the foundations of blessing for all these years and will continue to be the foundations of blessing for the years that are yet ahead of us.

I told you that I thought there were three great foundation stones, three great pillars that undergirded God's blessing in this church. One was our understanding of the glory of God. Two, our understanding of the lordship of Christ. And three, our understanding of the Holy Spirit's revelation concerning what the church is to be. It was very early at the very beginning that I by the goodness of God was able to focus on those things. When I came to Grace Church, I preached my first message on the lordship of Christ and what it meant to truly know Him as Savior and Lord. The second week I preached on the ideal church, what the Scripture reveals about what a church should be. Soon after that we did a series on the glory of God. And the first book I wrote featured that series in the opening

chapters.

It has been that sort of trinitarian perspective, God the Father's glory, God the Son's lordship, and God the Holy Spirit's revelation for the life of the church that we have focused on, that you have embraced, that every generation in this church before you has embraced. It is this which defines our church at every level, whether we're talking about a Sunday-School class for the littlest children, or youth ministry, or adult fellowship groups, or missions. Whatever it is, we are...we are driven at those wonderful theological truths that God is to be glorified, Christ is to be acknowledged as Lord, and the Spirit of God is to be obeyed as to His revelation concerning the life of the church. That is the explanation.

Now I know those things well now because I have pointed at them for 40 years of my life. But what I'm thankful for is that when I arrived here, the Lord had begun to establish those things firmly in my heart. And in all honesty, those great truths of the glory of God and the Lordship of Christ, and the Spirit's direction for the church were not really given to me in my years of growing up. At least if they were I didn't grasp them. They were things that the Lord planted in my understanding in the years after I had finished my training and before I came here, and I was grappling with the fact that if I was going to be a pastor somewhere, there were certain things, certain foundational things that I surely had to understand. And I am so deeply grateful that by the time we started here, February 9th of 1969, these things were already beginning to find their way into the foundations of my own understanding of Scripture.

So I've never felt like we had wasted months, or wasted years trying to figure out what we were to do. I'm not saying that the early years of preaching or the early years of ministry were everything they should be, there were lots of things to learn, lots of mistakes that we made. And lots of things if you could do them again you might want to do them very differently. But I thank the Lord that these things were beginning to take shape in my understanding and from the very beginning, they were the direction of ministry here, and they have continued to be through all the years.

You can't improve on these subjects. You can't do better than to glorify God, acknowledge Christ as Lord, and obey the revelation of the Holy Spirit. So there's nowhere to go from there. It's a just a wonderful reality that we started there together, and we're still there these many years later...and we will be, I trust, until Jesus comes whether I'm here or not.

So last week we talked about the glory of God. And I actually gave you a message from some notes that I found in the archive of my little study that I wrote on the back of Holiday Inn stationery from Akron, Ohio. And I was amazed that those things that I said then rang so very, very true 40 years later.

The first Sunday I was here, February 9, 1969, I preached from the text I read to you earlier. Turn to it, if you will, it's Matthew chapter 7. That might not be the most welcoming, inviting text to preach the first time you show up at a church as the new pastor. It might be something a little more comforting than that. For that text, of all texts, in the New Testament may be the most disquieting text of all. It may be the most uncomfortable text of all. And I confess that I have never been known for one who is a comforter. I have always been like the one who is the troubler of Israel. That's the way the Spirit of God has hardwired me, I think. But I want you to understand what led me to preach on a text like this one that says, "Many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' in that day and I will say to them, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness.'"

I'll tell you what it was. I was raised in the church, my grandfather was a pastor and I remember listening to him as a very small boy, my father was a pastor, I listened to him throughout all my years until I finally came here. I grew up in the church. I experienced the church at the most intimate level. All the family friends that we had were pastors or people who were in ministry, so I was surrounded with all the discussions about the church. I began as a junior higher to read books on theology to help me understand things that I was kind of grappling with. Even in my days in high school, there were certain books that I read, college more, and seminary even more. I was trying to get an understanding of the church.

And there was one prevailing thing that concerned me and that was there seemed to be so many people in the church who had had some moment of decision for Christ but who manifested no evidence. And there was the reality that I saw my whole life growing up that people came in the door of the church, walked an aisle, made quote/unquote some kind of decision for Christ and then disappeared. And I wasn't sure what the category for those people was. I knew that if you were once saved, it was forever because that's what eternal life is, and that nothing could ever separate a true believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, Romans 8. And I also knew that if anyone was converted to Christ, it was because they were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world and whom He chose He justified, and whom He justified He glorified. So I knew that no one who was a true believer would lose his salvation.

