

How are you? Let me share one of my fondest memories. In 2004, I won a competition that afforded me the opportunity to go to the Super Bowl. So I got to go to Super Bowl XXXVIII, which was great. It was down in Houston, but I didn't just get to drive down to Houston and head to the Super Bowl. It was much different than that. I drove to Addison Airport and got on a private jet owned by Jim Carrey and flew to Houston, which was different for me. That's not usually the way I roll. That more Chandler's style. I'm just your average dude. So as I'm flying on this jet, eating shrimp cocktail, looking down on my table, there's a little insignia there of "The Mask" to remind me that this indeed was Jim Carrey's plane. And then we landed in Houston where there was a limo waiting for us. I get in the limo, and the limo drives us from the airport to Reliant Stadium. We pull into the parking space, and I see that Jerry Rice is right there. And so I said, "Jerry, let's get a picture together." And so Jerry and I get our picture taken together because our limos are parked right next to each other. And then I walked into the stadium. When I got into the stadium, we had absolutely fantastic seats. We were right above the suites, so I could have leaned right over the rail and looked at all the famous people down in the suites. It was great. At halftime, it was 14-10, the Patriots over the Panthers. Now I don't really care about either one of those teams, but halftime was interesting. You might remember it. There were different acts that went on. Kid Rock played there. And then right at the end there was a dance routine between Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake. And I'm sure you remember how that ended. I remember taking my cell phone, calling my wife and going, "Did you just see..." And she was like, "Yeah, we saw it." And so we just sat there kind of dumbfounded, trying to work out this wardrobe malfunction that we had just been a part of. And then the teams take the field. They come back on, and it's Carolina kicking off to New England to start the second half. The referee comes up, stands right next to the ball and Casey their kicker is back here ready to kick off. Then the ref grabs the side of his pants and rips off all of his clothes. And he's standing there in a hat and shoes and that's just about it.

Now you guys didn't see that on TV because CBS cut away. You see, this wasn't a ref, this was a streaker who showed up to give us all a show. So this streaker stands there for about 30 seconds. He didn't just stand there, he dances. So he's standing there dancing, nearly naked, and he has written on his chest and back "GoldenPalace.com," which is a gambling website. So they're promoting their site and had paid this guy who apparently is an international streaker. I don't know how you get that gig and what you're résumé looks like to have that title, but if you read the story in *Sports Illustrated* he's going to say that this is what he does. He streaks internationally. So kudos to this guy. He dances there right at the 30-yard line for about half a minute, and then he just takes off running right down the middle of the field... until a linebacker absolutely lays him out. So he just delects him, because he does have on shoes, and then they hogtie him and literally carry him off the field. I'm just like, "This is amazing." It was unbelievable. That halftime show was more than I ever bargained for, I can assure you of that. They carry him off and the second half starts. It was incredible, it was the highest scoring 4th quarter in Super Bowl history. The Patriots win on a last second field goal...again. Tom Brady wins the MVP...again. The Patriots win the Super Bowl...again. It was just fantastic. And then the game ended, and what I think about when I think about the Super Bowl is that. I think about that moment. Now here's the interesting thing. How did he get on the field? This is 2004. Well, he looked like a ref. He has a referee outfit on. I guess he did what referees do. He goes out after halftime and just confidently walks out there. No one questioned him. No one said a thing. In fact, it took 30 seconds before anybody did anything because nobody knew what to do. It was unbelievable. And here's the deal. He wasn't a ref. That reality was exposed clearly...no pun intended. He wasn't a ref.

So think about this for a second, and let's shift this to our culture. If you and I know a language, know a dress code and know the cultural standards of what it means to live in a church community, I wonder how many of us might wrongly think that that's all it is and that we're good to go. Let me say it this way. What if we have been wrongly converted to a culture and missed biblical conversion to a person? So the angst that I have for my heart for me first, then my family, then this church and this community that we find ourselves in is this. It is far too easy to learn a lingo here, to know when to raise your hands, to know when to go "Amen," when to show up for group, what service projects to serve at and learn to walk in those things, which are good things. But what if those things cloud my ability to see that I have never really been converted to Christ. What if I've been converted to a culture and have missed Christ, not because I have a wicked heart or not because I'm trying to deceive people, but rather that I've been deceived or that I've been wrongly taught or that my assurance is in some empty words or some event that I think might have happened? What if I am walking under a false assurance that is based on a cultural conversion rather than a full assurance that's based on a biblical conviction?

