

Matthew 7: 21 - 29 // Choices We Make

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[0:00] Matthew chapter 7, verses 21 to 29, we're finishing off the Sermon on the Mount. It's about choices. And my mom, she wasn't big on advice, and frankly some of the advice that she gave because she was a coal miner's daughter and I was not raised in a Christian home.

I can't repeat some of the words here because it would be pretty rude. But she did have the odd little nugget of wisdom that I can share and one of them is just it's up to you, you've got to figure it out.

It was good. It was good advice. And I think sometimes when we look through the passages like this, there is an element that we have to figure things out for ourselves.

We have to understand them and process them. That is true. And there's other parts where we have to completely and wholly lean on Jesus as our rock and on our understanding.

And we have to be a doer of his word. Whether we understand it or not, we need to make steps towards doing his word. And I think this is a great example, as we close out the Sermon on the Mount, of how.

[1:09] Because Jesus has been teaching about the kingdom of God so far. He's been teaching about what it means to be a citizen of heaven. How you and I can be disciples for the Lord.

How you and I can be brothers and sisters together in this kingdom that is here and now within us that is God. And he gives us real life choices. Some people use the word free will.

And I'm often uncomfortable with the term. And the reason being is because we give away our free will so much and so often to addictions, obsessions, or things we get just fascinated with.

Our free will can be lent very quickly and very easily to the distractions of the world. We can be mastered by things. And we're not meant to be mastered by them. We have free choice.

But let's understand what that means. And I want to walk through that a bit. We aren't robots. God made us people who respond to him. Respond to his call. Respond to his spirit.

[2:10] And there's choices that we have to make as we move forward. I think there's three choices I wanted to highlight here this morning. And that's the choice whether we have a true or a false relationship with him.

We have a choice about the foundation we build our lives upon. And we have a choice of the kind of authority that we're going to recognize in our life. In other words, who sits on the throne of your heart today?

Is it Jesus? Is it yourself? Or is it someone else? I hope by the end of this, we'll have a desire for the real.

The authentic Jesus. I hope we'll have a desire for him to be on the throne of our hearts. And being king of our little kingdom here. That's what I hope for.

So let me dive into verses 21 to 23. And the first choice. The choice of whether we have a true or false relationship with him. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

[3:12] But the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven. 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? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. That is a dropping of the mic if I ever heard one.

People who go there thinking, well, I'm going to be honored. I've done all of this, all of that fantastic stuff. But they didn't have the relationship. And he wasn't sitting on the throne of their heart.

They had their own kingdom. We don't want to be separated from God. We don't. Yet entering his kingdom doesn't end with just simply calling him Lord.

Lord, we can go through the motions. We can go to church. We can have the appearance. And we can be bitter, corrosive, corrupt, and awful inside.

[4:11] And then go to him and say, but I came to church. But we hated our brother or our sister. Do you see where we need a renovation from the inside out? We need a renewal of the heart and the mind.

And we need to know who's sitting on the throne of our heart right now. Because it's only the beginning to call Jesus Lord. That's just the beginning of this journey.

It's a good place to start. But it is the start. And I think more than a few people, and we may have met them, will call the Lord Lord.

But it's just on the surface. It just skips off the surface. It doesn't go very deep. There's a saying in the pastoring circles where, you know, you want to build a church that is a mile deep, even if it's only an inch wide.

You don't want something that's a mile wide and only an inch deep. You want people to go deep with their faith. And though there may only be 12 people that show up, be 12 disciples from Christ, where Jesus is on the throne of our heart, what more could you possibly pray for?

[5:20] That's wonderful. So we desire depth, and we desire the real. But some are not sincere when they call him Lord, because he's not really Lord in the real way.

And if you say things like, Lord, you're my God, but we don't actually do it, live it, read his word, we don't love his people, then the kingdom just seems to get further and further away.

We have those choices. We need a real commitment, not just to act out a religious duty, but to walk in a relationship of faith. Verses 21 to 22 again.

Do we understand what this means?

Jesus will judge us. He looked out over a bunch of people. He will judge. Yes, Jesus is our caring and loving Savior.

[6:33] In a way we don't fully understand, he calls us friends. Though I don't know about you, but I feel unworthy of that title with him, most often than not. He calls us friends, but he is also our judge.

