

# Matthew 7:21-23 - I Never Knew You

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Good morning. It's good to be here at Southwood this morning and I want to say thank you for giving me this opportunity to preach and bring God's Word this morning and also worship. And so, with that being said, if you have your Bibles or you can look up at the screen, you'll see that we'll be looking at Matthew chapter 7, verses 21 through 23.

And as always, this is God's good and holy Word. It stands over us. It is for our good and for our benefit. Therefore, let us give our attention to it. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, 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?

[ 1 : 21 ] 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. This is God's Word. Let me pray for us and pray for our time this morning. Let's pray. Jesus, as always, as always, we need you.

We need your grace. We need your mercy. We need your kindness to us. Especially where we are sitting under your Word.

Lord, we ask that you would be with us this morning, that you would soften our hearts, that we might hear you and hear your Word.

We ask that you would unstop our ears and again shine the light of your grace upon us, that we might take in these hard but good words, that we might see you as beautiful, as glorious, that we might see your gospel as it really is, the good news for us.

[ 2 : 50 ] our prayer this morning, Lord, is that you would be our teacher, that by your Spirit, you would teach us.

For we, your people, we do not need to hear from a man, but we need to hear from you. And so we ask, kindly, humbly, begging, that you, God, would be gracious and kind to us and speak to us, that we might be changed, that we might leave this place differently from the way we came in.

We ask, Lord, that you would use me, a sinner, to proclaim the goodness and the excellencies of your kingdom. We pray all these things in Christ's name.

Amen. Growing up, I was a part of about six friends who were really big into WWF wrestling. So much that I pretty much used to say that Hulk Hogan was my dad.

I don't know if you can see the resemblance. But we really loved wrestling. We would talk about it all the time. It would consume our lives. It consumed everything we did.

[ 4 : 12 ] And these circle of friends, we would, you know, a lot of times just try to emulate what we saw on WWF the night before. Well, there's one friend in this group who in particular was a friend who made us comfortable in a lot of ways.

And the reason why is because whenever this friend would come around, we knew to be on our guards. We knew that we better watch out.

And the reason why is because this friend, instead of greeting you like a normal person would, you know, like a handshake or a hug, this friend would greet you with a wrestling move.

And so we would be standing in a circle and we would see this guy coming and immediately we'd start trembling because we knew, okay, he's about to put one of us in a full Nelson or he's about to dropkick one of us and we're just going to have to take it.

And the thing about it was that was his way of saying hello to us. And so it got worse over time. The more we saw him coming, the more immediately in our hearts we would tremble because we knew

that this could be the day that you would be suplexed on concrete or you would be putting the figure four leg lock.

[ 5 : 31 ] And for those of you who are like me now, a little jaded about wrestling, is you know it's not real, but if you do these moves in real life on people, they actually hurt.

And so this friend was an extreme source of anxiety and discomfort for me.

And when I think about that story and that experience growing up, there are very few times where I feel that sense of angst and anxiety and discomfort.

And one of those ways in particular is at times when I read the Word of God. That you're reading in your Bibles, you're having your personal time of devotion with God, and then you stumble on a passage like this one we read this morning.

That Jesus is speaking to his disciples and talking about what it means to be in his kingdom. And then he says this, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

[ 6 : 45 ] Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. That as I think about these words, that immediately they unsettle me.

That these words bring to mind the words of C.S. Lewis in his work, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, if you're familiar with.

The first time the children are going to meet Aslan, who's this God figure. And they are inquiring to figure out what is Aslan like? And they're asking Mr. Beaver these questions.

And Lucy asks this question, Is he safe? And you can remember Mr. Beaver's response, Safe? Safe? Who said anything about safe? But he's good. Safe? Safe? Safe?

[ 7 : 46 ] Who said anything about safe? But he is good. And that's what I want you to come away with this morning.

That Jesus says hard things to us. Things that make us feel unsafe. But it is for our good.

It is for our benefit. That Jesus in this passage is talking about what it means to enter the kingdom of heaven. And he shows us, for our purposes this morning, these three things.

That Jesus shows us that entrance into the kingdom of heaven is not through right theology.

