

## **The King's Speech: Beware of Castles in the Sand<sup>1</sup>**

Matthew 7:21-27

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Dan Hoffman

[Pray]

Please open your Bibles to the end of Matthew chapter 7. Today I want to talk with you about something important. In fact today I want to talk with you about the most important thing. The only thing that a hundred years from now will matter and that you will care about. That's the perspective I'm going for.

Now the funny thing is that on a daily basis we often get concerned about things that we won't hardly care about at all next year, or perhaps even next month or next week or sometimes even an hour from now. But we still worry about these things. But what I want to talk with you about today is the only thing you will care about 100 years from now.

And bar nothing the most important thing on your mind a hundred years from now will be your salvation. So the question today is "are you saved?"

Now you say "my salvation, what do you mean?"

If you went to the doctor today with some pain in your chest and they found out your arteries were 90% plugged and you were about to have a heart attack. And the doctor wheeled you into emergency and cleaned those arteries out we would say that he saved you. Right?

And if you were trapped in your house and it was on fire and one of those great men in yellow showed up, found you and dragged you out of the house we would say they... [They saved you]

And if you were swimming in the ocean and all of a sudden a strong undertow caught you by surprise and started dragging you out to sea no matter how hard you swam. And then a life guard jumped into the water and paddled out to you on her board and grabbed you while you were going down we would say she... [She saved you]

And the Bible teaches us that all people are lost in sin, all of our hearts are rebellious and treasonous against the God of the universe. And because of this we have a terminal illness if you will, and if left unchecked it will kill us. Against what we want, the house will burn down on us. We will be swept out to sea never to return. And that means every one of us is in need of salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> This message based off Pastor James MacDonald's sermon "Are you saved?" on Youtube. Accessed June 11, 2014.

Now the good news is that God looked down at us in our lost and desperate state and He made an escape route so we don't have to suffer the natural consequences of our rebellion. God sent Himself, God the Son, Jesus, who came down to earth, lived a perfect life in our place and then died a brutal death crucified on the cross paying the price for our rebellion. And if we accept what Jesus did for us; if we put our trust in Him for salvation, and pledge our lives to follow Him, then we are saved.

So let me ask you, have you done this? Are you saved? But then let me follow that question up by asking "how do you know you are saved?"

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And actually it is this second question that is going to be our main one today. And it is a question I think is particularly important because most people I have talked to and asked this question to have responded by telling me how to get saved. "Well you just have to confess your sins and believe Jesus is your only way to salvation and you are saved.... Just like that." Or they tell me when they got saved: "In 1984 I was at a Billy Graham crusade and I went to the front."

But neither of these are the right answer. Just knowing when you prayed a prayer or just knowing what you need to believe to become a Christian is not the same thing as actually getting saved.

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If I asked you if you knew how to get to Vanderhoof probably all of you could tell me. "You just head west out highway 16" and you will bump into it. But just because you know how to get to Vanderhoof does not mean that you are in Vanderhoof now – thank goodness right?

But as we are going to see, Jesus says it is the same thing with salvation. Just because we know how to get saved, or we know when we prayed a prayer doesn't mean we are actually saved.

And so on that note look with me at Matthew chapter 7 starting in verse 21

[Read Matthew 7:21-23]

This is a very sobering set of verses. Here Jesus makes very clear that some spectacular looking people are not actually Christians and will not enter the eternal kingdom of heaven. Now look at the resumes these people carry.

First of all, all they are people who profess Jesus as Lord. That means they believe in Jesus. On top of that they also do all sorts of Christian service. Some of them prophesy, or you could say preach Christ into the lives of people around them. Now I hope all of us do this whether it be to your family or to the Sunday school class or to friends and neighbours. All of us should prophesy to the truth of Jesus to each other.

But the list goes on and gets pretty extreme. Some of these people have spiritual healing ministries even casting out demons. How many of you have done that? And others have done many miracles in the name of Jesus. How many here would say “Yes, I’ve done many miracles.”

Now what we are supposed to take away from a list like this is that these are some very impressive looking people who if they were in our church we would never suspect that actually they might not be saved. So think the best of us. Think the most likely to succeed spiritually, if you will. Think the chairman of the deacon’s board, the pastor, the music leaders. Think people who have given their lives in service here. Think the kinds of people you would never think might not actually be saved.

And that is Jesus’ point. In this text Jesus speaks into a context like ours and says “the wide road that leads to destruction that we talked about last week isn’t just talking about people out in the world who haven’t professed Jesus as Lord, it is talking about people right here in church who would tell all of us today that they believe in Jesus.

Now wait a minute you say, I thought Romans 10 says

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

That means just pray ‘the prayer’: Jesus I believe in you, come into my heart and be the Lord of my life... Just believe and you are in, right? What is going on here?

Jesus says it is true you have to believe to be saved, but belief isn’t just a mental exercise, it is something that changes you. And that’s why the reality is “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

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There is a parallel passage to this one in John 8. There Jesus was teaching a crowd of people and He was talking about being the light of the world and how if you chose to follow Him then you would never walk in darkness.<sup>2</sup> Basically Jesus makes a call for people to put their faith in Him.

