



Matthew 7:21–23

21 “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. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evil-

doers!’

Reflection

(Today’s talk is written by Justin Moffatt)

I’ve often heard the phrase: “We need to get to the pointy end.” The ‘pointy end’ of a thing is the main point, the thing you want to leave people with, the thing at the end that cuts deep, that calls for action. Matthew 7:13-29 is the pointy end of the Sermon on the Mount.

JC Ryle wrote: ‘The Lord Jesus winds up the Sermon on the Mount by a passage of heart piercing application.’

It is quite unsettling to hear, as Jesus says there are: Counterfeits paths that we could

walk on (verse 13). Counterfeit prophets that we could listen to (verse 15) and counterfeit performance (here in verse 21). They look like the right path, the true prophet, and the right performance, but – like counterfeit money -- they aren't, and they are worthless. They'll lead you away from the Kingdom. And the consequences of getting Jesus wrong are terrible.

On Wednesday, Paul took us through the counterfeit path in verse 13-14: the 'broad road' that many choose, but Jesus says leads to destruction. Jesus says: choose the 'narrow path' that leads to life. Choose Jesus who walked that path to the cross and follow him.

Yesterday, Paul took us through counterfeit prophets in verse 15-19: false prophets

who look and sound good, but their lives reveal that they do not speak for God, but they speak for themselves. Today: counterfeit performance. Jesus says:

21 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven.'

And in verse 22:

"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?"

These people have performance, but no substance. What do they say? "All sizzle, no sausage." That is the implication of what Jesus says when he says 'on that day':

verse 23 ... I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”

Three questions: 1. What’s the problem? 2. How would we know if we have the problem? 3. And what can we do about it?

First: So what was the problem? It’s not easy to see at first. These people are polite: they call Jesus Lord, which is a mark of respect. They are orthodox: even within Matthew’s Gospel the word ‘Lord’ was used when someone was seeking God. It may even be the word used in the Old Testament for God. They may have even picked up that Jesus is divine. Or at least felt echoes of his divinity. They are fervent: Many will say to me ‘Lord Lord’ – reflecting urgency. And more, they ‘perform’ if I can use that word, Christian activities: They say

‘we spoke in your name’, we ‘cast out evil in your name’, and we performed miracles in your name.” “We had the power! We had the words! We had the miraculous thing going on.” But Jesus says: “I never knew you.”

What was the problem? Not knowing God is the problem. Not knowing Jesus is the problem. It’s a basic relational thing.

One thing to note is this: just because you see someone look powerfully Christian, this doesn’t mean they know God. Just because someone is a great Christian speaker, or have done remarkable things doesn’t mean they know God. You may even see someone perform a miracle, and even then, it isn’t proof that the person knows God. That’s worth drinking in.

So what was needed? Well, Jesus says it here and elsewhere: these people aren't 'doing the will of my father.' They aren't finding out what God wants and living his way. Or further still (we find this out tomorrow): they aren't building their life on the foundation of Jesus: what he said, and doing it. What Jesus did and trusting him. The only bedrock (foundation) is Jesus: his life, his words, his death, his resurrection, the giving of the spirit, and then knowing God through Jesus. Obeying him. Yielding.

These people (in the text): for them, bedrock was performance. Doing important things. What Jesus wanted was their heart: trusting, knowing and obeying the Father. That's bedrock. That's the pointy end.

Second: How would we know if we have the problem?

Think

This is the time to reflect. Reflect on your life. It's meant to unsettle you as you read it. Self-deception is a terrible thing. By definition, a person who is self deceived can't and won't know it.

You'd know if you have a problem when you rely only on what you say. You'd know if you have a problem when the mere confessions of the faith are more important than obedience. You'd know if you will not let Jesus bother you – challenge you. Instead, you'd rather seek affirmation when you read the Bible. You'd know if you thought 'what you did for Jesus' was more important than 'what Jesus did for you',

and being shaped then by your knowing of him.

Third: And what can we do about it?

Pray

We need to pray. Praying is the chief activity of knowing someone: you pray to them, and you know their heart. You talk to them.

Do you know God? Ask him to speak to you as you spend a Year with Jesus. Ask him to get in you and at you and through to you. What did Jesus say? Ask, seek, and knock, and the door will be opened. You love God? Let God set the agenda. Verbal profession of faith is important. Paul makes that clear that we need to confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. But it

can't just be verbal profession: we need to believe with our hearts that God raised him from the dead. Verbal profession can be a substitute for obedience; indeed it may camouflage for disobedience. Jesus doesn't want admirers. He wants followers. He wants your life, not just your lips.

And we need to be ready for 'that day' that Jesus talks about. The Day of Judgement is all about how you respond to Jesus. Jesus knew that. Jesus said that. Jesus had the audacity to say that. Jesus looks inside – he looks at the heart, he looks at the life lived.

Take the time to re-read the section. Self-deception is alarmingly easy. So ask yourself: do you know God? Do you love him? Do you trust Jesus? Do you let him

shape your life? That's the pointy end. And it can hurt, but it's a good kind of hurt: it can lead to new faith, new hope and a new love of God.