

Matthew Ch7v13-27 - The Way To Life

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[0 : 00] Thanks, Rob.

If you need a sheet, if you're taking notes, then they're at the table if you came in. Feel free to go and get one of them and a pen if you need one as well. It will help you as you follow along.

Thank you. And turn in your Bibles, please, to Psalm 1. Psalm 1.

Psalm 1. We will be back in Matthew in just a moment or two, but we're going to read Psalm 1 today.

Let's hear God's word. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked, or stand in the way that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

[1 : 34] That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever they do, whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked. They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Well, let's turn to Matthew's gospel and chapter 7. We're working our way through this gospel account, and I hope that you will make connections as we go along through Matthew 7, starting at verse 13.

You'll make connections between Psalm 1 and what we're going to look at together. We're going to be looking at verses 13 through to 27, but we're going to pray and ask for God's help.

[2 : 59] Father, as we listen to your word, as we meditate upon it and reflect, we long that your word would travel deep into our hearts and change us so that we become fruitful, displaying the beauty and the glory of Christ, that we would become distinctive and attractive in our lives, leading others to Jesus.

So would your words do an effective work in our life, that it would be good for us, good for each other, and good for the world in which we live.

Help us now, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Jesus is coming to the end of his sermon, and it's decision time.

It's been a bit of a marathon, quite a long sermon. If you want to go back to chapter 5, verse 1, this is where the sermon began. Remember, Jesus went up a mountain, he saw the crowds, and he sat down and his disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

So this is where the sermon begins. And it goes all the way through to the end of chapter 7, verse 28, where it says, So it's a long-winded message, long sermon.

[4 : 48] Perhaps it took all day, we're not quite sure. But his message is crystal clear. Jesus is God's king with absolute power and supreme authority.

And he's calling people to enter into his kingdom and to live as citizens of the kingdom. We are to live distinctive and attractive lives so that others would see our good deeds and glorify God, that they too would enter into the kingdom.

And as Jesus comes to the end of his sermon, as he comes to his conclusion, we have a decision to make. Have I entered the kingdom?

Am I living as a citizen of the kingdom? And to help us make our decision, Jesus gives four pictures so that we can be absolutely clear where we stand.

The first picture is of two roads, the choice we face. I love takeaway nights.

[6 : 04] Not only do we have the choice between Indian, pizza, Chinese, or the chipper, maybe there's some other ones out there as well in Carragalline, but you know, each one has about 50

options.

So that's at least 200 different meals we get to choose from. And if we don't like it, well, you can always go down to Lidl's and get a steak instead.

We love choice, don't we? And the more, the better. Except for when it comes to how we live, there are only two ways.

Look at verse 13. Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

But small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. It's very simple.

[7 : 06] Jesus is crystal clear. There are only two ways to live, two roads to walk on. There's a broad road with a wide gate or a wide entrance, and there's a narrow road with a small gate or small entrance.

That's it. That's your choice. Two roads. There's no middle way. There's no other option. There's no alternative route.

We haven't arrived at a crossroads. It's more like a T-junction. And you can't be on both roads at the same time.

You can't, as it were, have one leg on one road and one leg on the other road. It's one or the other. This is the choice we all face.

Two roads. The broad road that we're given is or represents the way of the world's kingdom. It's a life that appoints self as king and always chooses what I desire.

[8 : 17] The narrow road represents the way of God's kingdom. It's a life that submits to Jesus as king and longs to serve his desires. Now notice who's on the road or where the people are.

Verse 13 tells us that many are on the broad road. While in verse 14 only a few are on the narrow road.

It seems that the broad road, the road where we appoint self as king is the most popular place to be. It's the option that we most like.

After all, when I'm king I get to do and I live my life the way I want to. Who wants to walk the narrow road which is all about service and sacrifice.

Well as we think about our choice look at the consequences. Verse 13 The broad road leads to destruction.

[9 : 26] But the narrow road verse 14 leads to life. That's why Jesus calls us at the very beginning of his conclusion.

Look at verse 13 Enter through the narrow gate. This is what Jesus has been urging us to do all along. To leave the kingdom of this world and enter the kingdom of heaven.

And how do we enter? How do we go through onto the narrow road? Well just have a look back to chapter 4 verse 7. Sorry, verse 17.

chapter 4 verse 17. As Jesus began his ministry he had a simple clear message. From that time on Jesus began to preach repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

It's the same as chapter 5 verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit. those who he looks on in favour are those who know their spiritual need that they need God for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[10 : 42] He's calling us to change roads to leave the broad road and walk the narrow road. The popular path may promise much but it will lead only to distress and fear.

follow the path of Jesus and it leads to life and hope and peace. So the big question we need to ask as we follow Jesus in his sermon is have I entered the kingdom?

No one else can answer that question for yourself only you. Have I entered the kingdom? am I still fighting for my autonomy wanting to live my own life or have I surrendered my all to Jesus as my supreme authority?

Which road are you on? You can't walk both. This very moment right now you are either on one or the other.