And while He was preaching John tells us:

Even as He spoke, many believed in Him. (John 8:30)

Now at first you would think Jesus would have been really impressed with this kind of a response. It’s like at a Billy Graham crusade when thousands of people go to the front and everyone gets excited about the numbers. But Jesus is a little funny this way. In fact it is because the response was so good, because so many people were believing in Him, that Jesus was suspicious that something wasn’t right.

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<sup>2</sup> John 8:12

And so in the very next verse we read:

To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.' (John 8:31)

In other words, Jesus says while without belief it is impossible to be saved, there is something more than just a cerebral belief that is essential if you are going to be saved. And of course this lines up with what James, the brother of Jesus, challenged the early church when he said:

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. (James 2:19)

James says even the demons have some kind of mental understanding about who Jesus is and what He came to do. And they take this belief seriously, it causes them to shudder! But how many would agree that demons probably aren't saved, right?

And so the question James and ultimately Jesus has for us is are you sure you are saved?

Certainly the most terrible thing would be to find out the day you died, like the prophets and exorcists and miracle workers in our text, that in fact you were on the wrong belief train. You believed, but it wasn't saving belief. I can't think of anything more terrible.

And Jesus thought making sure you were actually saved was a big deal too which is why He taught on it a lot. If you have your Bibles turn a few pages forward to Matthew 13, and we will pick it up in verse 3. Here Jesus tells another story about some people who were saved and other people who looked saved but actually weren't.

[Read Matthew 13:3b-9]

Whoever has ears let him hear. That means do you get it? Do you get the parable of the sower and the seeds?

Now if not all of the story makes sense don't feel too bad because the disciples obviously didn't get it either. In verse 10 they asked Jesus "why do you use stories or why do you speak in parables because it's kind of hard to understand. And so in verse 18 Jesus tells His disciples what this parable meant. He says:

[Read Matthew 13:18-19]

So let's just stop there. Jesus says there are four types of people. Some people are like the soil of the path. They hear the good news about Jesus, that's the message of salvation, but before anything starts to grow in their lives the devil comes and snatches it away. So let me ask you. Saved or unsaved?

We will just do salvation by popular vote here. What do you think, saved or unsaved?

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Unsaved! It isn't enough just to hear the message of salvation, something has to happen in your life.... Jesus goes on. Look at verse 20.

[Read Matthew 13:20-21]

So these people hear the word and something happens, they excitedly believe, the gospel sounds like good news. It's free and you get to go to heaven, who doesn't want that. But then when the hard part starts, when it turns out faith in Christ costs something they stop growing and wither away. So what do you think? Saved or unsaved?

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Unsaved. That's Jesus' point. A moment of belief is not what it means to be a Christian. These people haven't lost their salvation; they were never saved in the first place. Jesus continues to unpack His story. Look at verse 22.

[Read Matthew 13:22]

So the gospel of salvation gets into this person, they get it, and start to grow but then life gets in the way. There are bills to pay and toys to buy relationships to invest in and pretty quickly they care more about the things of the world than they do about Christ. Saved or unsaved?

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So far this is a pretty bleak story, but now we get to the fourth kind of soil in verse 23. This is where you want to be.

[Read Matthew 13:23]

This person receives the good news, grows and produces fruit. The fruit is the proof. None of the other soil produced fruit.

Over and over again in this series we have said grace starts with God. It comes down to people who don't deserve it. God saves undeserving sinners – that happens first. But grace doesn't leave us where it finds us. It changes us. And very soon that grace starts bubbling out of us to those around us. We start working out our salvation. And it is what happens in this realm, on the horizontal, with our neighbours, with our families; that is the evidence of what has happened on the vertical. Bearing fruit in our lives doesn't save us, but if we bear fruit it is the evidence that we have been saved.

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Now there is a lot there, but maybe you aren't yet convinced. Maybe you want Jesus to be a little more specific. If you do that's ok because Jesus obviously

thought a little more needed to be said, and that's why He immediately tells another story. Look at verse 24.

[Read Matthew 13:24-30]

Jesus says two kinds of people grow up together. First there is wheat, that's good seed people, that's actual saved Christians; but then there is weeds, that's bad seed people, that's unsaved, non-Christians. And Jesus says they end up in the same field and they grow up together. And Jesus' point is that you can't tell the difference between them, at least not at the early stages.

I'm not much of a gardener, so if you came out of your house one day and saw me pulling stuff out of your garden you should be pretty concerned. Because, while everyone knows what a mature sunflower looks like, in infancy sunflowers and dandelions look pretty similar. At least to me.

It's only time that tells the difference between the two. And Jesus says it is the same in every body of believers, in every church. I'm not talking about the church down the street. I'm not talking about Gateway or Westwood or 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist. I'm talking about the weeds and the wheat right here. And please don't think "I sure am glad Bill is here to hear this." Jesus' words are for us, for me, and for you. Jesus says take a good look at your life and ask yourself is there fruit coming out of my life that proves I am wheat?