So I want us to go to Matthew 7 and see what Jesus says about this. Let me give you the context of the verses we'll be in tonight. Matthew starts out his book in chapters 1-4, and he is introducing Jesus as Messiah. The Messiah is coming onto the stage. Matthew begins chapter 1 with the genealogy. He's saying that Jesus is indeed the right one, He is the Messiah that's been promised, He is of the line of David, He does fulfill the Davidic Covenant, He is the One who will sit on David's throne. And then comes the preaching of John the Baptist of "Prepare the way. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Repent, the kingdom is here. The kingdom is at hand." This is the message of John the Baptist. Jesus I taken away in to the wilderness for 40 days where He is tempted and tried by the Devil, all preparing for Jesus' onset of public ministry. Jesus then arrives in Galilee, and upon His arrival, He announces the kingdom is here. He calls His disciples, and then chapter 5 begins. And the beginning of chapter 5 to the end of chapter 7 is the sermon on the mount. This is Jesus' sermon. This is Jesus' words. This is what He preached to the crowds, His disciples, the multitudes, all that had gathered. So He goes upon a mountain and looks out and sits down and it says that He opens His mouth and begins to teach. He starts with the beatitudes, and He goes through this sermon. And we will pick it up right in the end in verses 13-27 of Matthew 7. It's the end of His sermon, and at the end of His sermon, Jesus is saying, "Commit." He's asking this question, "What will you do with Me?" It's a call for discernment, and it's a call to commitment. It's the end of His message, so He boils it down and says this, "There are two ways. There's a wide path and there's a narrow path." And here's the question that He's asking, "Will you enter the gate to life in the kingdom of heaven and embark on a life of following Me, or will you reject Me for the popular road that leads to destruction? There are two paths: wide and narrow." And then He talks about where there are two trees. One tree that is a good tree that bears good fruit and a bad tree that bears bad fruit. The question "What will you do with Me?" He asks like this. "Will you find in Me the inner source for transformation that will produce the good fruit of life, or will you follow the prophetic voices of this world that hype a promise of life but will only take you into the fires of hell?" In verses 21-23, Jesus talks about two claims. So He's moved from "there are two ways" to "there are two trees" and now it's "there are two claims." And here's the question that He's asking, "Will you obey My Father's will and come to Me as your only Lord, or will you chase after false manifestations of spirituality that results in eternal banishment?" And Jesus ends the sermon on the mount by describing two builders. One builds his life on the sand and one who builds his life on a rock. And the question that He asks as He closes His sermon is, "Will you build your life on Me as your solid rock, or will the pleasant ease of your life cause you to be unprepared for the storms that will come and will ultimately wash you away into the desolation of the afterlife?" This call to commitment is actually a haunting set of warnings as He puts two diametrically opposed ways together.

We're going to camp out in verse 23, but let me say this. He's not asking us to make Him the most important part of our lives. He's not saying, "I sure want to be the biggest piece of the pie." Jesus is saying, "I am life. I'm not a part of life. I'm not 95% of life. I am life. Outside of me there is not life." And then He's also saying, "I hold life. I am the authority over life." He is life and He holds life, these are realities He's putting before the masses, He's putting before the disciples, He's putting before you and me.

The challenge in my life, as I am inundated in a culture just like you, is the question: Is Jesus life? Or have I tried to make Him the biggest piece of the pie? You see, culturally Jesus can be the biggest piece of the pie, but then there is work, family, social life, all these other things that ultimately will compete for affection and attention. Or there's a grid by which I understand everything, that Jesus is everything, therefore inundates, infects, changes and speaks to every single aspect of my life, my marriage, my kids, my money, my time, my worship, my priorities, everything. And let me say this before we jump into verse 21-23. My hope in sharing this is that you and I would do an honest examination of our our soul. Jesus is crying out here with a warning to all who would hear. So my hope is that all of us would heed the warning, every one of us. Know that my hope and my heart this morning is not to bother you, but if this text bothers you, then let it bother you, let the weight of this text sit heavy on you. Know that my hope today is not to try to cast a spell of fear over all of us so that paralysis sets in and we don't know how to live or operate, but if the Spirit is putting a good and godly fear in your heart, then let the Spirit put it on your heart. I can remember a night in college when this text haunted me, absolutely haunted me. So know that I am not trying to do anything other than be a voice of what the Scriptures are declaring.