Those of us who keep Jesus on the surface, that's what we're going to have to face. Do the foundation work now. Do the work now.

Jesus is God. And when he said it was real, he meant it. Jesus is Savior of the world, but he's also the judge of the world.

And we have to accept that. Maybe some don't want to be around Jesus. Maybe some don't want to be with him, and therefore, having his kingdom at a distance is what they want.

Maybe it's that after they pass, they will be given exactly what they want, and that is distance from the kingdom of heaven. Because it would be to them like a hell. I don't know.

[7:32] Maybe some say that they're with Jesus, but it isn't real. They don't really mean it. It's just something they speak, not something they live and walk and breathe.

It's a Sunday-only faith. Will he know them when they try to enter his kingdom? Will he know you and me? Maybe they'd argue.

Well, I did all of this work. Look at my Christian resume. Look at all of this. Look at all I've done for you, Lord. And really, I'm the one that's been building my kingdom and not yours.

I'm the one that's been building my world and not speaking your life into this world. Maybe. I believe that God works miracles.

I have seen them. I have experienced them in my own life. I know this to be true. However, sometimes I think that's what people only look for is the miracle and the flash in the pan and the fireworks.

[8:38] And sometimes life is a grind of difficulty. Sometimes it's a life of monotony. And I usually tell guys that I raise up to be pastors just simply this.

There is the old myth of Sisyphus. And I'm just going to briefly bottom line it now. He had found a way. This is Greek mythology. So take it with a great assault.

I'm not speaking the gospel here. He had found a way to cheat death. And Zeus got very upset and cursed him to rolling a rock up a hill for eternity.

So if you ever hear that expression, it's like rolling a rock up a hill. This is where it comes from. And Sisyphus would just roll it up and every time he got to the top, it would roll back down. It would start over, go up to the top, roll back down.

And the thing is, is sometimes building a foundation in our life, it seems like that. But we're not getting anywhere. We're not doing anything. All we're doing is building this rock. We're moving up there.

[9:36] You know, somebody complains or does something like this and all of a sudden the rock goes all the way down and our foundation is rocked and rattled. And it shouldn't be. Because when our foundation is built on Jesus, we see that every step up that hill can be a place of worship.

Father, help us to get one step further today. Our foundation won't be rocked if it is upon Jesus, if it is upon ourselves, then all we see is the misery of pushing a rock up a hill and never getting anywhere.

Sometimes pastoring, leadership, or in ministry, it's like that. You have to get used to the marathon and not the sprint. You have to get used to pacing yourself and working through all of the difficulty and adversity over a long distance and a long period of time, knowing that in the end, the Lord is waiting for you.

And my great hope, my great prayer so often is, Father, I just want to come home, be in your arms, and hear, well done, good and faithful servant. But I have to do the work here, not the last second. I have to do the work here and now, when some days it feels like pushing a rock up a hill. If you know what I mean, if life has felt like that, if life has felt like a grind at times, keep going.

[10:56] Do the work. And lean on one another in our fellowship. Miracles and prophecies won't save people on the day of judgment.

It's what's in here that will save us. Jesus didn't even seem to doubt what they were saying. You notice that? He didn't even argue with it.

Well, we prophesied your name. We don't know. He didn't argue with them. He just said, that's not what it's all about. It's not enough. It was like he was saying, so what? Is our claim of his lordship in our life, is it skimming off the surface or is it going into the deep?

I can't answer that for you. I have to work on that myself. Verse 23, and then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. There's one way to God and it's not about what we bring to the table or what we do.

It's not about our Christian resume. And you know what I mean by saying that. It's simply all of the good things we have done, how we have served. It's actually, that's an outflow of a relationship, but we can't earn our way to heaven.

[12:07] It doesn't work like that. You can know a lot about theology, but do you know Jesus? We can know a lot about Bible study and the mysteries and all this kind of stuff, but do you know Jesus?

Do you know him? Does he know you? It's important. Maybe the pursuit of knowledge in him is the Bible study. Maybe it is studying theology.

Maybe that is all bringing closer to the Lord. Great. Good. Awesome. But just know that it has to lead to relationship, not just head knowledge, because that isn't enough.

You may do miracles in his name, but do you know him? Does he know you? This is what our Lord wants. It's a relationship. To hear the words depart from me, I can't imagine words to hear.

