



Citizens & Strangers (Part 10) – Two Ways

Jamin Roller – May 6, 2018

[Video]

Female: The kingdom of God is as multifaceted and mysterious as our Creator, a kingdom we only see now through a glass darkly. Though we can't picture it fully, God's kingdom is the story told in Scripture, from the garden to the city, and in the middle of the story God chose to reveal his kingdom in a new way.

The gospel is not only Jesus coming and dying to save us from our sins; it's also the story of God establishing his dwelling, dominion, and dynasty in the world. We live as both citizens and strangers, prisoners of hope in this shadow kingdom, all while knowing it's not our true home, that something better is coming, that God's perfect kingdom *is* coming.

[End of video]

Good morning. If you would, turn your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 7. We're going to start in verse 13. As you're turning there, I want to introduce myself. My name is Jamin Roller. I'm one of the pastors at our campus in Plano. It's a joy to be with you guys. Just to let you know where we're going, we are ending the Sermon on the Mount this morning. If you've been here for the past several weeks, we've been somewhere in Matthew 5, 6, or 7 looking at one of the most well-known, if not *the* most well-known sermon Jesus preached.

What I want us to see today is that he ends that well-known sermon with some of the most well-known stories in all of the Bible, some of the most well-known illustrations in all of the Bible. What he's doing is he's using those illustrations as these future scenes for the purpose of drawing us in closer to all he has just said. I want to read verses 13-27, and I'll highlight what those three scenes are as we read, and then we will get going. In verse 13 you have scene one:

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Here's scene two in verse 15:

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. 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.'" Our last scene is in verse 24:

"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 that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Last time I got to be here with you guys, at least the last time I was here in Flower Mound, I got to share by way of illustration that my wife and I were expecting a little girl, our third child. That entered us into this season of waiting. Just to show you how time flies, that little girl was born last Sunday, a week ago, at 12:35 in the morning.

There's a lot I forgot about the whole newborn thing. I haven't done the newborn thing in about five years. There's a lot I just forgot about it, and there are a lot of things that have happened that have been really unexpected. I did not expect that all of a sudden my two older kids got that much older.

In a day, my little 4-year-old baby girl is not a baby anymore, and it felt like that happened in a day. She just got huge all of a sudden. My 7-year-old son looks so much older I made him get a job, and he's driving Uber right now. I didn't expect that.

What I had forgotten is in this season, as "Dad" my role in all this is really simple. It's not easy, but it's really simple. It's running errands and changing diapers, and a lot of it is just holding her to let mom rest or whatever. Just holding her. Holding her in the morning and holding her in the middle of the day and a lot of holding her in the middle of the night. (All you guys look really rested, by the way. I'm happy for you about that.)

In that time with her, I will just dream about her life. I'll just think about her life. Because of the way my mind works, a lot of that dreaming and thinking takes me to these future scenes in her life, these milestone moments that are coming for her, where she takes her first steps. I'll go to that scene in my mind, and there's celebration and stumbling and all that. Or maybe when she goes to school for the first time or goes off to college. I think about, "Who is she going to be then, and will she be ready? What will her life look like?"

I'll go to the scene of maybe her wedding day. Right before she walks down the aisle, she looks at me and says, "Dad, I've made a huge mistake, and I want to live at home forever." Now you guys know how to pray for her. I think about maybe one day when she becomes a mom, and all that will look like. Here's what happens. As I'm thinking about her future, what happens for me in the present is that I draw in closer to her.

All of that puts on a weight for me. I know God holds her life and he knows what I don't know, but the best that I *do* know I'm to be a dad to her, and I have a responsibility in all of that. So the effect all of that future thinking or going to those future places in my mind... In the present, it draws me in closer to my responsibility as her dad, closer into my relationship as her dad. So the future scenes in this moment help clarify for me how I'm to respond to her in the present.

That's how Jesus ends his sermon. He has made these two huge points about kingdom living throughout the sermon. He has said it is two things. Life in the kingdom is, first, *only Jesus* and, secondly, it's *all of you*. He has been beating that drum throughout. It's only Jesus and it's all of you. It's only Jesus and all of you. Then here he's landing the plane, and what does he say? He says there are two paths. One is broad and one is narrow. The narrow one leads to life.