And I wasn't sure how these people fit in. I pretty much had been taught growing up that if you pray a certain prayer, you're a Christian. In fact, everything that had ever been brought to me as a means of evangelism involved giving people a simple gospel message, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ask Him to forgive your sins and you're a Christian. And the follow-up instruction was always this... "Once they prayed that prayer, assure them that they're saved." And little formulas were given. This is how you do that...you do this...you do that...you take these three steps to assure them after they have prayed that prayer that they are genuinely saved.

And I will confess to you that I struggled with that because so many of these people were so

temporary. It kind of came to a head in a very personal way, and I've written about this in the past, when I was in high school and I had a really good buddy, we were on the football team together. We were on the baseball team together. We played in the backfield in football and he played first base and I played shortstop in baseball, so we were good buddies. His dad had an automobile dealership in Santa Monica and I got the greatest summer job that any teenager ever had. He hired me in the summer, along with his son, to repossess cars. I mean, is that like nirvana for a teenager? To steal a car and it's right? And to joy ride in brand new cars because people didn't make their payments? We even had the apparatus to get into the car without the key. We became good friends...his son and me. He was the president of his high school youth group in his church and I was a leader in the youth group in my church. And we talked about ministry a lot.

I remember when I was in high school we'd go down to Pershing Square sometimes on a Saturday and we'd stand up on a bench in Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles and give the gospel to people...two of us did that. I graduated from high school, I went off to school and he went off to the University of Redlands and within a matter, it seems to me of months, he had rejected Christ, rejected the Christian faith and plunged into a life of iniquity from which he never returned, as far as I know. I was so stunned by this, I didn't know where to put him. I was struggling with the fact that he had given some evidences of interest in the things of Christ, of course. And I wasn't sure just exactly how that works. There were people who assured me that he was saved because he made the decision.

And there was a convenient theology that was pretty pervasive in those days to accommodate that. I went away to college after that and again I was pretty much embroiled in athletics and particularly in playing football. And one of my closest friends who also ran in the backfield with me, his father was a pastor, my father was a pastor, the two fathers were very close friends. And here we were, their sons, both of us saying that God had called us into ministry. He was leading a college Bible study at the church that he was attending. I was leading the college Bible study at my church which is when I first met Patricia, I was the college Bible study teacher and she was in the class...engaged to another guy, but we rectified that. That's another story. And if you want the truth, you have to get her version.

But anyway, we were together. If you play football on the college level, university level, it's pretty intense. You get pretty close together. We talked about just about everything, about a lot of things. We talked about ministry, talked about the future. And I graduated the same year he graduated. He rejected the faith, went to Europe and got a degree in philosophy. Came back, was teaching philosophy at Cal State Long Beach in a bizarre kind of immoral act, did some things with his students during his classes, got him kicked out of that professor's job, became a rock concert promoter, ended up in jail. This was my friend. I just wasn't quite sure what the category was again.

Went to seminary, made friends with the dean's son in seminary. Sang in a quartet together, did a

whole lot of things together. I graduated from seminary, launched off into ministry. He graduated from seminary, married a Buddhist. Put a Buddhist altar in his house.

Now this is pretty extreme stuff but those are absolutely true stories. It was very personal to me because these were people that I knew and cared about. And I needed a category to put these people in. It was also very, very obvious to me from my experience in churches that churches were filled with people who didn't manifest any transformation, who came in the door and walked the aisle and then somehow disappeared out the side. There were people who didn't seem to have any particular hunger for the Word of God. And to this was a deep concern to me.

I realized that there were then in the church the unconverted. I came across 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out from us that it might be made manifest they never were of us." So I realized that no matter what appeared to be so, these people were never converted because if you were truly converted, there's a transformation that is manifest and unchanging, though not perfect. There is a direction of life, if not perfection, that is unmistakably the evidence of true conversion.

And so I became profoundly concerned about evangelizing the church. This was working in my heart by the time I came here. And so, the first Sunday I ever came to Grace Church, I felt like I needed to launch myself with an evangelistic message to the church because surely this church must be like every other church full of people who are self-deceived, who are going to be in the line that says, "Lord, Lord, we did this...we did that...we did the other thing." And He's going to say to them, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness." It's not about what you say, it's about how you live. The evidence of your salvation is not in your profession, it is in your behavior.

