

A Christian's Commitment

Matthew 7:13-29

The Sermon on the Mount began in 5:3-16 with the Beatitudes, a sort of introduction or prologue. Then in verses 5:17-20 Jesus states the theme or thesis of his sermon: “*Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven*” (5:20). From 5:21 to 7:11 of the Sermon on the Mount we have the body or main portion of the Sermon. Finally, in 7:12, Jesus employs the Golden Rule as a concise summary of all that he has said in the Sermon. Then the epilogue or conclusion of the Sermon is found in 7:13-27 with a trio of contrasts, the two roads, the two trees, and the two foundations. The three contrasts are an invitation to choose one of the two roads, one of the two trees, one of the two foundations. The epilogue is a call to decision and commitment.

1. We usually think of reading the Bible as beneficial. How might reading the Bible also be dangerous?
2. **Read Matthew 7:13-14.** Jesus speaks of two roads and two gates that lead to two different destinations – destruction or life. What do the small gate and the narrow road refer to?
3. In what sense is the road with Christ “narrow” and the gate “small”?
4. Why do many people dislike the idea that there is only one gate and one road that leads to life?
5. **Read Matthew 7:15-23.** Jesus warns us about false prophets and tells us how to identify them. Why is it significant that his warning comes right after his call to walk the road less traveled?
6. According to Jesus, why do people follow “false prophets” (7:15)?
7. Jesus tells us how we can detect false prophets: “*By their fruit you will recognize them*” (7:16). What kind of fruit does he have in mind?

How does the quality of the fruit reveal the quality of the tree?

8. It's something of a shock to hear Jesus say, “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven*” (7:21). How can this be, considering our Lord's gracious invitation like, “*Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28), or “*Him who comes to me I will not cast out*” (John 6:37)? Why does Jesus condemn the people described in 7:21-23? Why is what they say and do ineffective and inauthentic?

9. **Read Matthew 7:24-27.** In what ways are the two houses similar and different?
10. Why do you suppose Jesus ends his now famous sermon with a parable about two houses? What is he wanting to tell us?
11. What do the two builders in Jesus' parable have in common?
12. How do the storms of life reveal what was previously unseen about the two builders and their homes?
13. What is your response to each of the following quotes:
- Jim Wallis recently wrote: *“The great tragedy of modern evangelism is in calling many to believe but few to obedience.”*
- Soren Kierkegaard once remarked: *“It is so hard to believe because it is so hard to obey.”*
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: *“Only the person who believes is obedient and only the person who is obedient believes.”*
14. Think of one teaching from the Sermon on the Mount that has challenged you most. How can you begin putting it into practice?

PRAYER: “Lord, I want the Kingdom to be a reality in my life. I don't want to be like those poor people who spent their lives on the wrong thing things. Help me to build well on these teachings without turning them into a new legalism. I know these words are to be obeyed now. Yet I recognize that my life does not measure up to the demands of Christ's sermon; but I submit to its claims as proper and right. Through Jesus, whose gift to us on the cross is the surest guarantee of the validity of everything he taught. Amen.