Secondly, he shows us that entrance into the kingdom of heaven is not through right works.

But thirdly, he shows us that entrance into the kingdom of heaven is through him and him alone. So not through right theology, not through right works, but through him and him alone.

[ 9 : 02 ] So as we consider this passage in light of this first point, you might be familiar, this is the Gospel of Matthew. This is one of the five major teaching sections of the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus has begun to speak about his kingdom.

And in Matthew 5, he begins what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. He begins with the Beatitudes. He begins by talking about how the law speaks to our hearts, how it shows us our sin and our need for God's grace.

He continues in talking about what it means to pray and what it means to trust God and not be anxious. And then as you get into chapter 7, he begins to talk about false prophets and trees that do not bear good fruit.

And then we get to verse 21 and he says this, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

And if you think about those words, Lord, Lord, in the context in which this passage is given, that what Jesus is teaching us is that for these people of whom he's speaking, they really do understand and get some things about him.

[ 10 : 21 ] That, for example, they get the fact that he is Lord. They get the fact that he is master and ruler over all things.

They get that he is sovereign and in control of all things. Now, I know it's easy for us at times to miss the significance of the word Lord, especially in Southern culture because it's ingrained in our culture.

But I want you to take a step back and try to imagine what it would be like for a first century Jew to call Jesus Lord. that for one thing, they would be guilty of one of the greatest sins in the eyes of Jewish religious leaders.

That you don't call a man Lord. That is blasphemy. That is wrong. And in some cases, it's punishable by death. But also, that this group of people were under Roman authority.

That is, they were taught that only one person was Lord. And it's not Jesus. It's Caesar. Caesar is Lord. And any threat to his lordship was a crime that was punishable by death.

[ 11 : 46 ] And yet, Jesus would say of these people, listen, you really do get who I am.

That you call me Lord, and rightly so. And yet, we see that he says these hard words. not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

It shows us that even though these people, theologically speaking, knew things about God that were right, that that, in and of itself, was not enough.

That that alone did not save them. And especially being a ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, I think this is something we need to hear.

That you and I need to hear over and over again that reformed theology does not save us. That the five solas don't save us.

[ 13 : 01 ] That adherence to the Westminster standards do not save us. That our perfect theology does not save us. Jesus saves us.

Jesus alone saves us. And he is saying, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

And I know when we hear these words, as I so often do, I just immediately think, well, he's not talking about me. He's talking about those other people.

And I'm going to ask that you not do that. I'm going to ask that you not run to the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 17 and 18, on the assurance of grace and salvation and perseverance of the saints.

I'm going to ask you to be vulnerable and let the words of Jesus cut. and let them do their good work. Because what he is saying to us is that is not enough to save us.

[ 14 : 13 ] And that's not to say what we believe doesn't matter. It's not to say just throw all our theology out the window. But it is to say that if we are resting in and on that, it will not save us.

We will be sorely disappointed on the last day if that is our hope. Jesus saves us. Martin Lloyd-Jones, as we wrap up this first point, says that orthodoxy, that's right belief, is absolutely vital and essential.

Unless we believe that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Son of God, unless we recognize him as the eternal Son, substance of the eternal substance, made flesh and dwelling amongst us, unless we believe the New Testament doctrine that he was sent by God to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and that because of that he has been exalted and is Lord of all, to whom every knee shall eventually bow, we are not Christian at all.

We must believe that. To be a Christian is a matter of believing certain truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, believing on him.

There's no such thing as Christianity apart from that. To be a Christian means that we rest our entire case, our whole salvation, our whole eternal destiny, entirely upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 15 : 44 ] That is why a true Christian says, Lord, Lord. That is the content of the statement. It does not just mean saying the right words.

It indicates that we mean those things when we say them. It is not just saying the right words. It indicates that we mean those things when we say them.

Jesus shows us that not through right theology that is the way that we enter the kingdom of heaven. But secondly, he shows us that it is not through right works.

And I think this is the part of these three verses that are equally troubling or more troubling than those first words because Jesus says this in verse 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.

[ 16 : 56 ] And you see this clause in your name. In your name.