He says in verses 21-23, "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, 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.'" So Jesus is saying here that on that day, there will be those who are surprised to find out that they are not His. That's what this text is saying. He starts off by saying, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven,..." So here's the first point. Words are insufficient to save, even the right words. That's what's kind of frightening about this text. These are the right words, "Lord, Lord." These are the same words that Peter is going to use in his confession in Matthew 16 that Jesus receives. But Jesus is saying here that words alone are empty and insufficient to save, but His understanding of a confession is that it comes from a wellspring of faith in the heart. So if there is not a heart behind a confession, a full on desperate cry and plea behind that that produces a change moving forward, then that confession is empty.

Now think about this. Last week, my daughter turned three. This week she said this to my wife. I was in the kitchen and overheard her. "Mom, I have a dirty heart, don't I?" Her mom said, "Yes, you do." And she says, "Mom, you do too." Mom says, "Yes, I do." And so my wife, trying to teach her total depravity apparently, throws me under the bus by saying, "Does daddy?" "Yeah, daddy does too." And we kind of walked through how everyone has a dirty heart, and we're trying to teach her that Jesus makes our dirty hearts clean. We're trying to figure out how to communicate to a three year old. And she says, "Well, Jesus makes my dirty heart clean. Can I ask Him to do that right now? Jesus, will You make my dirty heart clean?" Now at some level those are right words. Then later on, she chokes her little brother. So there is some type of disconnect here between my daughter's confession and what is being produced in her life. Now here's the deal. Do you know what that moment was for my wife and me? That was a sweet, tender moment. I mean, that's a moment to write about and hope about, and that moment drives me to hope and pray that those words one day would not just be regurgitation but would come from a heart that recognizes that indeed she does need a Savior. I have no reason to think that that's what's going on right now. It's a sweet moment. I praise God for that moment, and it drives me to beg Him for a time where that becomes reality to her.

I came to faith at 19. When I was in 2nd grade, my mom put me in VBS. This is a few years before my hellion years began. And do you know what I did when I was there? All I did was do what they told me to do. So I memorized the verses. Why did I memorize the verses? Because if the guys memorized more verses than the girls, then on Friday, we had the opportunity to have the giant sundae and the girls did not. So it was a competition. So I did my part. I did what I could do to help us win. I showed up on time, I memorized these verses. Do you know what I got at the end of the week? I got a trophy. It's a cross and it says, "Most Christ-like Bible Boy." From 2nd grade on I went to military school to rehabs. My life

was an absolute train wreck. There was zero indication that I had any relationship whatsoever with the Savior. It wasn't until I was 19, broken down in Tom Bailey's living room, after getting out of the hospital from having my jaw shattered because I was beaten up in a field after being put in a drunken stupor, that I came to a place realizing, "Huh, my life is kind of absolutely lame." And Tom says to me, "You don't know Christ." And I thought, "Well, what about the time the God Squad approached me after a football game and they came up to me and said, 'Do you know Jesus?' and I said, 'Yeah, I know Jesus.' And they said, 'Good!'" And so I had this false assurance from a 2nd grade trophy to these times where I have been in this drunken stupor where I would cry out, "God, do something." Those confessions were empty. Was God using them? Was that all a part of His plan for salvation for my life? Absolutely I was not a believer when I was 14, when I was 8. I did not come to faith until I was 19. And I can see a change in my life from 19 moving forward. Perfection? No. But there's an absolute difference in affections for Him, a hatred for sin, a willingness to repent, a desire for change and begging Him to work these things out in me. But what if I just kind of meandered through life thinking that indeed I was the most Christ-like Bible boy? My wife came to faith on a confession when she was 6 years old, and the Lord changed her heart. Words alone are insufficient to save, that's what Jesus is saying. If there is no change or trajectory in your life that is leading you to be more and more Christ-like, then you need to go back to the confession that you are banking your life on. If all of this is to simply avoid hell as you and I think about it, if there is nothing in your heart that stirs you towards Him, then you need to go back to the confession you're relying on. Because biblical conversion is not about avoiding hell; biblical conversion is being in a relationship with the person of Christ. If that's not true in your life, then go back to the confession you're leaning on. Because Jesus is saying, "Many will say 'Lord, Lord,' but they won't enter the kingdom of heaven. So words are insufficient to save.

And then in verse 22, it says, "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?'" Now hear almost the surprise in their voice there. And He says this, "I never knew you." So words are insufficient to save, and spiritual and religious activity is inadequate evidence. These people are banking on what they are doing for the kingdom, but Jesus is saying, "You have never met Me. You do not know Me. You are busy about works, you are busy about doing things, you are busy about helping out at Transform or you're busy about greeting or holding babies." All of these things are good. The interesting thing about this list is it's the same thing He sent out His disciples to do. He sends His disciples out to do ministry, to prophesy, cast out demons and do mighty works. But do you know who was among His disciples? Judas. He did those things. So the warning, the plea, the clarion call that is going out to us all is this: works, religious activity, what you do is inadequate as evidence. Jesus is saying, "Don't be surprised. Your words are insufficient to save. Your works are inadequate."