There's this scene where not everyone who thinks they're with Jesus is really with Jesus, and then there are these two houses, and only one of them stands. He's taking us to these stories so we would respond rightly to all he has just said. It's intended by Jesus to take us to this place so we would move in closer to him, closer to what he has taught. Let me show you what I mean. We'll look first at *only Jesus* that we see in scene one. I'll read verses 13-14 again for us.

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." One of the words that would describe Jesus' sermon and Jesus *in* his sermon is that he's polarizing. What I mean by that is he teaches in such a way, he lays out this life of ethics in such a way you can't live that life without him. It's impossible.

But also you can't follow him without following that teaching. He draws this line in the sand. Nobody is walking away from the sermon saying, "It was pretty good content, but I wish he would have told more jokes." The takeaway is he's either right and I'm leaving everything behind to follow him or he's crazy or he's blasphemous or he deserves to die. Jesus teaches in a way that draws us into him, *only* him.

There's a question around this sermon. I have it every time I read through it, and maybe you've had it as we've talked about it the last several weeks. The question is: Does Jesus teach in this way, does he talk not only about not committing adultery but not committing adultery in your heart, about not only praying but praying from a right motivation, laying out that kind of life so we would say, "Oh my gosh! I fall short of that" and come to him for salvation or does he lay out a life and expect us to respond by saying, "Man, I should live that life"?

Am I supposed to walk away from the sermon and say, "I need a Savior in a bad way" or am I supposed to say, "I should pursue the ethics and righteousness and picture of human life he just laid out"? What's the answer? *Yes*. It's both. In some ways, though, that wrestle misses the point of the sermon. What I mean by that is what Jesus is doing is he is laying out a picture of how God always intended the human life to be lived. But not just that. He's laying out a picture of the *only* way God intended the human life to be lived.

Our question at the end of the sermon is not primarily, "Do I think I *can* live that life?" or "Do I think I'm *able* to live that life?" but the question is, "Do I believe any other life is not truly living?" Because that's what Jesus is saying. "It's me, and it's *only* me." If we believe him in that, then we're leaving

everything behind to follow him. He makes this most explicit in this scene of these two paths. How many are there? There are two of them.

One of them is broad, and do you know who's on it? Irreligious people, people who don't go to church and people who define their lives based on their own will and their own sense of morality and people who are wicked. Do you know who else is on it? Religious people, people who are self-righteous and all of the people he just got done describing in the sermon, scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites.

So it's not that the broad path is for all of those who are bad and then the narrow path is for good people, as if that's a thing. What Jesus says is, "Anyone who's not with me is on the broad path." Then he stands on the narrow and preaches to the broad and says, "There's a narrow gate, and that's Jesus and a hard way, and it is the only one...not *a* one, the *only* one...that leads to life."

Maybe you hear that and say, "Okay, the only way that goes to life is the one that goes through Jesus. All right. So he's the only way to salvation." I know that. You know that. I know you know that. But it's so much more polarizing than that. Hear me. If we're listening to this story and he says there's a narrow and a broad and we have in the back of our minds all of the sermon he just taught... What has he just said? What points has he just made?

He has gone to success, to being blessed, and he said the blessed life is the one that's poor in spirit and meek. So if my definition of being blessed, of success is different than persecution and mourning, then I'm missing it. He talks about purpose in life, and he says your purpose is to be salt and light. So if my purpose for my life, the thing that wakes me up in the morning, the thing that drives me throughout the day is different than putting the character of God on display for the watching world, then I'm missing it.

He talks about faith. He talks about how to respond to our fear. He talks about what to do with our money. He talks about where our treasure is. He tells us about how we are to treat everyone, all other people, the way we would want to be treated. He is running the gamut of all of human existence, and he is saying, "I and I alone get to define not just what life *should* look like but the only way to be alive, the only way to be living."

He knows that at some point in his sermon he spoke to something we all bristled at. Maybe it was different points for different people, but he spoke to something that made us uncomfortable. He

knocked on a door we are just not looking to open. "Jesus, I'm with you, and the things you've said are really good and really interesting, but when you talked about being a peacemaker, that's not part of it for me. That's not who I am. That's not what I believe.

When you started talking about anger, when you started talking about divorce, when you started knocking on those doors I'm not looking for you to open, when you went after where my treasure is and started asking for forgiveness where I don't want to offer it and started demanding generosity where I don't want to let go of it..."