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In Matthew 7 Jesus says "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." Living out God's will on the horizontal realm, doing what God wants to our neighbours and to our brothers and sisters sitting beside us here, is the evidence that salvation has come.

One of my mentors, Pastor James MacDonald often says, "If your faith hasn't changed you it hasn't saved you."

With that established we have to ask "what is the will of the Father then that we have to live out on the horizontal to prove that we have been saved?" How do we know if we are saved?

Now it is interesting here that the will of the Father is not service for Him. Because the resume of the people in this passage is full of great service for God – greater service than I've given. I wouldn't say I've performed many miracles in Jesus' name, and I haven't cast out any demons either. So these people have done great things for God, but they didn't do the will of the Father.

Here we have to look back at what Jesus has been teaching throughout the King's Speech. Nowhere has Jesus said prove you are my disciples by doing miracles – this isn't to say miracles are wrong, just that they aren't the fruit Jesus talks about. Nowhere does Jesus say cast out demons to prove you are with me – that isn't to say casting out demons is wrong, it just isn't the fruit Jesus is talking about. So what is the fruit Jesus has been talking about that proves He is at work in our lives – that proves we have been saved?

Looking back through the Sermon on the Mount Jesus plainly tells us what it means to follow Him. In chapter 5 He started out by saying you need a righteousness more than the Pharisees in order to get into heaven.

And then in five steps He describes the life of righteousness that true Christians live out. He says His disciples kill their anger; they exhibit the miracle of sexual purity and marital fidelity. They speak with truthfulness, they don't get even, and they love their enemies.

While not spectacular or sensational, what Jesus calls us to here is extreme. No one does these things in their own strength. If you have a personality that gives in easily to anger you don't just get over that. If you have struggled with lust it doesn't just go away because you want it to. If you have enemies you don't just start loving them by default. These things only happen when the miracle of God's grace is alive within you.

And so when these works are active in your life they are the evidence you are saved. This is the fruit that the Holy Spirit is alive within you.

Then in chapter 6 Jesus talks about spiritual disciplines like giving, praying and fasting. These too are both completely extreme and totally unspectacular.

When it comes to giving most Canadians think it is crazy to be generous. In fact only 23% of Canadians claim any charitable contributions on their tax returns at all. And of those 23% only the top 10%, or 2.3% of the total Canadian population, give over \$1000 per year. Even though we are one of the wealthiest countries on earth the average yearly charitable contribution of all those who give is a mere \$123.<sup>3</sup>

Why is giving so low? Because giving your money away is not something people do unless God is at work within them. If God isn't at work in you then you have to hold on to what you earn because it is your hope for the future. Only if you have hope in God can you be truly generous.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/what-canadians-give-how-charity-depends-on-where-you-live/article16065426/>

Then Jesus talks about prayer. Jesus calls His disciples to a secret and yet vibrant and passionate prayer life. A prayer life focused on hallowing the Father's name and longing for His kingdom to come. A prayer life full of faith as we rely on God for His provision for both our daily bread and our forgiveness, both our physical needs and our spiritual needs.

But the hang-up is that naturally prayer seems like a waste of time. It doesn't make sense to wake up early or stay up late or take time out of the middle of our busy day in order to spend time talking to a God who doesn't speak audibly back to us. But a life without prayer is not a life of following Jesus.

Finally Jesus talks about fasting. Again this is something totally extreme and yet totally unspectacular. Nobody naturally decides they will stop giving their body food. Usually when this happens in the world it is a sign of mental illness. "Healthy" people don't do this. But Jesus says people who follow Him practice reminding themselves that their biggest need is God not food or anything else.

And so if these things are at work in your lives. If you find yourself bubbling over with generosity. If throughout the day you are compelled by an inner passion to pray and read your Bible. Or you joyfully give yourself to periods of fasting to increase your reliance on God. Jesus says this is evidence God is obviously at work within you and you are saved.

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A month ago Tonya was baptized here and she told us how since she had become a Christian only a few weeks earlier. And since that time she has been driven with a passion to read the Scriptures. At the time she had finished the whole New Testament and last week she told me she is almost finished the whole Old Testament too. Only the Holy Spirit puts a desire like this within a person. A hunger to hear from God is characteristic of a disciple of Jesus.

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Friends, Jesus says there are lots of people who call Him Lord, who believe in Him if you will, but who are not saved. And my appeal, Jesus' appeal to you today is don't let one of those people be you. Instead make sure you are someone whose belief has changed them. Put your beliefs into practice.

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The King's Speech concludes with one final illustration. Look at verse 24.

[Read Matthew 7:24-27]

Friends Jesus wants you to be saved. He wants you to be a wise builder who builds your life and places your security on the rock that does not shift. He doesn't want you to be a fool and find yourself on judgment day unknown by God.

And so Jesus urges us all, make sure you are saved. It's not whether you hear the message that matters, it's not even that you do great things for God. What matters is that like the wise builder you put Jesus' words into practice in your own life and produce the fruit the Father wills.

And so I conclude with the question we started with today. Not when did you get saved, not how does a person get saved? But what fruit in your life proves you are saved? Please answer this question carefully; it is the only thing that will be important to you 100 years from now.