

## **“Genuine Faith” | Matthew 7:13-23**

This Lord’s Day we pause and think about the high calling of fatherhood. What a privilege, and what a responsibility it is to be a father, to care for your family and raise your children to know and love the Lord. Of course, many fathers have failed at this task, and some of you have been scarred by their failure. Know your Heavenly Father saw it all and He has never left your side.

Some have done an outstanding job of living Christ-like before their family so that their family had opportunity to know Jesus and learn to love him too. Today some of you are honouring a father like that. You are blessed people.

And some are remembering a father who is no longer with you. It may have been months or years since your father died but today in particular you feel the pain of loss. You would love to talk with him again, maybe ask him what he would do in the midst of this COVID pandemic. But you cannot. Know the God of all comfort is with you today as well.

And as we noted last week, we have a perfect Heavenly Father whose love can never be exhausted. Of course every day should be a day to honour – and worship – our Heavenly Father, but those who have no other example to look up to, look to God in heaven as your Father today.

Now being a father is exciting, overwhelming, rewarding, disappointing, exhausting and invigorating all at the same time. But it can also be humbling....

A little girl was sitting in her father's lap as he read her a goodnight story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. By and by she was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again.

Finally she spoke, "Daddy, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart" he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she said. Then, "Daddy, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed honey," he assured her. "God made you just a little while ago."

"Oh" she said. Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it now isn't he?"

In today’s passage we find a great challenge to fathers – and all believers. In a world that is filled with all kinds of false teachings, evil and wicked people, the children need someone who will look out for them, and not only tell them about the right path to live but will show them the way. Men, we need to take leadership in spiritual things as the priest of our home. Praise God for godly women, for they have been the backbone of the church for many, many years. But God is calling men to step up and lead by example, so the next generation will know what it means to be sold out for God.

Turn with me once again to Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 7 starting at verse 13 and reading to verse 23. (Matthew 7:13-23)

- Read Text -

Verses 13 and 14 remind us that there are only two roads to take in this life: the broad way that leads to destruction and the narrow road that leads to life. We can live for the pleasures of this world, live only to make ourselves happy, live for today with no thought about eternity; or we can live the way of submission to God, walking in relationship with Him and finding our way to our eternal home through faith in Jesus.

The broad way with its wide gate is the path we are all on naturally. From birth we are on this way, and it seems easiest to just follow the crowd...

Until we realize that this road does not lead us to God. Oh, true, there may be religious people on this broad path but they will also end up facing destruction or punishment. As Jesus will say in just a few verses, some will get to the judgement and will rehearse all the religious things they did: prophesy in God's name, drive out demons in God's name and even do miracles. Yet what does God say to them because they spent their lives on the wide path? "I never knew you. Away from me you evildoers."

As we noted last week, Jesus is the way, the door to the narrow path. That path is one cross wide, as we must come to Jesus believing he died for our sin and salvation can be found in no other name.

This Father's Day I rejoice that my earthly father chose to walk the narrow path that led to life. He came from Germany and knew little about God or faith or salvation. But God drew him and not long after coming to Canada he gave his life to Jesus, and found salvation through faith in him. God blessed him with a Christian wife, so when my sisters and I entered the family, we entered a Christian family. Yes, we too had to decide to enter that narrow road that leads to life, but we had the example of a godly mother and a godly father to lead us. This is what Jesus desires for every home.

So men, I leave you with the challenge Joshua left the men of his day:

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15

But Jesus goes on to warn us that there are those who will try and lead us astray, try to get us off of the narrow path. In verse 15-20 Jesus warns against false teachers, or false prophets who will try and lead you away from God, not towards him. The Greek word here for false prophet is "pseudo prophet": they look like a prophet but their teaching is false.

Sometimes these false prophets are teaching religious beliefs that are not from God. There have always been these kind of teachers. Jeremiah the prophet of the Old Testament had to confront false prophets who said destruction was not coming to Jerusalem and that Jeremiah should be thrown in prison. But Jeremiah heard the Lord say quite clearly, judgement was coming and Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Today you can find false teachers everywhere. From the men who now live among us and claim to be the Messiah, to the folk who come to your door and try and tell you Jesus is not God. YouTube has become the pulpit for all kinds of false teachings, and sadly you can find almost any doctrine or belief known to humanity there. With no accountability, people can make all kinds of rash statements, and sadly, they will get a following.