So I came in here with that Howitzer Canon on the first Sunday. And the repercussions and the fallout came pretty rapidly. We found out there were people in the church who were not converted to Christ. There were people on the Elder Board who were not in Christ. There were people in the choir who were not in Christ. Was that the wrong thing to do? No, I think it was the right thing to do. It is the loving thing to do. I know one responsibility that I have endeavored to discharge as a pastor and it is a weighty responsibility on many fronts to be a pastor, as you would expect, to stand before you and be the one who represents the Lord Jesus Christ and to have accountability to Him for this representation. But among those things which are most concerning to me is the fact that I make sure that no one sitting under my ministry is going to be under the illusion and the self-deception of thinking they're Christians when they're not. So if there's been any particularly relentless ringing tone through 40 years of ministry, it has been that we get the gospel right and we understand what real repentance is and what genuine saving faith is. And that's, of course, why the New Testament says, "Judgment must begin at the house of God."

You think about the Apostle Paul. He spends a couple of years in Corinth and he's discharged his soul there, not just on the Lord's day there but everyday for nearly two years. They've had the best teacher ever, one who gets divine, direct revelation. And then, after that, they have the benefit of having others there, such as Titus. And then he writes them four letters, two of them in the New Testament, sixteen chapters of 1 Corinthians, 13 chapters in 2 Corinthians, 29 chapters and you can add a couple of more letters to that that came from his heart and were full of truth and pastoral instruction and admonition. And even after all of that, even after being written to by Paul, taught by Paul, ministered to by Paul, nurtured by Paul, at the last chapter of the last letter, the last word he has to say to them, 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourself whether you be in the faith." He is still concerned that nobody be self-deceived.

And it all goes back to this passage, "Many, many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord.'" We're not talking about Muslims here. We're not talking about isolated religious people here, we're not talking about Buddhists or Hindus or somebody in a false system of religion, we're talking about people who say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord," who are shut out of heaven. That to me without question became the first priority of pastoral ministry...to make sure that no one is existing in my watch, in my field, in my flock who could be self-deceived and end up in that line of people who say, "Lord, Lord," and are denied entrance to heaven. This comes from the heart of the Lord, because this is His heart.

Now, this is the Sermon on the Mount, so let's back up and go back to the Sermon on the Mount, for a minute. Most people think the Sermon on the Mount is this wonderful ethical sermon. Certainly there are ethical things in it, but it is not a sermon on ethics, it is a sermon on the gospel, it is an evangelistic sermon. It is a sermon on salvation. That's its theme.

And the bottom line is this, here our Lord says, "You want to enter the Kingdom of heaven? You want salvation? You want forgiveness from sin? You want eternal life? You want to go to heaven? Here's what you need to know." The first main point, chapter 5 verse 20, first main point. "If you will enter the Kingdom of heaven, if you will escape hell and go to heaven, I say to you, it's not going to happen unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees"

Now you can't imagine what a devastating statement that was. Now this is the first sermon Jesus preaches in the New Testament. Apart from comments about repenting, this is the first full sermon and it is a sermon to expose people to the reality that they may think they have a relationship with Gd but they don't. So if I may be so bold as to say, I took my cue from Jesus. This was the subject of His first sermon, this is the subject of my first sermon.

Now, to say that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees would shock them to their sandals because the scribes and the Pharisees were the most righteous people on the planet. First of all, there may have been other people in other religious environments who were

endeavoring to do good and be moral, but it was the Jews only who had the Word of God. So they were endeavoring to adhere to the true and only revelation of God. They were fastidious about their observation of the ceremonies and the laws and even had added more and more and more laws ostensibly to increase their righteousness. They offered themselves to the Jewish nation as the models of what righteousness looks like. They fasted. They appeared in public in positions of humiliation, putting ashes on their heads. They prayed prayers interminably long, long prayers with very carefully crafted and repeated words. They gave...they arrived at the trumpet-shaped receptacles in the temple where alms and charitable giving was done and they dumped in their money. They obeyed the Ten Commandments. They did not commit adultery. They did not kill. They endeavored externally to observe all of the commandments. And Paul, being one of them, says that as compared to the Law, he was actually, outwardly blameless.

How in the world could anybody's righteousness exceed this? They follow all the ceremonial observations. They follow all the moral observations. They follow all the religious observations, like fasting, and charity and prayer, and those things. And yet Jesus says if you expect to enter the Kingdom of heaven, you have to have a righteousness beyond that...which, of course, in the minds of the people would be inconceivable. What righteousness could be beyond that?