Two roads. the choice that we face. The second picture he gives us is one of two trees.

[12 : 05] The fruit we display. It seems that there are some people who pretend to be in the kingdom of heaven but are actually not.

Do you see how he describes them in verse 15? Watch out for the false prophets they come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

They have this appearance of being followers of Jesus. They sound like kingdom people. They claim to be walking on the narrow road but they are wolves in sheep's clothing.

They are not the real deal. They subtly teach that there are actually not two roads but there are many roads that you can take and any one of them that you choose will lead to life.

So choose whichever path you want. No, says Jesus, watch out, be careful. So how do we know who's genuine and who's not?

[13:11] How can we tell who is in the kingdom of heaven? Well, look at verse 16. By their fruit you will recognise them.

How do you know the difference between a pear tree and an apple tree? Well, they look pretty similar, don't they? Their leaves are very similar but it's the fruit that will distinguish them which is exactly Jesus' point.

He's crystal clear. Let's read from verse 16. By their fruit you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them.

[14:24] Now here the kingdom is pictured like an orchard. An orchard that's full of fruit trees. But there are only two kinds of tree.

There's a tree that produces good fruit which represents the true citizens of the kingdom. They're the ones that take seriously the commands of God and the values of the kingdom.

And then there's another kind of tree that produces bad fruit and represents the false citizens of the kingdom. They live by their own standards and pursue their own desires.

Therefore, the fruit that is on display is the evidence of whether you are a true citizen or a false citizen.

The issue isn't is there fruit because we all display fruit. The issue is what kind of fruit are we displaying.

[15:28] The kind of fruit that we should expect to see on display is the life that Jesus commands and demands of us. If we had time to read all of Jesus' sermon, he would have reminded us of things like this.

This is the kind of fruit that we be non-judgmental, not looking down at other people, not looking for the speck in somebody else's eye, taking the plank out of our own eye.

That we're ruthless with sin, that we cut it out, that we are faithful in our marriages, that we're true to our word, that what we say is our yes and what we say is no is no.

That there would be extravagant love for others, that there would be generosity in giving to the needy, that we wouldn't be holding grudges, and that we are generous to those we consider to be against us.

Chapter 7, verse 12 captures it well for us. So in everything you do, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets.

[16:48] You want a summary of what all God's commands are all about? Love others the way you would want to be loved.

Treat others the way you want to be treated. That's it, fruit in a nutshell. This is the kind of fruit that is good that should be on display.

Now again, notice in verse 18 that there are no mixed trees producing mixed fruits. Verse 18, a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

fruit. Now this isn't talking about being perfect, it's talking about people who humbly see their need of God and are depending upon God to do a work in their life so that they will produce good fruit. But those who are proud and depend on self and carry on their life going their own way will only ever produce bad fruit. And sooner or later there's going to be a harvest.

[17:59] When the fruit will be picked and it will become evident to all and the trees that do not belong to the kingdom will be exposed, there will be no hiding.

Look at verse 19, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So the big question we need to be asking here is this, can I see evidence of good fruit? Am I practically serving in the life of the church?

Am I other centred or have I become self absorbed? What kind of tree are you? Only you can really answer that.

We can't be both, we can't be kind of a half a good tree and half a bad tree, it's either good fruit or bad fruit. Two trees, the fruit we display.

[19 : 11] The third picture that Jesus gives us is one of two claims, the priorities we have. as he comes towards the end of his sermon, he gets very personal and up front.

And we're to imagine ourselves standing before Jesus on the last day. Here we are, picture yourself standing at the entrance to the kingdom.

Are we going to enter into that eternal kingdom? What are we going to say to Jesus? Jesus? Well, let's read verse 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.

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?

[20 : 16] Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers. Once again, we're presented with two kinds of people.

The first person claims to know God, but it is actually excluded and shut out from the kingdom.

Jesus says, away from me, I never knew you.

Now, at first reading, it seems terribly unfair, because this person seems to be sincere. Lord, Lord, it's a recognition that Jesus is king, that he does have all authority.

Lord, you're the one who's in charge. And they seem to have done some very spectacular things in their ministry life as well, haven't they?

Verse 22, we prophesied in your name, we drove out demons in your name, we performed miracles in your name.

[21 : 20] I mean, look at all that we've done. Surely, they must be a disciple. If anybody's going to be a disciple, it must be one of these people. They seem to be genuine, enthusiastic, and have served well.

But yet, Jesus said, I never knew you, they're excluded. Why? Why have they been shut out? Well, when we look at the second person, they also claim to know God, they also acknowledge Jesus as Lord, but here's the difference.

Did you pick it up at the end of verse 21? Only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven is going to be in the kingdom.

Their priorities are God's priorities. Imagine yourself right now standing at the entrance to the kingdom before Jesus.

Lord, I was such a regular attender at that church, Carigoline Baptist Church. I sang songs so enthusiastically.

[22 : 44] I don't think any time I was ever there that I ever did not take communion. And when I was in that church, I served well.

I was on the rota Lord. And in my ministry life, I even led somebody to the Lord. No, Jesus isn't impressed by our words or our lists.