David Koresh was a young man from Houston, Texas who got involved in a group called the Branch Davidians. This offshoot of the Seventh Day Adventist Church believed the return of Christ was imminent and they lived austere lives that separated them from the sinful world as they waited for Jesus. David Koresh soon became leader of the small band of people in Waco, Texas, and though he memorized much of his King James Bible, he also taught strange ideas. He believed he was King David. He also said he was the Lamb of Revelation 5. He believed sexual pleasure was a sin, even in marriage, though this did not stop him from sleeping with the female members of his group – even minors. No matter how restrictive and bizarre his ideas became, people still followed this “pseudo prophet” – even to their death. Some do to this day...

Jesus said to look at the fruit of the teacher or prophet and see if there is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, or the fruit of this world. Are they going through the motions of loving God, or is it genuine? Hear again what Jesus says:

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.” (v. 17)

When Jesus is the Lord of our lives, when we have yielded control to him, we will bear good fruit. Love, patience, kindness, goodness will flow from our lives as His Spirit works within us. It is not about trying harder; it is who we are. But it starts with submission to Jesus, walking in obedience to His Spirit within us.

And the false prophet who tries to imitate the real thing will eventually be exposed. Selfishness, pride, jealousy, anger are just some of the fruits that the pseudo prophet will bear. Why? Because he has not been changed inside by Christ. He may put on an act to fit in with the religious crowd, but inside he is still living for himself.

Imagine that CIDA, Canada’s international policing agency, needed me to do some work in China for them. They needed me to blend in, so they taught me the Chinese language. Then they taught me the Chinese culture. They taught me to cook and eat Chinese food. I learned their mannerisms and customs. I am even given plastic surgery so I look Chinese. So now I look, talk and live like someone from China.

But let me ask you... am I Chinese? The answer has to be, “No.” To be Chinese I would need to have Chinese parents. All the externals in the world cannot change who I am on the inside.

But spiritually we can be made new. We are born citizens of this world, traveling the broad road to destruction. But Jesus says that those who put their trust in him, those who believe in him, can be born again. “Flesh gives birth to flesh,” Jesus said, “but the

spirit gives birth to spirit... Unless we are born by water and the Spirit we will not see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:6,5)

Then Jesus warns us that we must not be fooled by what looks like good fruit but is not. In verses 21-23 Jesus describes the sad situation that some will be very religious, but will still choose to be in charge of their own lives. They will prophesy in the name of the Lord, and work miracles but still not be in relationship with God. They are still running their own lives, not doing the will of the Heavenly Father.

Does it surprise you that people can be so religious looking, even doing miracles yet be far from God? Satan can imitate so much of what God does. False religions can tell you about healings. Almost every religious movement- from Muslims to Jehovah Witnesses – will give you stories of healings and miracles. So these are not what make a teaching true.

Instead, look at how their teaching measures up to the Word of God, and what God has revealed to us already. For instance, where should we stand with this Black Lives Matter campaign? What does Micah 6:8 tell us?

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good;  
And what does the LORD require of you  
But to do justly,  
To love mercy,  
And to walk humbly with your God?

Seems very clear. But some want to riot, to protest, to destroy property or simply ignore the whole thing. None of those answers measure up to God’s answer.

What a sad day when Jesus says to the self-deceived religious folk, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers.” Your miracles mean nothing if you do not truly make me Lord of your lives...

Can you see Jesus looking into the eyes of his disciples that day as he was teaching these truths. Most of these men were family men – they were fathers. We are told that Peter and the apostles had their wives with them as they ministered in 1 Corinthians 9:5. He no doubt wanted these men – these Fathers – to walk on the narrow path that leads to life, and guard against false teachers. This teaching was not just for them, but for their families. They were to teach the family to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” (Matthew 6:33)

This Father’s Day I challenge each man to lead your household in spiritual things. But you cannot do that if you do not first surrender yourself to Jesus. Mom’s, you also must be an example of a godly women, not by trying harder but by living in obedience to the Holy Spirit. Grandmas and grandpas, we need you to show us what a surrendered life looks like.

Sadly I have seen what it looks like when people go through the motions, attend church and sing the songs, read their Bibles and maybe even sit on the Church Board but inside there has been no real change. When the enemy – Satan – brings conflict or trials or confusion they respond very poorly. I pray they will not be the ones to whom Jesus says, “I never knew you.”

A poem by an unknown author reads:

I stood at the crossroads –  
The wide street and narrow.  
The wide street was lighted,  
The people were at play;  
The music and laughter  
Rose to a crescendo,  
As I looked at the throngs  
That were going that way.

I looked at the street that  
Was narrow and darkened,  
As few lowly souls  
Left the street that was broad.  
And then as I joined them,  
A light shone about me,  
And the hand that held mine,  
Was the hand of the Lord.

Dad, enter the narrow way. Protect your family from false prophets and teachers. Don't play at religion but be fully surrendered to our Lord. Mom, do the same. Children, please choose the way that leads to life and not destruction. Do so today...