Pharisees were part of a kind of religion that I call the religion of human achievement. It is the idea that you gain heaven by what you do...religiously, spiritually, morally, that the path to heaven is the path of human righteousness. This, by the way, is Satan's biggest lie. Every religion in the world, every false form of Christianity fits into the category of human achievement. All of them are works approaches.

In other words, there are only two ways possible to get to heaven...either by your works, or not by your works. So all religion falls into those two categories. There's only one true religion and that is the gospel of grace which says salvation is by grace alone through faith alone not of works. Works plays no role. Every other form of religion is a false form, no matter what its name is. You can call it Judaism. You can call it legalistic Christianity. You can call it Islam. And it's the same religion, the characters may change, the definitions may change, but anything that is a system of works/righteousness whether it's Islam or Roman Catholicism is the same false religion.

Now just exactly how righteous do you have to be then? That's the next great point in the sermon, chapter 5 verse 48. Now He says, "Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Whoa...so that's how righteous you have to be? As righteous as God? Exactly...Exactly. By the way, in the sermon in between those main points, Jesus basically says to them your prayers are phony and you're hypocrites and you do them to be heard by men and to be thought of as religious. And you're full of pride and your hearts are corrupt. And he says your giving is for the same hypocritical, phony, proud reasons that you might be seen by men. And your long-

winded, constant prayers of endless repetition are meaningless to Me and your morality is hypocritical and superficial because you commit adultery in your hearts and you murder in your heart, because if you look on a woman to lust after her, you've committed adultery. And if you hate someone, it's as good as if you killed them. And he just shreds their supposed morality.

And any thinking person is going to be cornered to say, "Huh, if the standard is to be as perfect as God is perfect, I am not as perfect as God is perfect and now Jesus has just told me that even what I assume to be righteous is actually corrupt, hypocritical self-righteousness that appalls God, that nauseates God that God rejects. How can I be perfect? How can I be as righteous as God is righteous?

Answer: Not by anything you do. That's why Jesus began the sermon. Go back to chapter 5, see how He began the sermon in verse 3. He starts with a stunning list of Beatitudes. Just look at the first few. "He opened His mouth," in verse 2, in front of everybody, "and began to teach them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.'" That is a blow to their pride immediately. Poor in spirit means...the word "poor" is not having little, or having barely anything, it is the word for having nothing. The people who are going to be a part of My Kingdom are those who realize they're spiritually destitute. That was contrary to what all the Jews thought. Luke 18:9 says that they...that the Pharisees thought they were righteous.

And the people who followed their religion thought they were righteous, too. But the people who enter the Kingdom know they're not. They know that they cannot have a righteousness that satisfies God. They cannot be as perfect as God is perfect. So they are aware of their spiritual bankruptcy.

Secondly, because of their spiritual bankruptcy they mourn. They're not proud about themselves. They're not giddy about themselves. They're not smug and self-satisfied about their condition. They mourn and they weep and those are the ones who will be comforted. In other words, they know their spiritual bankruptcy and they are horrified by it, they are heart broken over it, they are grieved over it. And they sorrow profoundly in their desperation.
Then the next one says, "Blessed are the meek." They're humble, they're not proud. They're humble. They're crushed under the weight of this wretchedness, this spiritual poverty. Then verse 6 says, "They hunger and thirst for righteousness." They know they don't have it. They're starving for it. They have none of it. You know what it means to hunger and thirst for something? It means you don't have it.

So Jesus is saying...Look, if you want to enter the Kingdom of heaven, you have to have a righteousness that surpasses the most righteous people on the planet. In fact, you have to have a righteousness that is equal to the righteousness of God. Since you know you can't have that, you've got to come to a point of your awareness that you are spiritually destitute, bankrupt, broken weeping,

humble, hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

This is contrary to everything those people ever, ever heard. It was all about pride. It was all about human achievement. So the Sermon on the Mount is designed, as any good evangelistic sermon has to be designed, to strip the self-righteous, to strip the self-deceived down to the bare bones.

Now Jesus brings the sermon to a conclusion, we come back now to verses 13 and 14. He wraps it up by saying, “Look, there are only two possibilities. Either you come by the way of human achievement or you come the way of divine accomplishment.”