I can't imagine that. So God gives us a real choice. He gives us real choices right here and now.

Are we going to have a surface level relationship?

[13:18] Is it going to be a Sunday only relationship? Or is it going to go deep into deep into deep? The choice is ours. We can make that choice right now, right here, right today. And it just starts with a Lord.

I want to go deeper. I don't understand. I want to go more into you and your knowledge and understand who you are. I want you to know who I am.

But I don't know where to start. That's okay. Start with that prayer and see who he leads into your path. Maybe there's somebody already praying for you. You know, we often have, I think, many mothers and fathers in our lives that end up being mentors.

I've mentioned her before and it's not our little evident K here but I had an Auntie K as we all called her and she had been praying for me for a couple of years prior to my coming to the Lord because I was friends with her grandson. And it was always just such an interesting relationship to have to, you know, you meet Jesus and all of a sudden someone says I've been praying for you.

And my first reaction was why? Because I didn't understand. I have come to understand how beautiful that is. Maybe someone's praying for you to go deeper now.

[14:29] I can say that I actually have a very long list of people that are that are in the church right now, physically in this church right now as I look around. People that are not in the church who have moved on and I pray I think it's at least three times a week I try and make it I try and do it every day but I'd be I'd be disingenuous if I said it was every day.

It's at least three times a week I pray through that entire list and I take my time. And I don't know some of you as well as I wish I could but I know the Lord knows you and that's enough.

So know that someone is praying for you right now. You know, this is a regular thing. I'm praying for you. Please pray for me as well. Choice number two.

We have a choice about what foundation we build our lives upon. Verses 24 to 27. Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against the house and it fell and great was the fall of it.

[15:53] Each of the builders built houses that were similar on the outside. We can take that from this. The houses looked similar.

It would take a building inspector to be able to go and look at it and say, no, this just isn't quite right. And sometimes we need that from Jesus, right? Lord, come and look into my life and show me what just isn't right.

Show me how my foundation is not built upon you but rather is built upon sand. Lord, help me in that insight. Or give me brothers and sisters who will speak that truth to me.

I call that in my circles a bucket of cold water conversation. Sometimes you need it. Or the come to Jesus conversation. Sometimes we need it, right? We need a friend to be able to say, you're crooked but you've got to fix that foundation up.

Let's pray. We can't tell the difference very easily but you sure can when the storm comes. Another thing I do tell people that I'm raising up in leadership, be the one person in the room that doesn't run around with their hair on fire.

[17:00] Okay? If things are falling apart, don't go, yes, we've got to freak out and run around and make things worse and throw gasoline, be the one person in the room that just stays steady and say, it's going to be okay. It's going to be alright.

You can always tell the foundations of someone's life when the storms come if they start freaking out and everything's on fire. We can look around in the world right now and it's almost a joke.

That's how weird things have gotten. It's almost a joke. We're not even halfway through 2026 and I've lost count of how many major news story events that have happened and we can look at that and we can start getting freaked out and paddicked.

You know, UAPs, alien invasion, what is happening, whatever. You know, you can just go down those rabbit holes and you can get angry, frustrated, depressed and you get lost in it.

Or, we can take a step back and understand that this is nothing new under the sun. The world has always been a crazy place and God is on the throne in heaven and he is in charge.

[18:09] And it makes me go through my days thinking, whatever, man. I almost expect next week to have some major new news, you know, announcement of something and I'm like, it's okay.

It's alright. God is on his throne in heaven and that's all I need to know. One is built on the rock, one is built on the sand. And we can notice the difference during the storms of life.

Some of us have experienced some fierce storms in our families, in our workplace, in our marriages, in our friendships. Some of us have weathered tornadoes that have ripped through our lives.

Some of us have experienced those. Some of us, those storms are yet to come. But they might be on their way. Whether we have a storm now or in the future, it's going to reveal what the foundation of our lives really are.

But here's the thing. Work on it now when the storm isn't there. You'll notice that these houses were not built during the storm. The storm is what proved what the foundation was worth.

[19:19] So work now. Work now on your faith. Work now on reading the word of God and letting it soak into your life. Work now by going to Bible studies.

Work now by reading it, praying for one another, asking for one another for prayer, and being that support. Work on those things now so that when the storms rip through, we're prepared.