There's a moment we all have...we can't help it...where it's like, "Oh no" or "I don't know" or "No, I don't agree." That bristling point for all of us is the very moment Jesus stands over and says, "It's me, and it's *only* me. There's a broad path and a narrow one, and the narrow one where I'm the gate and the life I just taught is the path is the only one that leads to life."

I'm not talking about trying to live this sermon out perfectly to earn or prove God's love. That's not what I'm talking about. Jesus preached this sermon, and in the very sermon he taught us to pray, and in that very prayer he taught us to pray, "Father, forgive us of our sins." A daily prayer. "God, forgive us of our sins." Why? Because he knows we'll fall short.

Perfection is not the standard. He knows we're not going to be able to do this, but, again, in some ways it misses the point, because to come to Jesus for salvation is also to come to him for his rule in and over your life, and what he has just said is there's only one way to do that, and that's surrendering to the life he just taught and following him.

We live in a world where there are several ways to do everything right. I've been reminded in the last couple of weeks of all of the right ways to sleep train a baby. How many right ways are there to eat healthy? Maybe it's Whole30 or Paleo or Keto or Weight Watchers or intermittent fasting or maybe, for some of us, it's high-fructose corn syrup and a lot of prayer. Anybody? We won't be here long.

All kinds of thoughts on social issues and political issues, all kinds of ways to believe in God or to believe in *a* god or to *be* your own god. We live in a culture where the standard is having a well-informed opinion and believing it with all you have until you change your mind. What Jesus has said is, "In a world that applauds multiple paths and well-informed opinions, when it comes to me there is no middle road."

He's warning us to not view his sermon as some sort of buffet of morals and values and we get to walk down the line and pick the ones that are easy for us or the ones that line up with our worldview and our goals for our lives and our purposes. That's not the invitation. He says there's a broad road and a narrow road, and the narrow road is for all of those who empty their hands of all other allegiances and hold on to him, *only* him, for life.

About six years ago, I went to see a biblical counselor because I wasn't in a great place and there was a lot I needed to process. Our very first meeting, we sat down, and I just opened my mouth and laid it all out. "Here's where I'm struggling, but really, here's what I want you to hear. Here's where I'm disappointed, and here's where I feel like God hasn't held up his end of the bargain. I'm just frustrated and feel unseen and overlooked." I just laid it all out for him.

I expected him to respond with empathy or with some sort of nugget of Christian wisdom I had never heard before that would make it all go away. Here's what he said. He said, "You know what? It sounds like you don't know what surrender is." I thought, "Am I paying you to talk to me like that?" That sums up why I was in counseling at the time. He said, "You don't know what surrender is," and he pulled out a blank piece of paper and had me hold it in my hand.

Then he said, "What you're looking for is an agreement with God where you write out all of the things you're going to do for God, and then you sign it, and then God writes out all of the things he's going to do for you, and then he signs it." He said, "God is not asking for an agreement. He demands surrender. Here's what surrender is." He pointed out that blank piece of paper in my hand and said, "Surrender is when you leave it all blank and sign the bottom and offer it back to God and say, 'Fill it in however you want. I trust you. You know best, and I will do whatever you ask of me.'"

At the end of his sermon, Jesus lays out two paths to make that very point. "You can struggle. You can grow. I'm not asking for perfection, but I also do not want you to mistake me for one road among many. There's *that* path that leads to death. There's *this* one that leads to life. I'm the gate. Surrender and follow me." Then he goes to verse 15 and takes us to scene two to drive home that not only is it *only Jesus* but it's *all of you*.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad

fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

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.'"

Throughout what Jesus has done is he has taught in a way that brings us to him and *only* him, but surely one of the things we've all seen is that he has required and demanded all of us, teaching that goes beyond behavior and beyond circumstances and captures all of the heart. The way Matt put it last week is that God is after wholeheartedness. That's Jesus loving us well.

About 10 years ago, my wife and I got married. We got married on a Saturday, and on the following Monday we were on a plane headed to Jamaica for our honeymoon. We were going to stay at a couples resort for just a few days. In the middle of the flight I look over at my brand new bride, and she is as white as a sheet and visibly ill. In the back of my mind I thought, "Is she having second thoughts about this whole marriage thing?" So I asked her, "Are you okay?" She said, "No, but I don't know what's wrong."