Now what have we learned through the years, beloved, about how in the world can a sinner be as righteous as God is? How can that be? If I have to be as perfect as God is perfect in order to enter His Kingdom, in order to be reconciled to Him, in order to be received by Him, in order to escape hell and get to heaven, how am I ever going to be as perfect as God is perfect?

Answer: Not by anything I do but by the great New Testament truth of justification which is God justifying us, declaring us righteous, by imputing to us His own righteousness. This is the gospel. When you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ genuinely, God takes His own righteousness and puts it on you. We’ve said this so many times, so many ways. On the cross God punishes Jesus for your sin and when you put your trust in Him, He takes Jesus’ righteousness and gives it to you. He gave Jesus your sin so He could give you His righteousness. That’s divine accomplishment. It’s a divine work of righteousness, not a human one. So you only have these two options. Either you get to heaven and you get into the Kingdom of God by something you do in cooperation with God. Or you recognize you can’t do anything, you’re spiritually bankrupt, you’re crushed, you’re broken, you’re mourning, you’re hungering and in desperation you come like the Publican in Luke 18, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” And Jesus said to that man...went home justified because he recognized his spiritual bankruptcy and he repented and he put his trust in God.

Romans 10 says the problem with the Jews was that they were ignorant of the righteousness of God and they went about to establish their own righteousness. They didn’t know what righteousness of God was. They didn’t grasp its absolute perfection. And they didn’t grasp the fact that that is the same righteousness that God required of them. And so they went about to establish their own righteousness thinking that would satisfy God when it wouldn’t. Consequently they couldn’t understand the cross and they couldn’t understand Christ, and they couldn’t understand the great truth that Christ would take on our sin in order to give us His righteousness.

Only two religions in the world. There is human achievement, which is works, flesh, self-righteousness. There’s divine accomplishment which is faith, Spirit, heavenly righteousness. And they don’t mix. They don’t mix. You put Law in grace and you have no more grace. You have works

in faith and you have no more faith. And these two options are laid out in verse 13. “Enter through the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction and there are many who enter through it, for the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life and there are few who find it.”

This is so simple. You can look at the world and think it’s a very complex religious place and there are so many very complicated religious ideas floating around. But that’s only one perspective, that’s the earthly perspective. The heavenly perspective, the biblical perspective is there are only two possibilities. False systems that say you do something to gain heaven and the truth that says it’s all done by Christ. Two gates, two ways, two destinies, two crowds...four contrasts. Let’s look at them in these two verses.

Two gates, narrow and wide. Both say heaven. Nobody is selling tickets to hell. You don’t see on the front of any false church, “Join us, we’re all on our way to hell. Go to hell with us.” No. You don’t hear that being sold. People don’t sell hell. Everybody sells heaven, but not everybody’s going there. Remember the old spiritual that said, “Everybody talking about heaven ain’t going there.” Absolutely right.

There is...says our Lord...the necessity to enter the narrow gate. He says in verse 14, “It is small, once you enter the way that you’re now on inside the gate is narrow that leads to life. Thee are few who find it. Enter through the narrow gate. It’s an aorist imperative command, you must enter. Forget your self-righteousness, forget all your fasting and all your alms giving and all your formula prayers and all your supposed superficial external morality, you must enter...you must enter this narrow gate. We understand clearly what that narrow gate means. Another way to look at it would take...would be to borrow the words of Jesus in John 10 who said, “I am the door.” Or to borrow the words of Jesus in John 14 who said, “I am the way. No man comes to the Father but by Me. No Christ, no salvation. There’s no salvation in any other name,” Acts 4:12. You must enter this gate.

We’ve said that through the years, and you’ve heard it and you’ve embraced it and you’ve proclaimed it. And we have missionaries all over the planet that are preaching this same message of true repentance, true faith in Christ alone is the only way of salvation. I never thought I’d live to see an evangelical church that is now saying you don’t have to believe in Jesus Christ to come to God and enter into His heaven. You must enter this gate, you must enter. You must confess Jesus as Lord, Romans 10:9 and 10, “and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. There’s no salvation any other way.” First Corinthians 16:22 says, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be damned.” “Faith comes by hearing the truth about Christ,” Romans 10:17. You must enter this gate...the only way of salvation. There are not many ways, this is the only way.

Oprah is wrong when she says, “I’m a Christian but there are many ways to God.” Sadly she’s not a

Christian and there are not many ways to God. You must enter this gate. You must enter this gate alone.