So the question that is begging to be answered then is: How do I know? What do I do? What is my next step from here? And Jesus answers it. He says in verse 21, "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." The one who does the will of the Father in heaven, that is the one who will get entrance into the kingdom of heaven. What does that mean? Because the first time I read that, I think, "Do I have to do the works of the will of the Father? Is this works based? Do we shift from grace based? Is this not saved by grace through faith? Have we moved away from the confession?" No, we haven't moved at all from the confession. Because this entire sermon is written to show how those who are rightly related with God will act. So what Jesus is saying here is that a true confession, a true repentant heart, a heart that has been truly converted to His person will then be a heart that's inclined towards obedience. So what's the will of the Father?

At the beginning of this sermon, Jesus gives a summary and He outlines at the beginning how those who believe should behave. So turn to Matthew 5. The beatitudes start in verse 3. Now again, the beatitudes serve as a summary, outlining the rest of the sermon. Jesus is going to take these eight beatitudes and unpack them for the rest of the sermon on the mount. So if you and I want to know what the will of the Father is as Jesus said in Matthew 7, to rip that out of the context of the sermon on the mount is to do injustice to the text. So the sermon on the mount begins by saying those who are

rightly related to God, a true conversion will produce a life that looks like this. Belief always precedes a true conversion. It always precedes these things. You cannot do these things apart from a true conversion, but you can look at these things and see that one has truly been converted. So let's see what Jesus says. He starts off all these beatitudes with the word "blessed." And this word here is not just "happy." It goes beyond that. It's kind of a divine source of joy, that this blessing, this favor, this fortune in life comes because of who He is in me. But it's also not just my position of blessing. It's also the Father, it's the Son who is conferring blessing on those. This word "blessing" also carries with it a weight of approval. So the Father is saying, "My blessing rests on, My approval rests on these." So He's saying, "My disciples, those who are learners, those who sit in a posture of humility before Me to learn and sit at My feet and grow under My teaching, My disciples will look like this." So let's look, starting in verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." So the question that you and I need to apply to our hearts as we examine our lives is this. Have I simply converted to a culture, or am I a true, genuine disciple of Christ? So Jesus is going to ask that question by saying this, "Do these things show up in you? Are these things growing progressively in you? Is your life marked by these things more and more and more? My disciples are marked by these things? Are you?"