So we land and go to the doctor on the resort, and he wasn't very helpful. He gave her some Dramamine and then sent her to bed. She spent much of our honeymoon sick in bed. I was with her, and she was really sweet. I'd say, "Babe, are you okay? What can I get you?" and she was like, "Honey, just go. Just go have fun. We spent all this money. Go out and hang out on the beach." I'm like, "No, honey. For better or worse, in sickness and in health." She said, "No, really, go." I said, "Okay."

So I went and did all of these excursions and hung out on the beach by myself at a couples resort. It wasn't awkward at all. I was like, "Don't worry; I'm a pastor," and that made it worse. We flew back to Dallas and went to our primary care physician, and he listened to all of the symptoms and said, "You just have really bad allergies. Take this medicine and do these breathing exercises." We're like, "Okay." So we did that.

We did that for three years, and she didn't get better. In fact, some of her symptoms got worse. Three years in she started having numbness in her limbs. She would get so dizzy and disoriented she couldn't walk without holding onto a wall or without help. So we went to a different doctor three years in, and he immediately sent her to have an MRI.

After the MRI, he called us into his office and said, "It's not an allergy problem. You have a condition called a *Chiari malformation*. It means your brain does not have enough room in your skull, so the tonsils of your brain are growing out of your skull down into your spine. Any amount of pressure causes serious problems, so when the weather changes or if you were to ever go up into an airplane you would have serious problems."

So she had what's called a *decompression surgery* on her head, and it fixed the problem. When I think back on that whole season of life, a lot of things stand out to me. One of the things that stands out is the fact that we went and saw two different doctors, and two different doctors looked at the same symptoms and pointed at two different problems.

The first doctor pointed to a problem that was a lot easier to hear about. "You have allergies." Surface level. Breathing exercises and taking a pill. Then the other doctor pointed to something that was so much more severe, and the road was so much more difficult. His words were harder to hear, but which doctor pointed us toward healing? The one that was right, even if his words were harder to hear.

Maybe as Jesus has been teaching in this sermon or maybe as you've heard him talk about life there's something about it that's offensive. He points to the problem, and the problem is in the heart, and that's what's coming out in our lives in all kinds of ways that are sideways. As much as we want to blame circumstances or something around us, Jesus is the good doctor loving us well by saying, "The primary problem is the problem of your heart. That's where it's coming from."

What he does is he aims deeper. He wants the change to not just be external but to go all the way to the heart. That's why he says, "It's not enough to not murder with your hands; don't murder in your heart. It's not enough to just love your friends. Everybody does that. Love your enemies. It is not enough to just fast and just pray and just give. What I want to know is why you are doing all of those things."

If the problem is deeper than behavior and deeper than our circumstances, the change aims deeper. It aims to the heart and has as its goal a life where all we do flows out of a heart that mirrors the very character of God. What does that look like? How will I know if that change is happening? That's why he takes us to this second scene to make *this* point. Please hear me. That change will be more than words and more than our gifts and will be most clearly seen in simple, ordinary obedience to the teaching of Jesus that comes from a love *for* Jesus.

How does he make that point? He says there are these guys, and they're false prophets. We don't know a whole lot about them, but if they were prophets what it meant was they were really good with their words and knew how to talk about God and knew how to speak rightly about God and to try to represent God to the people.

What Jesus has against them is not "Your words are wrong." Jesus doesn't say, "What's wrong with you is you need better theology." He doesn't say, "What's wrong with you is your words don't accurately represent me." What he says is, "Your words, what you say, is incongruent with who you are." The tree that is rooted... You know what kind of tree it is by what grows on it.

A changed heart is not going to primarily be measured by what we say about God in front of other people. A changed heart is not primarily measured by a profession but by persistent...not perfect, but persistent...ordinary obedience to Jesus. What that means for us is that what we say about God is not the greatest indicator about where we are in all this. How we talk about God, especially when others are around, is not the greatest indicator of where we are in following Jesus.

Hear that warning, because we live in a Christian subculture that places a really high value on speech and words and those who are gifted at talking in a gifted way about God. Because of that, there is a danger that we learn the words of the Christian life and view our Christian life by how well we regurgitate words that are connected to other people's experience with God but that might point to places we've never been.