There's a popular new trend kind of connected to the new paradigm and Paul...you don't need to know about it really, but for those of you who do, that says essentially, "God saves people in communities. Saves them in groups." That's nothing new in itself. There is this notion that's been around a long time that if you're baptized as an infant, by virtue of that baptism and proxy faith by your parents, you have been introduced into the community of faith and you belong to the Kingdom. That's pretty old. That's deeply embedded Anglicanism, that if you're in the Anglican community, you're part of the Kingdom. They're essentially one and the same, the visible and the invisible.

It's not the way it is. This is a narrow gate, groups don't go through. You go through alone. I remember when I was at CNN one night and I was...I got in..I don't know how I got into this discussion with Christianne(?) Amonphor(???) who is a very worldly-wise journalist and has done all kinds of special things for CNN and she had done this thing on comparing Christianity and Islam and things like that. It was on CNN repeatedly. And she was trying to sort out in her mind what real Christianity was like. And we were having discussions when it was off the air because she had seen the religious rite in America and had the view of Christianity that is basically like it or not like it, conveyed by that approach to politics. She was familiar with Middle Eastern kinds of Christianity that is orthodox Christianity. She was familiar with wars, perpetrated, supposedly, by Protestants against Catholics. She had this concept of Christianity as a collective thing and she talked about the fact that religion when it becomes widespread, when it takes over a group of people, becomes very powerful, very dangerous and sometimes very evil, etc., etc., etc. And she was saying these are...the Muslims by their religion are trying to conquer the world, and the Christians by their religion are trying to conquer the world.

And she was making a parallel between the goals of Islam to take over the world in the name of Allah and the goals of Christians to take over the world in the name of Jesus Christ. And I was trying to deprogram her from that. And I made a simple statement, "The Kingdom of God, the true Kingdom of God advances one soul at a time...one soul at a time by personal faith in Jesus Christ and no other way. And the rest of that stuff has nothing to do with true Christianity, it is counterfeit. You come through this narrow gate alone." And Jesus even said, "I came to bring a sword. You may have to hate your father, hate your mother, your sister and your brother. Hate your own life. You come one at a time, not as a matter of race, not as a matter of family, not as a matter of community, not as a matter of ritual or rite. You come by individual and personal faith one soul at a time. You must enter this gate, you must enter this gate alone, you must enter this gate alone with difficulty. It's not easy." That's why it says, "Few are there who find it."

Why would He say that? It seems to me that it's...people today would say it's real easy to be a

Christian, just pray this prayer. Huh...it's real easy to be a false Christian. It's real easy to be a self-deceived one. Real easy to get yourself in a situation where you're going to say, "Lord, Lord," and He's going to say I don't know you. But becoming a real Christian is difficult. And there's a couple of reasons why it's difficult. Number one, because of the false teachers described in verses 15 to 20. Because they're hocking tickets to the broad road, the false prophets dressed up in prophets' garb, prophets wore wool which is sheep's clothing. But actually they're tearing people to shreds like ravenous wolves and their lives are corrupt.

One of the reasons that so many people are deceived is because there are so many deceivers...so many false prophets, false preachers. And faithfulness to these great truths through the years, we've tried to warn you and warn you and warn you and warn you about false teachers. It's not personal jealousy, it's not personal attacks, it's protection against their damning influence.

So, you've got false teachers everywhere and they're throwing the name of Jesus around, aren't they? As if they represented Him. And the second reason it's so hard to find this and enter is because the demands are so high...the demands are so high. I mean, the contemporary false teacher deal is, "Come to Jesus and He'll make you rich and successful and happy and prosperous," blah, blah, blah, the prosperity gospel. The gospel of the New Testament says, "Come to Jesus and give up everything. Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. Hate your father, hate your mother, hate your own life, count the cost." Remember the parallels in Matthew 13 where Jesus said there's a treasure hidden in a field and a man sold everything to buy it? And there was a pearl of great price and a man sold everything to get the pearl. The pearl and the treasure is the gospel of Jesus Christ and the man sells everything because there is nothing in this world that can match the priceless value of salvation. It will cost you absolutely everything. It's the scandal of the gospel. He is kurios and He asks you to be doulos. He's calling you to give up everything and become a slave. Hate your own life, your personal ambition, dreams, goals, even your own family, those that are close to you...you may have to give them all up, you may lose your life to follow the crucified Christ.

This was what the Jews thought was a stumbling block and the Gentiles thought was foolishness. And Jesus even said, "Don't come unless you've counted the cost. You're not going to build a tower unless you know you have what it takes to finish it. You're not going to go to war unless you know you have the power to win the battle. You're not going to come to Christ unless you're willing to pay the price."

