

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes November 15, 2006

Matthew 7:13-23

- 13: "Enter by the narrow gate;
for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction,
and those who enter by it are many.
- 14: For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life,
and those who find it are few.
- 15: "Beware of false prophets,
who come to you in sheep's clothing
but inwardly are ravenous wolves.
- 16: You will know them by their fruits.
Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?
- 17: So, every sound tree bears good fruit,
but the bad tree bears evil fruit.
- 18: A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit,
nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.
- 19: Every tree that does not bear good fruit
is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- 20: Thus you will know them by their fruits.
- 21: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,'
shall enter the kingdom of heaven,
but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
- 22: 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?'
- 23: And then will I declare to them,
'I never knew you;
depart from me, you evildoers.'

Discussion Notes:

Introduction:

- We live in a world of compromise...

Context:

- Scriptural context:
 - Jesus is calling his disciples to radical conversion.
 - Sermon on the Mount: Central instructions on discipleship
- Conversion = metanoia = turning radically back towards God
 - Ezekiel 33:10-12
 - **Turning:** visualize turning 180° into God's direction...
 - **Turning back** because we were created in His image to have communion with Him, but original sin and our actual sins have caused us to turn away toward

- other gods...
 - **Radical turning back** because we are inundated with conflicting voices attempting to turn us back away from God ...
- All of what Jesus has taught in the Sermon demands this radical turning back to God...
- Today's passages address this turning, especially from those who want to compromise, diminish, or even belittle the necessity of this turning.
- Three aspects:
 - 1) False roads;
 - 2) False teachers;
 - 3) False professions.

I: FALSE ROADS:

- 13: *"Enter by the narrow gate;
for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction,
and those who enter by it are many.*
- 14: *For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life,
and those who find it are few.*
- Turning towards Jesus and following him requires a narrowing of our lives
 - Radical detachments and revised attachments
 - BUT: the world offers us many roads that are easier & more appealing;
 - Those who follow Jesus are few.

II: FALSE TEACHERS:

- 15: *"Beware of false prophets,
who come to you in sheep's clothing
but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*
- 16: *You will know them by their fruits.
Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?*
- 17: *So, every sound tree bears good fruit,
but the bad tree bears evil fruit.*
- 18: *A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit,
nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*
- 19: *Every tree that does not bear good fruit
is cut down and thrown into the fire.*
- 20: *Thus you will know them by their fruits.*

- **False prophets:**
 - Israel was familiar with false prophets in their midst: Jer 14:13-16; 23:16-17
 - Moses gave criteria for discerning: Deut 18:18-22
- **Sheep's clothing:** falsely in the name of the Lord;
 - Israel was also familiar with bad shepherds! Jer 23:1-6
- **Inwardly ravenous wolves:** hidden agendas; Why? Private gain!
- So how do we know?! Wait to see if what they say comes true?
 - Look at the **fruit**...Jesus uses familiar rhetorical earthy analogy...
- But still a problem: **how to we judge good from bad fruit?**
 - For this reason, Jesus was calling, choosing, instructing, and then anointing his hand-chosen Apostles to carry on after him:
 - John 14:25-26
"These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

- John 15:16-19
"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."
- Luke 10:16
"He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."
- For this reason, Jesus was establishing His Church:
 - Matthew 16:13-19
Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - **So how can we discern between good or bad fruit: we must trust His Church!**
 - The Catechism!

III: FALSE PROFESSIONS:

- 21: *"Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*
- 22: *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?'*
- 23: *And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'*

- **What kind of people would do this?**
 - Those whose external profession does not match their internal conviction.
 - Paul emphasized both sides in Romans 10:8-11
"But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.'"
 - Those who claim to be followers of Christ but who live contrary to the will of God, especially those who instruct others to do likewise (Mt 18:5-6)
"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."
 - Those who imitate Christ for selfish gain (vs.22).

○ **How could Jesus not “know” them? Doesn’t he know everyone?**

- “Know” = union; communion; fellowship; “Abide in me & I in you” (Jn 15)
- Professing faith in Jesus without obedience may not save you! James 2:14-24)
What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?

So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

But some one will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe -- and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”; and he was called the friend of God.

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

- But how do we balance these verses with those that seem to emphasize faith alone? (i.e, the previous passage from Romans 10!)
 - This is why Jesus gave us a teacher whose authority we can trust: the Church!
 - Faith is never alone: faith itself is a gift of grace, which we must freely accept.
 - Faith is more than mental assent or the utterance of words of conversion; requires a complete turning of heart, mind, soul, and body; faith means obedience to the will of God;
 - For this, we must always ask for his assistance. (Jn 15:4-5)
“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”