That's the work we've got to do now. Build when things are calm and good. doesn't mean easy, but you can still build. Let's read verses 26-27.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against the house and it fell.

And great was the fall of it. So just hearing God's word isn't enough to build a foundation. It can be soothing, healing, encouraging, but we've got to do it.

[20 : 18] We actually have to put this in practice, this stuff. So think of it like this. If you need a kickstart of where to begin, treat it like how you look for a mentor.

And if you don't have a mentor in your life, find one. They're important. I have not gone through many years in my Christian walk without having a mentor or multiple mentors.

Sometimes you're going to look at someone's life and you're going to say, man, you are really calm during the storm. Things happen to you and you never get phased. Take them out for coffee and ask them, how do you do it?

Right? That's mentoring. That's building up the foundation. Look in the mirror and ask the Lord and just say, Father, where is my foundation weak? Where is it leaky? Where is it built on sand? And then find someone that you see that is like that.

My example is recent, actually. Bob Roberts from Bunch Roberts Funeral Home. You know, like we actually get along really well. And the funny thing is, it's always a standing joke. It's like, we kind of hate it that we only see each other at a funeral, right?

[21 : 20] It's a weird thing. So the last funeral that I had that I did, I actually went out an hour early from my appointment with him and I sat with him and I was sitting there and I said, you know, Bob, you always seem so peaceful.

You really do. I mean, every funeral that I've attended with you, everything that, you know, we've done together, there's just this calm about you and in the midst of a very emotional and difficult trying time, how do you do that?

And you know what he says? He says, you know what? I just, I love the Lord and I consider it an honor to be able to walk through families through these moments. And so his job is to not worry about the schedule and all that kind of stuff.

It's just simply to know what he has to do, to do it well, to do it quietly. And I sat there and I thought, man, that is gold. And we prayed together and left and it's like, you know, that's how mentors can work.

That's how we can build up the foundation of our lives. It's just simply asking people that we see that have something in their life that we really admire and say, how do you do it? What is it about that?

[22 : 21] Work on your foundation that way. That's a very practical, practical little bit that you can work on. But it means a couple of things. You see, asking mentors into your life means you have to listen to someone else other than yourself.

That's not easy for some of us. But it is important because like I said, whether it's the bucket of cold water or the come to Jesus conversations, sometimes we need to hear, buddy, you got to fly right. No, we all need that. I've had people give me those conversations too and I've had to stop and even though I wanted to deflect or defend, I had to stop and think, they're right.

They're right. Hard to hear, hard to accept, longer to process, but if they're right, it's something that we got to take in. I know that train guy obviously really agrees.

He's honking the heart. But if we fail to be doers, we'll commit the sin that will surely find us out and expose where our loyalties really lie.

[23 : 26] Numbers 32, 23 says it here. But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord and be sure your sin will find you out. Do you know what the sin is they're talking of?

It's the sin of doing nothing. You see, the kicker of this kind of sermon and writing it and hearing it is that now you have a choice before you.

do something about it or don't. But there is a sin of doing nothing because no one intentionally builds a house poorly unless you're a crooked builder, right?

Unless you're a scammer and you're trying to hurt people. You want to build a house, take pride in it, you build it well, right? You want that. So the foundation is all that much more important. Now the sin here is doing nothing. When you build a house based on ignorance and neglect, that's where it can come back to bite you. I love that Crawford referred to Proverbs 31.

[24 : 28] So I'm going to dip into that well a bit but from Proverbs 14 verse 1 and I'm paraphrasing, okay? The wise woman builds her house, the foolish one tears it down.

Right? We all have our parts to play in building the houses that are around us but it starts with our own life. It starts with our own throne that's on our heart here. Is Jesus on that throne or are we? The second builder didn't set out to build a bad foundation. It just simply happened through neglect. They didn't pay attention. They made choices away from God consistently to where the kingdom was just distant and it shouldn't feel like a far country.

So what is Jesus actually telling us to do? I think there's a list here because we look back at the Sermon on the Mount, the things that we've been working through these past weeks when it comes to learning it's this.

Endure persecution. Let our light shine in this dark world. Do not murder. Do not hate. Do not commit adultery and do not lust.

[25 : 38] Christ. Jesus told us not to seek revenge and to love those who hate us. Give of our material resources. Pray and do it right.