That's why in Luke our Lord said in chapter 13 that one of the followers of the Lord came to Him and said, "Are there only a few who are being saved?" And Jesus said, "Well, there are many who are striving to enter in, but they can't do it." There are those people who are saying, "You know, I really would like to go to heaven, I really want to know God, I really want a reconciliation. I want to escape hell. But it's not that easy because you've got to be able by the power of God, of course, to reject the

false messages and to give up everything."

You don't sleep your way into the Kingdom. You don't pray a little formula prayer and you're introduced in to the Kingdom. It's not for the half-hearted weaklings, the waverers, the compromisers. It's not for the rich, young ruler who wants to be in the Kingdom but wants to hold on to everything in this world also. The Kingdom is for people like Daniel, Stephen, Paul, Peter.
So you must enter this gate. You must enter alone. You must enter with difficulty. And you must enter naked. In other words, you don't bring anything with you. This is a turnstile and you don't carry your baggage through a turnstile. You can barely squeeze yourself through. It's the gate of self-denial. It's the gate that strips you bare. It's what Jesus says again in Luke 9:23 to 25, "If you lose everything, you'll gain heaven." You can't get through with all your junk, all your baggage. That's what the rich, young ruler tried to do. The song writer says it this way, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling." You come empty-handed.

And then you must enter this gate, you must enter alone, with difficulty, naked and penitent. From the start, Jesus and John the Baptist preached repent, repent, repent. It's that hatred of sin, that desire to turn from the power and the penalty of sin that marks this.

By the way, this doesn't happen without the work of God. First Corinthians 12:3 says, "No man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit." It is God who grants you repentance. It is God who does this work in your heart. But where this work has not been done in your heart, there is not true conversion. This is the narrow gate.

Then there is the wide gate in contrast. He says the gate is wide. It doesn't require any sacrifice. You don't have to give up anything. Bring all your garbage, all your baggage, all your sin, all your self-will, no self-denial, no repentance, no surrender, no submission. And it is that wide gospel, sad to say, that's been preached in our country for many, many, many, many years.

Sure, you don't even have to confess Jesus as Lord, just make sure you confess Him as Savior. That was the dominant idea being perpetrated in American Evangelicalism in the last 50 years. We're not talking here about Islam or a false religion. We're talking about a kind of Christianity that takes people to hell.

So there are two gates. And then there are two ways. Once you get through the gate, the wide gate, verse 13 says, you get a wide way to go with it. Easy, tolerant, no curbs, all the desires of the fallen heart are fine, self-will, self-gratification, self-indulgence. But on the other hand, if you come through the narrow gate, it says that the gate is small and the way is compressed, constricted, pressed together. It is constricted by the holy requirements of God. It's a kind of slavery, we've learned, haven't we?

Then there are two destinations. The broad one leads you to destruction, hell. The narrow leads you to life, eternal life.

There are two crowds. There are the few who come through the narrow, the little flock, mikron flock. And there are the many, many who come through the broad gate. And the many who come through the broad gate are the many who show up in verse 22. Many go in that way, the broad way. And then many show up at the end to say, “Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name? And in Your name cast out demons? And in Your name perform many miracles?”

People always ask me, “Did they really do that?” Of course not because Jesus says, “I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, I have no connection with you and therefore you have none of My power. Depart from Me.’” And they’re cast into hell. “Because you are practicing lawlessness.” The proof of conversion is not a past event, or a past prayer, or past experience. It’s a present righteousness. Ah, it’s not perfection, but it’s direction.

You got people running all over the place now prophesying, supposedly in Jesus’ name, supposedly in Jesus name, casting out demons supposedly in Jesus’ name, doing phony miracles. The Charismatic Movement is just rife with these people and has been for years. Are they really doing it in His name? Of course not, He doesn’t know them...He doesn’t know them. They’re on the broad road. And I’m just horrified to think of the fact that they’re going to be people who are in this line who hear “Depart from Me, I never knew you,” who spent their life in some kind of ministry, maybe a very wide ministry.

So you can go the way of race, faith, submission, repentance, the power of the Spirit. Or you can jump on the broad road with all the rest of the people in the religions of human achievement and end up in hell. The sad reality, of course, is that many of these people are going to say to Jesus, “Lord, Lord.” And they have no relationship to Him at all.