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." The question is this. Do I live in a posture of humility before both God and man, recognizing the bankruptcy of my soul? Therefore I live differently before Him, and because I live differently before Him, I've learned to live differently before others, as one who is bankrupt. Any richness in my soul has been endowed to me by Him through Him. So because of the gospel of Christ, His death and His resurrection, I live differently, I have a posture of humility before both God and man. "Blessed are those who mourn." The question is this. Am I broken over sin? Does sin disrupt my spirit? Is there a hatred of sin in me? Do I despise the sin that I see in me? Do I despise the sin that I see in my spouse or in my neighbors? Not that I would walk over and pound them on the head for it, but I would be broken knowing that my God is a holy and righteous God and that sin ultimately led His Son to be slaughtered on the cross? Does that affect my heart? Do I think of sin that way, or have I grown so comfortable in it? It says the disciple is marked by a mourning over sin. Does sin bother me, not because it inconveniences me but because it absolutely defames the name of the God whom I love and whom I serve and who saved me? Does sin bother me? Am I broken over it? "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Has your appetite for authority and power been broken? Has the lust in your heart, in my heart to have authority and power that I might use it for my means, for my gain, as I lord it over my spouse, my children, my coworkers, my employees? We've seen how people have taken power and lorded it over communities and governments and nations, but Jesus is saying that in His disciples that lust for power has been broken and now power has been used to channel means for the kingdom. It's different. The idea here for meekness is this idea that a horse has finally been broken and it's been bridled and it can be ridden. So the picture here is that the power is not necessarily gone, it is now under control, it has been bridled, it is meekness. He says, "My disciples, those who follow Me will be marked by this." And then He says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." The question is this. Do you and I yearn for the rule and the reign of Christ? Do we long for a day when His righteousness will be unveiled in all of its glory? Do I long for a day when He comes back and makes every crooked path straight? Do I long for Him being here? Or am I just so utterly complacent and comfortable. Is my longing for a bigger home, a safer neighborhood, a bigger bankroll or do I hunger and thirst for righteousness? He's saying to the disciples that this will be a progressive mark in their lives. The more I walk with Him, the more I long for Him to be here, to make things right. We just sang about it, "That glorious day." The trumpet will sound and He is coming back.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Am I a person who extends grace? The crazy thing about grace is it is given to those who do not deserve it; they have not merited it. Grace is not afforded to those who come and wallow and say, "Gee, I'm sorry." Grace is extended before. Am I one who extends grace and mercy, recognizing that grace has been afforded to me through the cross of Christ, by the will of the Father. Has this become a reality in my life? Am I gracious to my spouse? Am I gracious to my children? Am I gracious to my neighbors and coworkers? Am I gracious in my car? Am I gracious in the parking lot? Or are my feathers so easily ruffled? Am I so entitled to my space, my world, the way things go my way, and is life about me? Or am I one who extends grace and mercy in the name of Christ because it has been extended to me. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Do I strive towards holiness? Do I strive for purity in my life, in my mind, in my heart, in my speech, in my affections? Because in Romans 12, Paul is going to say that the very will of God in my life is that I would be conformed into the image of His Son. And being conformed into the image of His Son means that I will look more and more like Christ, which means I strive for grace, for purity and holiness in my life. So is this marked in me? "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Do I make peace? Do I spread peace? Do I speak peace? Paul says that I have been given the ministry of reconciliation, which means that where there are two parties that are hostile towards one another, I have been commissioned as a peacemaker there to end hostility, ultimately telling them about the gospel, that they can have a relationship with the Father through the cross of Christ. That ministry has been entrusted to all who believe, the ministry of reconciliation. Being the ultimate peacemaker for the ultimate relationship, is that found anywhere in my life? And then from that element of peacemaking, am I a peacemaker in my home? Am I a peacemaker in my workplace? And then, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad." The question for the disciple is this. Do I suffer well? Do I suffer well with an understanding that my suffering is all under the gracious, merciful hand of a sovereign God who has rule and reign over every area of my life. Although it hurts and it's painful, I can still say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Does that mark my life? Because the reality is if I've just been converted to a culture, then I am much more interested in social networks and common shared ideological values of family, safety and even generosity, then I like the system of morality that we're all moving forward towards and I want these values to be instilled in my kids. That's a cultural conversion. But being converted to the person of Christ looks like all of these things. It's altogether different. It's not that I don't have community and I don't care about morality. I do, but it's way more than that. The only way that this is ever relevant or prevalent in my life is because I've been endowed with the Spirit of Christ, that's it.

So in closing, let me read this to you. 1 John 2:1-6 says this, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins..." The word "propitiation" just means "wrath bearer." Jesus is the One who bears the wrath of God towards sin. As the Father is angry towards sin, He doesn't just look it over; He punishes sin. He does it in His Son. That's what it means by saying Jesus is the propitiation for sin. "...and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." It's consistent with what Jesus says in the sermon on the mount. What John adds here is the element of the gospel. The gospel is this: Christ died for our sins and rose on the third day. By Christ dying for sins, He has bore the wrath of the Father, He has been a shield, taking the punishment that was due to me for my sin as He hung on the cross. He dies on the cross for sin, and then He rises three days later. In His resurrection, it validates His person, that He is indeed the Messiah, the One who comes to take away the sins of the world. He is able to do that because He has risen, it happened, it's done. And moving forward, that same Spirit of Christ that raised Christ from the dead has now

been entrusted and empowered in believers. We have this seal, we have this deposit in us, this Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that raised Christ now empowers me to live for Christ. So upon my confession of His person and work, "Christ, You are the Savior. You are the One who saves from sins. You are the Lord. I desperately need you," upon the genuine confession, the Spirit is indwelling that believer to then move and live according to the obedience and will of the Father. If there is no movement forward, then go back to the confession. And that's what Jesus leaves is with, with great hope and assurance. For those who believe are His. But they're not to be deceived by a false assurance and be surprised on that day to find out that we never were saved.

So let the weight of that sit in on you as it is sitting in on me. And beg Him for mercy. "Father, we come to You, and I know this is a weighty topic, I know it's a weighty text and I pray for mercy. I pray, Lord, that You would give us the courage to look honestly at a confession. I know, Lord, that I have had so many empty confessions leading up to a confession that was genuine. So Lord, I pray that we would not be a room full of cultural converts but rather we would be rightly converted to the person and work of Christ. It's in Christ's name that we pray. Amen."

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