It would be like if I said, "I just love Hawaii. It's beautiful over there, and it's so majestic. When you're over there, the sun feels different than when you're anywhere else. Every morning you wake up, there's a different part of the island to marvel at." You're like, "Man, you really love it. When did you go?" "I've never been. I'd love to go. All of those are things I've heard other people say who have been."

There's a real danger that we measure our relationship with God by how well we talk about God to others or by how well we ride the coattails of others who have relationships with God that we admire. We hold on or grab on to their tweetable phrases or their sound bites or their experiences. In and of itself, none of that is wrong, but what Jesus is asking is "Has any of that made its way into your life? Has any of that made its way as fruit, as faithful, simple, ordinary obedience in your life?"

If those words are connected to a public projection of relationship with God that's inconsistent with the private reality of relationship with God, maybe you've missed it. He doesn't stop there. He says it's not only more than your words but it's also more than your gifts. These guys walk in, and Jesus is the judge. Jesus places himself at the end of his sermon as the one who judges who's in the kingdom and who's out of the kingdom, how "only Jesus" is that of Jesus to do.

These guys walk in, and their résumé is so impressive. They have these words. "Lord, Lord." They multiply their words before Jesus. "We did it all in your name, Jesus. We have these extraordinary spiritual gifts. We cast out demons in your name. We're prophets. We're miracle workers." Then Jesus turns it all on its head. Two charges against them. "I never knew you. You didn't do the will of my Father."

What's Jesus doing? How unexpected is that? It's as if Jesus is saying it's possible to have the gifts of the Spirit but not have the fruit of the Spirit, and what matters most is the fruit. Paul says it like this: "If I can speak in tongues of angels, if I have all kinds of prophetic powers, if I have faith that can move mountains but don't have love, I'm nothing."

Jesus is speaking to a culture that values extraordinary and impressive and, in some ways, can define relationship with God and health with God by how impressive and how extraordinary we are before God. He turns it on its head and says, "Life in the kingdom doesn't work like that." Life in the kingdom is much more beautiful than that. It's ordinary people coming to Jesus, *only* Jesus, and being met by an extraordinary Savior, and he's changing us in a way that, over time, comes out in ordinary, everyday obedience in our lives.

That's what God delights in. In fact, that's what God is using through his kingdom people to run darkness out of the world as the light of Jesus shines through us. He elevates the ordinary. In the kingdom of God, ordinary, faithful obedience to Jesus *is* the new extraordinary. Are you gifted? Can you teach or lead or manage or sing or you're just good with a room of people or in front of a crowd and you can out-serve whoever is serving alongside of you?

If that's all true for you, praise God. Steward it well. But know this: As gifted as we might be at any of that, as gifted as we might be at *all* of that, there is no gift that casts a shadow big enough for our sin to hide in from God. He sees it. He doesn't want the gift if it doesn't come with the whole heart. But to give God our whole heart, our lives slowly begin to look more and more like the life he taught. There's coming a day when the ordinary is the very thing God exalts before the watching world.

Can you imagine this scene before Jesus and what this scene will look like? This great reversal. There's a reversal in every scene. It's the narrow road, the hard road, the less popular road, and that's the one that leads to life, not the broad. It's unexpected. There are these two houses, and they both look the same, but one of them falls and the other one stands, and it's unexpected. There's this unexpected reversal moment in this scene with Jesus, and it's just astounding.

What plays out on earth is the ordinary people are pushed aside. The less impressive people are pushed aside, and the extraordinary and gifted and talented people step forward, and everyone knows their names. But what happens before Jesus? The extraordinary, the impressive come up and call Jesus by name, and Jesus says, "I don't know you. I don't know your name. Step aside."

What Jesus is doing is calling out the ordinary and exalting it. That's what will happen on that day. The ordinary is seen and known, and that's what's exalted. The man who's poor in spirit who didn't have much to offer, who wasn't impressive in anyone else's eyes but was hungry for God, dependent on Jesus... He had this awful problem with anger, but over time, following Jesus, that anger turned into empathy for everyone because of his love for Jesus. On that day, Jesus knows him by name and sees him and exalts that ordinary obedience.

It's the woman who spent so many hours praying in quiet communion with God. On that day, there's a host of people around her. God used her prayers and changed them and brought them to faith, but she didn't do it to be seen. She just loved talking to her heavenly Father whose name she hallowed and whose kingdom she longed to see on earth. She's known and seen, and the ordinary is exalted.