It comes up three times. And I think that is terrifying. That what Jesus is communicating is that there are actually people who are laboring in his name and don't know him.

That there are actually people who are serving him and don't know him. that if Jesus were telling this story in light of our day and age and in light of our culture in specific terms, that he wouldn't say did we not cast out demons in your name because we don't do that in the Presbyterian church.

If you're in a Presbyterian church that does that, run. So, but what he might say and the way that he might word this is that did we not preach the word of God faithfully in your name?

Did we not worship you faithfully in your name? Did we not serve your church in your name? Did we not give to the work of your church? Did we not give our tithes and offerings?

[ 18 : 32 ] Did we not baptize our children in your name? Did we not love our spouse in your name? Did we not do all those things because we loved you?

And that is troubling to see that Jesus would say, I don't know you. I don't know you. that even as a minister of the gospel that I have many times where I question what in the world am I doing?

That God, why in the world would I do RUF and have to raise support and labor for the good news and the kingdom on the campus of Alabama A&M;?

and I think it's a foolish way to live if I'm humanly speaking that if I would say to God was I not was I not doing all that for you and to think that on the last day Jesus will look at me and say I never knew you that that is terrifying that what God is asking all of us is that are you sure it is God you are serving?

[ 20 : 07 ] Are you sure that you are resting in Christ and not in all the stuff that you are doing for God? Are you sure that Jesus wants to show us over and over again that he alone saves?

I had a friend in seminary who went on to be a church planner who in the middle of our preaching class he became a Christian he was converted in the middle of our preaching class and for the kids who are here and think it's tough to sit through one sermon just imagine being in seminary and listening to five sermons in a row and that'll give you some perspective on just long suffering but this friend was you know if you had asked me if there was anybody who knew God and was faithful and was a Christian I would definitely have said before that moment that guy is definitely a Christian that guy definitely gets what it means to walk after God and here he was in the middle of this preaching class he's standing before us and he makes this confession hey I don't know if I'm really a Christian in the middle of seminary and today

I want to accept Jesus as Lord of my life I want to submit myself to him and his reasons for not coming to Christ earlier was that he had already been in youth ministry he had already been involved in the ministry of the church and he had heard the gospel preached at a youth conference and was deeply moved to confess his sin and turn to God and yet out of shame he didn't because who wants to be the youth minister who goes to a conference and gets converted and he shared that with us that he needed Jesus and he trusted Jesus and I think it is better that he stood before us that day some years ago and confessed Christ as Lord than for him to wait at the last day and have

Jesus say to him I never knew you depart from me you worker of lawlessness that what God wants you and me to do is to consider our hearts consider what it is we think makes us right with God and if it is anything other than Jesus himself then it will fail us at the last day and that's where Jesus takes us finally in these three verses that in verse 21 he says to us and not everyone who says to me Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven and that last clause where he says but the one who does the will of my father in heaven we've just seen that it's not a matter of just doing the right things before

God and so it must mean something else and in a passage that I think is strikingly similar to this passage is John 6 you can turn there if you want to but if not I'll read it for you but in John 6 Jesus is again teaching his disciples what it means to follow him what it means to trust him and the reality of it being a very hard thing the reality of it being that kingdom life is hard and in John 6 in verse verses 28 and 29 his disciples ask him this question what must we do to be doing the works of God what must we do to be doing the works of God and this is the way Jesus responds to them in verse 29 Jesus answered them this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent this is the work of God that you and I believe in him whom he has sent that God has set his seal upon his son

[ 25 : 05 ] Jesus that God's will for your life and my life is that we would believe and rest in the person and work of Jesus that you and I would know that the good news is really good that Jesus really paid for our sin that Jesus really makes us righteous that Jesus is enough for us and what that does whenever the Bible talks about belief it is not just these cognitive things or these rational things but it always is wedded with action that what we think about God influences what we do what we think about Jesus influences all of our living and because you and

I believe in Jesus then it should affect how we think about him that we should study God's word more that we might think rightly about God that our theology might be good and helpful and true of the way God declares and shows himself to be that our actions should be influenced by Christ and what he has done for us and that's a subtle difference but a significant one in this that you know that

