

Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 9/7/08

Two Destinies

Text: Matthew 7:21-23

As we begin to wind down this series on Kingdom Living, as we come to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching of Jesus, let us keep in mind how this all started. Jesus is teaching his disciples; with a large crowd all around them (Mt. 4:25), and now, the Holy Spirit is teaching those of us who read these words. This passage, like the two before it and the next passage, is about choices that we make in our walk with Jesus. Here, our Lord is speaking about a serious choice to be obedient to the Father, not just content with the appearance of being spiritual.

Let me remind you once again of all that Jesus has been teaching us in this series on Kingdom Living, literally what he expects of those who truly follow Him, even today. Kingdom Living, taught by Jesus in this sermon:

Beatitudes, salt & light, obedience, no murder or anger, no lust or adultery, no unfaithfulness or divorce, no empty promises, go the extra mile, love for enemies, giving, praying, fasting, know true treasures, no anxiety, no judgmental attitudes, discernment, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, truth, compassion, a non-retaliating spirit, a life of integrity.

This is quite an impressive list of things that Jesus gives us to help us understand how the Father wants us to live out our daily lives. Each one of these teachings is from the Sermon on the Mount, taught by Jesus, and is expected of those who seriously want to live obedient Christian lives. There are two people who know if you are living out the call of God in your daily life, you and Jesus!

Because there are two roads, you and I have to make a choice which one we will travel, because there are two trees, we know that we will be producing either good or bad fruit, but we also know that sometimes others can't tell the difference, because we hide things so well. Now Jesus interjects, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

He also says, "Many will say to me on that day..." Even if we were able to fool all the people all the time, we won't be able to pull one over on Jesus, no matter what we have convinced ourselves and others we are.

Without a serious desire to obey the Word of God, the values and principles that Jesus is teaching, we are really only what King Solomon said: "Then I took a good look at everything I'd done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke. Smoke and spitting into the wind. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing" (MSG). *Ecclesiastes 2:11*

When you and I stand before the Father, who is the Truth, all pretense and falsehood are gone. We stand before Him in judgment, ready to either be welcomed into eternal life or to end up where the road to destruction has led us. It is really our choice, and we have the Holy Scriptures to teach us, and the Holy Spirit to lead us in the way we should go.

Imagine standing before the Father, pleading your case, already knowing that you are known, having been exposed for who you really are. Jesus tells us how emphatic these folks will be: "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord" they speak the Name of Jesus twice, to show just how spiritual and good they are, but Jesus will have none of that. No matter how good we sound, if we are not into radical obedience, we are "spitting into the wind".

This person, probably a good evangelical in good standing with their community, great at expressing their orthodox views, now stands before the King of kings and emphatically addresses Jesus as "Lord, Lord", and yet, somehow, as hard as it might be to grasp for those of us who have been in the church for so long, he finds himself as one of the "many" who did what they thought was right, only to find out that the teaching and life of Jesus was about obedience, not just doing good things and looking good.

What you and I do is by far, more important than what we say, which is exactly the point Jesus is making here. Those who really are followers of Jesus, pray, and live out what He told us in His Model Prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (6:10).

What needs to matter most, to you and me, is our relationship to the Father which was the major emphasis of Jesus while here on earth. Everything that He did pointed to His love for, and obedience to the Father. All of Scripture points to the fact that each one of us, individually needs to accept Jesus Christ as not only the Son of God, but as our personal Savior. And, everything that Jesus spoke directs us to obey the Word of God, in all areas of our lives.

Turn back in your Bibles to Matt. 5: 17-20, Jesus came to fulfill all of the OT prophecies about Him and to help us understand them in truth. Look again at the list of teachings that Jesus has given us throughout this Sermon on the Mount. If we think that we can pick and choose which ones of these are important, and which ones we will choose to obey, we have already decided to, change, with the stroke of our own pens, what God has called us to.

We don't get into heaven because we are simply obedient, we also can't expect to get into heaven in disobedience. We are saved by the absolute amazing grace of God, but God's grace shows itself in our lives through obedience. The grace of God, which saves us, is not cheap, but it is free! You and I can't have grace without forgiveness, and we don't get forgiveness unless we confess our sin and ask for His mercy.

Remember, on the night Jesus was betrayed, the disciples each wondered which of them it could be, then precluded it really couldn't be any of them. Earlier they had discussed among themselves which of them was the greatest, and a couple of them had their mother ask Jesus if her sons could have places of prominence in heaven with him. So much for humility, purity, love and a life of integrity that Jesus had taught at the beginning of his ministry.

This is exactly why we come before the Father in Holy Communion; to remember Him, His teaching, His sacrifice, His risen life, and His perfect love for each of us. That is what controls our destinies in Him.