It's the mourning couple who lost greatly, the grieving couple who lost in unspeakable ways, and their hearts broke in that loss, and as their hearts grew back together they grew back together with more room for Jesus. On that day, they come to Jesus, and in one hand is their Bible stained with

their tears and in the other hand they receive back from God infinitely more than they lost. He sees them and exalts them.

To the one who was sinned against in such a devastating and egregious way by a spouse, by a family member, by a friend, and in that devastating sin bitterness and resentment came knocking at their door, and following Jesus meant that over time they opened the door and ran the bitterness and resentment off with forgiveness. Mercy and grace that had been placed there by the heart of the risen King came out in their words as "I will never be asked to forgive you for more than I've been forgiven by Jesus." They're seen, and the ordinary is exalted.

To the merciful he says, "Step forward." The one who saw injustice in the world and didn't judge by race or circumstance or socioeconomic status, didn't become so jaded by injustice they knew all of the problems but weren't part of a single solution, laid down their comfort, and instead of holding on to their resources or their weekends, they held on to the hand of the widow, they held on to the face of the orphan, because Jesus ultimately held all of their heart. On that day, all of this ordinary obedience is celebrated and exalted.

Jesus knows every single road was messy and imperfect, but ultimately on that day what he says is, "I can see your love for me in your life." Then he turns to the prophet. He says, "Of all of the people who are impressed with you, I'm not one of them. No, I don't care about your miracles. I don't care about your prophecies. What I wanted you to do in my name was to follow me, which is not namely about your words and not primarily about your gifts but about a love for me that comes out in your life as obedience. So I have no idea who you are."

I'm uncomfortable, and I've *been* uncomfortable. Some of that is because this passage is a passage of Scripture I've wrestled with from the very first day I ever read it years ago. I'm a preacher and the son of a preacher, so the last thing I want is to live some sort of life and then, at the very end, to realize it was all for naught. That haunts me in some ways. I'm uncomfortable, because maybe there's a reaction like that going on in the room right now.

There's such a high risk that what we're thinking is that this is somehow works versus grace, and that's just not it. There's a high risk in this moment that maybe some of us go the wrong direction. Let me help us respond. What's he doing? Why does he tell these stories? He doesn't give the Golden Rule, "Treat others the way you want to be treated," and then say, "Close your eyes; let's pray," and then dismiss.

He ends with these stories to try to capture our hearts, to take us to these places in the future for the purpose of drawing us closer to him. It's not a trap. It's not a guilt trip. It's like Matt said week one. It's the mirror we stand in front of that we might look more like Jesus. That happens by being welcomed in closer by Jesus. These are invitations. Don't go the wrong direction. The wrong direction would be any step away from Jesus.

One of those steps I'm really mindful of in this moment and have been mindful of all week is that some of us walking into the room really struggle with confidence in our salvation, struggle in believing that God loves us, struggle in believing we're doing the Christian life the right way.

If that's you, maybe what you're hearing right now is that everything I've said and everything we've read is affirming that doubt, substantiating that doubt in your life. We're saying and we're reading and I'm preaching and you're thinking, "I knew it. I'm a fake. I'm a fraud. I've not done enough. I'm not good enough. I'm not Christian enough. He doesn't love me."

What happens so often if we struggle with our salvation and struggle with doubt is we draw these really small circles around our lives and hold ourselves to standards we don't think are true for anybody else. That comes out in this moment as us hearing things like, "There's no room for failure in this," and hearing that if there's any part of the sermon that doesn't measure up with my life or any part of my life that doesn't measure up with the sermon, it means I'm broad path.

It means I'm "Depart from me," because there's no room for me to mess up. There's no room for me to not measure up. Hear me. No one has said that. Jesus is not saying that. After Jesus dies and rises again, he appears to what were, at the time, his 11 disciples. They're a little bit freaked out because he was dead and now he's not dead anymore.

He shows up to them, and it says there are two responses. They worship, and some doubt. It does not read some worship and some doubt. It reads they *all* worship and some of them doubt. Do you know what that means? It means that for some of those guys there is worship and doubt simultaneously in their hearts.

Jesus knows that, and do you know what he says to them? "Come back when all your doubt is gone." No. What does he say to them? "Go into all the world. Teach all that I've commanded." So, go into all the world and teach people some of the very things you're still struggling to believe yourself.