The real issue that he'll keep coming back to is, did you do the will of the Father? You see, doing the Father's will is not a once a week event or a duty to tick off on my to-do list.

That's it done. That's that compartment dealt with. The Father's will is to be done every moment of every day. Remember how Jesus taught us to pray.

Have a look back at chapter six. Chapter six and verse nine. This then is how you should pray.

[24 : 00] Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Not my will, not my standard, not what I think is enough or suitable. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

It's a whole life of prioritising and pursuing what God wants. It's daily submitting and surrendering to his will. It's a wholehearted commitment to see his rule over every area of my life.

Christianity is not a social club where we meet up once a week, put our names on a road to help out our duty to perform. It demands our life, my all.

Chapter 6, verse 33, seek first his kingdom. It's challenging, isn't it?

[25 : 09] When you say, yes, yes, I get all of that, but what about grace? grace. I thought getting into the kingdom was all about what Jesus has done for me, not what I do.

And yes, you've got it right. That's true. It's all of grace. My performance counts for nothing. There's nothing I can say to Jesus, look at what I did, that will mean that he has to accept me.

It's all of grace. grace. However, if I have experienced grace, it will be seen and expressed in prioritizing the kingdom of God, his will being done in my life.

An experience of grace will always lead to a life of obedience. We sang about amazing grace, but amazing grace changes us and transforms us.

So the big question we need to be asking is this, do I obey God's will? We all know what God's will is.

[26 : 23] I'm sure many of us here could write a wonderful essay. We could even teach people, this is what God desires. And maybe some of us here can look back in history to our past life and pinpoint examples and say, I did God's will.

But it's not about what we know or even what we did. It's am I humbly reordering my life around his values today?

Am I doing what I claim to be? two claims the priorities we have. The fourth picture that Jesus gives us is of two houses the way we build.

how are we going to respond to Jesus teaching? I mean, it's hard to avoid it. I don't know about you, but it's hitting me between the eyes anyway.

What we do with the words of Jesus is like building a house. Let's read together verse 24.

Therefore, conclusion, therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

[27 : 59] The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundations on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew, and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crush. Again, the picture is clear and simple, isn't it?

But here's what it does do. It reveals our eternal destiny. first we have this house built on a foundation of rock.

This building project represents the person who hears the word and obeys the word. And then we have another house which is built on a foundation of sand.

And this building project represents the person who also hears the word, but does nothing about it. you see, each one of us here, all of us, we're all building a house.

[29 : 20] And from the outside and from our perspective, they all look identical. Above ground, they're exactly the same. The house is all the same.

We're all hearing the word together. But there's a crucial difference that will determine whether the house stands strong or falls with a crush.

and that's the foundation. The foundation is not the word and the foundation is not even Jesus, not in this context.

The foundation is putting the words of Jesus into practice. That's the foundation. Look at verse 24. Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on the rock.

In other words, the foundation is obeying the teaching of Jesus. You see, this is the point of the whole sermon.

[30 : 28] Am I living a life of obedience? Obedience is always evidence of repentance. I say I've repented. Well, it will be expressed in obedience to God's word.

I've experienced God's grace in my life. Well, the evidence of that will be obedience. That's the foundation.

And the foundation we have determines our eternal destiny. Jesus tells us it's like a flood that is coming. In the picture here, the rains are going to fall, the streams are going to rise, the winds are going to blow.

It will test whether you have built your house on a good foundation. It's a flood of judgment. Just as the flood came in the time of Noah, so a final and ultimate judgment will come.

And the question is, how will your house stand? You see, not having the right foundation is like walking on the broad road.

[31 : 37] It leads to destruction. It's like a tree with bad fruit. It's going to be cut down and thrown into the fire. It's like making a claim to no God, but being shut out and excluded.

Jesus' words are serious. Do you hear them? He's painting a picture that is real and through it he is literally shocking us into action.

How do you, how do I respond to his word today? Because it determines our eternal destiny. It's either heaven or it's hell. It's either the kingdom of light or it's the kingdom of darkness.

There are only two roads. There's only two trees, two claims, two houses. things. So the big question is, am I putting Jesus' word into practice?

[33 : 00] Not am I reading it through the week, but am I doing what it actually says? It's not can I answer all the questions about who did what and who Moses was and who David was and what Jesus did, but is it making a difference in my life?

Decision time. Let's pray. let's just take a moment to reflect on what we've heard.

Let's just take a moment to reflect on what we've heard.

Father, we need your spirit to do a work in each of our life, to show us exactly what our hearts are like, so that we run to you seeking your grace and your help.

Asking, Father, that you would change us and do a work in our life so that we produce fruit, live lives of obedience and prioritize your values and your desires above our own thoughts.

[35 : 07] Father, help us to walk in your way and help us that we might become distinctive and attractive, displaying the beauty and the glory of Jesus to those around us so that they too might enter the kingdom and know the joy of a life with you.

in Jesus' name, Amen. We're going to sing a song that I hope helps us to reflect well on what we've heard today.