Our Lord closes His sermon, and I’ll close mine, when He says in verse 24, here’s the bottom line. “It’s what you do with My Word that gives evidence of your spiritual condition. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them.” These words of Mine, that means the teaching of Jesus recorded for us wonderfully in the pages of Scripture. “Anyone who hears these things and acts on them, obeys them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on a rock. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew, slammed against that house and it didn’t fall for it had been founded on the rock.”

What is the evidence of true conversion? What is the evidence of true repentance. It is a life of obedience, submission to the lordship of Christ. It’s not profession. It’s not empty words. It’s

obedience. James 1:22, “Be not hearers of the Word only but doers.”

On the other hand, verse 26, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and doesn’t act on them...” You see, we have been saved by grace, Ephesians 2, unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” There’s no such thing as being totally transformed and genuinely converted without manifest righteousness. Not perfection but direction. Paul still said, “I’m not what I ought to be, I do what I ought not to do and what I don’t want to do and don’t do what I ought to do, but I still love the Law of God and long for righteousness.” Those are the longings of a transformed life.

But then there are those people who seem to have no interest in that, no obedience to that. They’re religious. They build their house but they build it on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew, slammed against that house and fell and great was its fall.

I think what’s so interesting about that story that Jesus tells at the end here is this, these people build the same house...same house. I mean, they’re using the same materials, religious activities. They’re built in the same place. We know it’s the same place because the same flood gets both houses. So we would assume that they’re within Christendom, they’re within the church. They’re....they’re doing the same things that everybody is doing around them, it’s like the wheat and the tares, but they can’t be told apart because you can’t see the foundation. And, of course, remember the false prophets are the sand-land agents. They’re selling the sand. And when the judgment flood comes, the people whose lives are on the rock because their salvation is genuine, manifest in its obedience to the Word of God. They come through the judgment. But the people whose houses are built on sand, even though they look religious on the outside, are destroyed by the judgment because they heard the Word but they didn’t ever obey.

Jeff O’Hara said, “Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say. You call Me the way and walk Me not. You call Me the life and live Me not. You call Me master and obey Me not. If I condemn you, blame Me not. You call Me bread and eat Me not. You call Me truth and believe Me not. You call Me Lord and serve Me not. If I condemn you, blame Me not.”

Well, always this has been on my heart. It is no less on my heart now. In the early years it was The Gospel According to Jesus addressing this very issue. Then it was The Gospel According to the Apostles or Faith Works addressing the same issue. Then it was another book Reckless Faith. Then it was another book, Hard To Believe, The Truth War. Just finished another one, The Jesus You Can’t Ignore. And I’m trying again to get people to listen to the Jesus who confronts false teaching, false religion.

Beloved, it’s what you do with the sayings of the Lord that give evidence of your genuine conversion.

If you love the truth and you love to obey the truth, even though you fall short, those are the evidences of true conversion.

As a pastor, my responsibility has never really changed, it's always the same, and it starts with this. We start with making sure that you understand what it means to confess Jesus as Lord and therefore become a member of His salvation Kingdom. And then we want you to understand what it means to live your life to the glory of God. Remember I told you what the first principle is in glorifying God? The first thing you do to glorify God is to confess Jesus as Lord, Philippians 2, to the glory of God the Father. The hymn writer said, "My hope is built on nothing less that Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame that wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other grand is sinking sand."

Father, we thank You for the time we've had this morning to reflect back over many years and back to the very beginnings of our wonderful journey together here. Thank You for the truth that was so clear in those early and beginning days and is yet clear to us now, so necessary then, so necessary now...the very truth which was most on our Lord's heart when He preached to the people of Israel. Lord, I do pray that there will be no one here in this church, in this congregation who will be caught in the self-deception, thinking they are in Your Kingdom when, in fact, they're not, only to stand before You in that day and make a profession that has no value because there's never been a transformation. Would You bring to that heart true repentance, true faith in Christ and would You by Your power, by the Spirit's power that allow them to confess Jesus as Lord in the true sense? We know You are Lord. We can't even imagine people who would think you could be a Christian without confessing Jesus as Lord when, in fact, there are people who do confess Him as Lord who are not true Christians. We must confess You as Lord, believe in our hearts that You were raised from the dead. But that confession cannot be superficial, or trivial, or momentary. It must be the reflection of true faith and genuine repentance that only can be wrought in us by Your Spirit. May it be so, O Lord, for Your honor and Your glory, we pray. Amen.

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