

Saying, Hearing and Doing Matt. 7:21-27

Intro. On June 26, 2007, while on a training exercise off the Oregon coast, Major Gregory D. Young of the Air National Guard flew his F-15A fighter into the Pacific Ocean. The \$32 million aircraft was destroyed and he was killed. There was no distress call / no attempt to eject / and no apparent aircraft malfunction. At age 34, Young had 2,300 hours of flight time, more than 750 hours of it in F-15s.

"As investigators sifted through the wreckage—colleagues, family, and friends were left to wonder: What caused this veteran pilot to guide his airplane right into the ocean at more than 600 mph? The answer, revealed in an investigative report two months later, was both unsettling and all too familiar. In the terminology of the report, Young 'experienced unrecognized spatial disorientation which caused him to misperceive his attitude, altitude, and airspeed. As a result, he was unaware of the dangerous position he was in before impacting the water.'

"Once called pilot vertigo or aviator's vertigo, spatial disorientation is a killer. FAA statistics show this condition is at least partly responsible for about 15 percent of aviation accidents, most of which occur in clouds or at night, and 90 percent are fatal. What makes spatial disorientation so menacing is that pilots are deceived and oblivious to imminent peril. As we'll see this morning, the same is true for those who are self-deceived regarding their relationship to Christ and their eternal destiny.

This morning we come to the final two sections of the Sermon on the Mount. As we've seen in past months Jesus here describes the righteous character / morality / and values of those who are citizens in His Kingdom. Throughout the sermon He calls us to a lifestyle that is radically different from that which comes natural and that which is common to those who live apart from His lordship. A key verse is **5:20** where Jesus said, **For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.** Christ's kingdom has a strict entrance requirement. Required is a righteousness that surpasses that of the most religious men His audience knew. As we learn from the rest of the NT the righteousness God requires can't be self-produced. What can't be achieved can only be received by trusting Christ who provides His righteousness as a gift. He offers us Himself. Because the broad way of religion and works can't save anyone, Jesus said, **"Enter through the narrow gate..." - 7:13** This is Christ's invitation to every human being. As Messiah and Savior of the world, Jesus is **the narrow gate**. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." - Acts 4:12** Though most refuse Him, Jesus is the way to the life you've always wanted both now and for eternity. Though His teachings were rejected by the proud and self-righteous, He promised blessing to **those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness** which comes by faith in Him.

Beginning in **7:13**, Jesus began to distinguish true faith from false profession. **vs.13, 14** describe two paths to walk through life. Each person chooses one path or the other and there are no other options. The **broad road** leads to eternal destruction and the **narrow path** leads to eternal life. Here Jesus introduced the concept of the **many** and the **few**.

In **vs.15-18**, Jesus again contrasted two types of people using imagery well known to those of that culture. He spoke of wolves versus sheep / grapes and figs versus thorn bushes and thistles / and good trees versus bad trees. Having established the idea of dichotomy, He then went on to apply these truths to the spiritual status of those who heard Him. The stage was now set for Him to present the two types of people who will appear before Him **on that day**.

As His sermon ended, Jesus issued the invitation to enter His Kingdom. But along with His invitation, He issued a series of warnings. In **v.15** He said, **"Watch out for false prophets..."**

Watch out for deceivers. Be on guard for deception that comes from without. One reason few enter the narrow way is because of something Chuck Missler calls, “*hostile jamming*.” *Hostile jamming* isn’t some guys with guitars playing a fight song. In radio, *hostile jamming* is a deliberate attempt to disrupt communications by flooding the air with random signals. In effect *hostile jamming* is like trying to hear the evening news in a room full of noisy kids. This strategy is used extensively by the Adversary. He fills the world with religious and philosophical noise to distract people from hearing God’s truth. **Rev. 12:9** says the devil **leads the whole world astray**. Much of the noise he makes comes through false prophets. They come with sensational messages that demand little / offer much / but deliver nothing.

But there’s another reason **few enter the narrow way**. We see this in the warning of **vs.21-23**. While false prophets deceive many people, many people deceive themselves. The Greek philosopher Plato wrote, “*There is nothing worse than self-deception*.” Like that F-15 fighter pilot, many are oblivious to the peril ahead when they stand before Christ. The sad reality is this...the confidence of many who claim to be “Christian” is as illegitimate as the teachings of a false prophet. Many are “Christian” in name only. They may have done wonderful things in Jesus’ name. They may refer to Him as Lord. But they did all this without submitting to the narrow requirements of God’s will.

In the second warning of **vs.24-27**, Jesus said some will listen to the truth as though hearing is enough. They listen without obedience. This group fails to act on the truth they hear. In the words of James, their faith without works is dead or useless. This kind of easy believing is ineffective and powerless to save or deliver them in the storms of life. The writer of Hebrews put it this way, **the message they** (that is Israel in the wilderness) **heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. – Heb. 4:2**

So the first warning turns our focus outward because it regards false prophets who come bringing a false gospel. Jesus said, “Be on the lookout.” **Watch out** for them! But the second warning turns our focus inward because it concerns the validity or reality of our faith. Deceivers promote the broad road and we see them coming. But the self-deceived travel that road. They suffer something like spatial disorientation because they think all is well.