Fast and do it right. Store up treasure in heaven more than on earth. Do not worry and trust that you have a loving Father in heaven that's working things out.

Jesus told us to not be judgmental or hypocritical but to love. To be aware of false prophets and bad teachers that are out there. This is a very short list.

I could go on and on and on and on and on. This is a list of this is how we work out our citizenship. This is how we build the foundation better and larger in our life.

This is how we let Jesus in and let his light shine more and more because the rock to build upon is Jesus. If you walk away today and say I'll do that's maybe a mistake.

[26 : 43] Maybe think of it like this I will be I will be a son or a daughter of the king. I will be the father or the mother he wants me to be.

I will be the brother or the sister that my fellowship needs me to be. go and be not just go and do because we are sinners saved by grace.

We see how Jesus wants us to live in this list and it should always bring us to where Jesus died on the cross where he died for our sins even the sins of doing nothing.

So are we going to hear the word or are we going to do it? And it leads us into choice number three. I will be closing soon. And the kind of authority that we are going to recognize in our life is our third choice.

Verses 28 and 29. And when Jesus finished these things the crowd were astonished at his teaching for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

[27 : 45] Those who listened to Jesus couldn't help but notice there's something different. The typical clown that fills a pulpit myself included if you're teaching from the words the word has its authority we need to listen to it not me listen to the word and have it build our lives.

But when and it was very common for rabbis to travel around almost like an itinerant rabbi in that way and go and teach in different temples and they would teach from the law and people would be like oh yeah my mom taught me that.

Right. Yeah I can hear that. The difference is that when Jesus taught it was as though it was God himself. It was. And there was an authority that they couldn't quite place their finger on but they knew this guy is different.

There was an authority that shocked them blew them away that just made them sit on the edge of their seat with the teaching. Something beautiful and profound. Jesus can speak the word of God but as God himself.

So could you imagine that authority right now speaking into our lives? Could you imagine that for a moment where the Lord says son daughter I want to build the foundation of your life so that no matter what crazy stuff comes along the way you're going to stand firm because it's about to get weirder.

[29 : 08] And we need to shore up all of these things of our foundation. We need to make sure that we are all in that groove where God is on the throne of our hearts. And what if he's saying to us

right now come and walk with me and I will show you how.

I will show you who to be. Just trust in the Lord. Trust in our king. We have authority in our life. We have lots of authority in our lives.

Family, social media, our bosses. We have lots of authorities. Some good, some bad. Some really bad. We have lots of authorities in our lives.

Maybe the authority in our life is our own heart and we keep following it into bad situations.

Perhaps. We need a better authority because our hearts have weaknesses and failings.

We're human. We're very imperfect. God knows this. We need to let Jesus be the authority of our lives. His word be the authority in our lives. Jesus shares his heart, his will, his mind to us through the word of God.

[30:15] I will say it until the point of you being sick of it. get deep with the word of God. Get deep with the Bible. Read it.

Pray through it. Let your life soak in it and let him show you the way through the darkness. He is our better authority. So yes, Jesus left us with three choices.

The choice of whether to have a true or false relationship with him. We have a choice about the foundation with which we build our lives upon and the kind of authority that we're going to recognize in our life.

God loves us enough to let us choose. So what do you choose today? Do you want to go deep or do you want to stay shallow?

Do you want to do something? Or better yet, do you want to be someone in him? Because right now, you are a beloved daughter and son, brother and sister.

[31:19] And in a way, like I said before, I can't even possibly begin to understand he looks at us as friends. So lean on him. If there's things that you know that foundation of your life needs more of, look at someone else and go and ask them.

And say, how has the Lord built you in this way? And just see how your foundation of your life is shored up, strengthened, and built through other people that the Lord brings into your life.

Let's pray. Father, I want to thank you for passages like this that just remind us that you are on the throne of heaven, that you are in charge. And even though the storms feel difficult and everything just feels really hard sometimes, maybe it feels like we're pushing that rock up the hill, Lord, help us to be really, really faithful in the small things.

Help us to be faithful in the invisible things. And Lord, teach us how to be a lot better than we are at doing. Because we can have the do part and we can miss the being part.

I don't want any of us to be unknown by you, Lord. So I pray that you will know us and help us to know you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.