In our minds, we think it's so much harsher than that, that the category over *here* is you have the doubters and the imperfect and the strugglers, and then you have the worshipers over *here*, and until in my life it's all worship and no doubt or all worship and no struggle or all worship and no failure...

Until that moment, I'll never know I am a real Christian or that he really loves me or that I'm really a part of this. Look right at me. That day of all worship and no doubt will not come until Jesus returns. The invitation is...*Can you believe that every day from now until then Jesus both celebrates your worship and loves you in your doubt and failure?* Because he does.

The most dangerous step away from Jesus would be for us to not take him seriously, for us to not take *this* seriously, for someone in the room to think, "For some reason I'm the exception. For some reason I don't have to respond to this. For some reason Jesus is not who he says or there's just some other road I can walk." To respond that way makes you a hearer and not a doer, and to be a hearer and not a doer is like a foolish man who once built his house on the sand.

The rains are coming. Once you build your house on the sand, it doesn't matter what you build on top of that. It doesn't matter how much beauty you stack on top of that. It doesn't matter how much success you stack on top of that. It doesn't matter how much church attendance you stack on top of that. If it's built on the sand and the rains are coming, it will not last.

C.S. Lewis said it this way: "If you have not chosen the kingdom of God, it will make in the end no difference what you have chosen instead." Then he argues with himself about it. He basically says, "Really? It doesn't matter whether you chose patriotism or whiskey? It doesn't matter whether you chose drugs or art? It doesn't matter whether you chose money or silence?" He says, "No difference that matters. Does it matter to a man dying in the desert by which path he misses the only well?"

I know I'm not talking to everybody. I know I'm not talking to most of us, but surely I'm talking to somebody. In a room this size, or to think about Fort Worth, Plano, Dallas, Southlake... For some of us, we've always only been hearers, and our plan today was to walk in and hear and then leave. Listen to me. Maybe we're walking away to walk some sort of middle road of Americanized self-defined morality, and that road leads to death.

The rains are coming, and my prayer is that those rains would be trials in the present that lead us to repentance, because if not, it will be the unrelenting judgment of God. To be a hearer and not a doer, to walk away from Jesus in all of this. To be a doer is to come closer, step closer. When I'm envisioning those future scenes just holding my little girl and it draws me in closer to her, do you know what it looks like? Faithfulness today. That's it. Taking the steps today. As best I can, covered by grace and forgiveness, to take the step today.

When we hear sermons like this, oftentimes we can be so overwhelmed by regret in the past or we feel so much pressure about who we should be in the future we stay frozen in the present. Jesus is just saying, "Come closer today. Where are you withholding surrender? Where are you covering your heart? Come closer. Where are you treating heart problems with surface solutions? Come closer." Why? Because we're drawn by him. We said it all series long. The point is God *with* us.

So who is on the narrow path? It's life with Jesus. The tree that produces good fruit is rooted in Jesus. The house that stands is founded on Jesus. So to be captured by him, to be drawn in by him, to long to be with him is to produce in us a confidence of knowing that one day he will not say, "Depart from me," but today he says, "I'm with you always." The heart that loves him follows him, *only* him, and it changes all of us. Only Jesus and all of you. Let's pray.

God, we love you. Holy Spirit, I'm mindful and pleading with you to work in a few different areas even in this moment. Would you speak to the man or the woman who is stuck in a morbid introspection that comes from doubt and fear, and would you interrupt those thoughts in this moment and replace them with thoughts of you?

Whatever the mixture in their heart is, you can love them right there. If it's the worship and the doubting or the worship and the fear, that you can celebrate and love. You're not asking anyone to have it figured out in this moment. All you're asking is, "Come closer." To the hearer but not the doer, God, would you birth in their heart in this moment a repentance that leads to salvation that comes from your kindness?

Then to those all across our campuses in every single room who are exhausted in the ordinary obedience or feeling a little lost in the ordinary obedience, would you make so evident to us in this moment that we are seen? To the man or the woman who's practicing ordinary, faithful obedience to you in the middle of a confusing and difficult marriage, you see them and exalt them.

The not perfect but ordinary, faithful obedience in a battle against lust or anger or control or fear or anxiety... You see them in their striving, covered by grace, and you're so proud. May we believe it, and may believing that bring us closer, Jesus, to you, only you, as we're eager to offer you all of us, amen.

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