Now I need to say right up front...this is one of the most sobering passages in the entire NT. Spoken to the crowd gathered on that Judean hillside, it applies to the seasoned and secure saint as well as to the new believer who just boarded the gospel train. It alerts us all to the peril of self-deception... thinking all is well when it’s not. I’m convinced the intent of Jesus is not to confuse or instill fear, but to clarify and fortify. So let’s ask for God to open our eyes to the meaning of this vital passage. Pray.

These closing verses divide naturally into two points:

1. The peril of saying without doing – vs. 21-23 (or empty profession) **"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. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"**

Let’s unpack some details that are essential to the meaning of these verses. In **v.21** and **22** the people in view are **saying** something to Jesus. They are speaking to Him and making certain claims. The verses then specify what these people say. They say, **Lord, Lord**. In other words, they address Jesus as Lord. MacArthur notes that “*A Jew could use the term lord simply as a title of respect and honor. It could be used with reference to any political, military, or religious leader or teacher. But for people to say, Lord, Lord suggests something more than mere human respect.*” This is clear from the claims they associate with His name.

They say, **“did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?”** In other words, they acknowledged Jesus as **Lord** in a supernatural way. They claimed the great things they did were done by His authority and power. To add intensity to their claims of devotion and dedication, they address Him as not merely as Lord but they say, **Lord, Lord**. These people clearly acknowledge that Jesus is Jehovah, the Creator God of Israel. They are saying or professing to believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

Now a question arises. How do we explain miracles performed by people who are unsaved? There are several possible answers. First, Satan is a great deceiver who sometimes replicates the miracles of God within certain limits. **Ex.7** describes the magicians and sorcerers in Egypt whose “secret arts” impressed many people. In the NT, Paul confronted Elymas the Jewish sorcerer who performed all kinds of deceit and trickery. So not all miracles come from God and not all who perform miracles in Jesus’ name are truly His. In fact, as the end of the age draws near, the NT warns us to beware of miracle performing deceivers.

But second, there are times when God will allow unbelievers to perform miraculous deeds. The prime example is Judas who along with the other disciples, preached the gospel / healed the sick / cast out demons / cleansed lepers / and even raised the dead. Judas seems to have had the same power as the other eleven though he was never a true follower of Christ. So the super-natural ability to prophesy / the ability to cast out demons / and the ability to perform miracles proves nothing. Though tagged with Jesus’ name, miracles and many other charitable works are done by the unsaved. The acid test isn’t achievements, no matter how impressive they may be.

Notice the time notation that specifies when many will make these claims. **v.22 - Many will say to me on that day...** While the phrase **that day** is generic, it points to a future event...an event that hasn’t happened yet. Bible scholars agree **that day** refers to a period of time the Bible calls **“the Day of the Lord.”** But **that day** seems to refer specifically to the judgment of the unsaved that will follow the return of Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation. Joel prophesied that judgment and Matthew uses this phrase again **Matt. 24:36-39 - “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** Here **that day** is linked to the second coming of Christ.

We believe the Bible teaches the next event on God’s prophetic timetable is the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the rapture of true believers. This momentous air lift will be immediately followed by the judgment seat of Christ where believers are rewarded. As the Church in heaven enjoys the final installment of our salvation with all its blessings, those on earth will suffer the ravages of the Tribulation. At the end of this 7 year period the armies of the world will gather for World War III or Armageddon. At that time Jesus Christ will return with the armies of heaven. Just prior to the establishment of the Millennial kingdom, the survivors of the Tribulation will be assembled and judged. **Matt. 25:32-34** says, **All the nations will be gathered before him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. The believing, or sheep, will be separated.** This is the future and event referred to in **Matt. 7:22** as **that day**. It’s a dreadful day...a day of judgment when earth’s Tribulation survivors are summoned to stand before the Lord Jesus. **Matt. 24:34** says those on the right will enter the kingdom. But **v.41** says, **“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.**

This is a day more solemn than any other...a day when the opportunity to be saved and to live for Christ, has passed. So this time notation in **Matt. 7:22** is important. When Jesus Christ returns in power and glory, every knee will bow and every person alive will confess that He is Lord. This promise is made in both the OT and the NT.

- **Isa. 45:23, 24** says, **By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.**
- **Phil. 2:9-11** echoes this promise... **Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

The catastrophic events of the Tribulation and the appearance of Christ and armies of heaven will no doubt shake every atheist / every agnostic / and every ounce of belief in gods other than the true God. I'm just guessing...but in the last days Atheist Associations the world over will be inundated by members begging to have their names withdrawn. *Jesus first pins* may become the hottest items on the market. When judgment day finally arrives and the nations are assembled to stand before Jesus Christ, in desperation, everyone may try to appear as "Christian" as they can. Every human being will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord. But it will be too late. Previously Jesus had given this warning...**Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven...** Hearing no response from Him and perhaps in a louder voice, they will protest, **Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'**

So the situation is this...at the end of the age just after Jesus returns, survivors will be gathered to be judged. On that day, many will say, **Lord, Lord** and many will claim to have done all sorts of things (even miracles) in Christ's name. But Christ's judgment will separate true believers coming out of the Tribulation from unbelievers and those who merely professed allegiance to Christ. Believers will be blessed to enter the kingdom yet those whose profession was false will be cursed and cast into Hell.

Now let's zero in on the end of **v.21** - **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.** The difference between those who believe and are saved and those who merely profess allegiance to Christ is proved by what they've done. As the old adage goes, *"Actions speak louder than words."* In **Lk. 6:46** Jesus said, **"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"** The gulf between saying and doing is very wide.

I've sometimes told the story of the guy who was out of work and hungry. He went door to door saying he was willing to work in exchange for some food. A man answered the door at one house. After listening to the hungry guy's story, the homeowner said, *"I'll tell you what...if you saw some wood for me, my wife will feed you a good supper. Do you see that woodpile over there?"* Turning his head in the direction of the woodpile the hungry man answered, *"No sir, I can't see it."* The homeowner then said, *"What do you mean, I saw you see it!"* To which the guy said, *"You may have saw me see it but you ain't gonna see me saw it."*

There's a major difference between seeing / saying / and doing. Am I right about that? It's not enough to say we believe Jesus is Lord. Even the demons know who Jesus is! So raising your hand, walking an aisle, signing a card, or even getting baptized may not be enough. The issue is obedience to God's will. We are saved by faith alone, but faith itself is never alone. **Jn. 8:31** says, **To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.** Faith and obedience to the will of God are inseparable. Faith and obedience are two sides of the same coin. Christianity demands more than a profession...it demands a practice.

Faith that is inward and genuine will show up outwardly as changed behavior. That's what Jesus has been saying since His sermon began with the Beatitudes. Instead of continuing on our own way and doing our own thing...citizens of Christ's kingdom do the will of God! Their lives are brought under the authority and control of heaven's king. Here again, claiming is not the same as doing. We don't do to be saved, we do because we believe and are saved. And because self-deception is so subtle and devastating...we need to know this...giving mental assent to the facts and actually obeying God, are not the same thing! This group of people thought they had a ticket in, but they were wrong.

Notice what Jesus will say to those who profess allegiance but haven't done the will of God. **v.23 - Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'** The language of **v.23** is emphatic. The force of it means, "*neither at any time did I know you.*" The verb **to know** is a Hebrew idiom that represents an intimate relationship. In a unique and intimate way the Lord knows His sheep and they know Him. Jesus said that in **Jn.10:14 - "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me..."** Just as shepherds distinguish one sheep from another and have names for each sheep, Jesus knows us and He invites us to know Him. Yet these who trusted their profession / their claims / and their works to save them...will be devastated **on that day**. They will hear Christ say, **Away from Me, you evildoers!** This verdict signifies the second death which separates human beings from God and His blessings forever. **Evildoers** is a present participle in Greek. Instead of a one time act, it signifies continuous action. Just as a liar is a person who tells lies frequently and perhaps habitually, an **evildoers** is a person who practices evil or lawlessness. Earlier in **v.18** Jesus said, **A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.** So those whose profession is empty and illegitimate have not experienced the saving transformation that makes bad people good. They are unregenerate and lost forever. Yet before His first sermon ended, Jesus addressed a second peril.

2. The peril of hearing without doing – vs. 24-27 (fruitless hearing) **"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."**

The story that follows the warning of **vs. 21-23** is simple and straightforward. It's as though Jesus said, "In case you didn't connect with what I'm getting at, let me make my point more concrete. The importance of a having a good foundation beneath a house is universally accepted. In the parable, one man is wise. He built his house on the rock. When storms came, his house stood firm. But the second man is foolish. He built his house on the sand. When a storm came, his house couldn't withstand the force of the driving wind and water. The work of his hands collapsed with a great crash.

As we unpack this section, note the details. In the previous warning Jesus spoke of those who **say, Lord, Lord...**but here He refers to **everyone who hears these words of mine. (vs.24, 26)** The issue in the previous verses is empty profession or saying and not doing. But the issue in these verses is unresponsiveness, or hearing and not doing. The **wise man** is the man who hears the teachings of Christ and puts them into practice. His house is built on the rock. But the foolish man hears the same teachings but he takes no action steps to obey the Lord or put them into practice. Having no solid foundation, his house **fell with a great crash**.

Just as saying and doing are miles apart, the same is true with respect to hearing and doing. Never in history have opportunities to hear Gospel truth been more available than they are today. And the temptation to hear and not do has perhaps never been greater.

At MBC you can hear sermons / participate in SS classes / Bible studies / and Life Groups where the word is taught and shared. We live in the great information age. With advances in technology we can download teaching on virtually every topic as well as every passage in the Bible. There's no shortage of opportunities to hear. Yet let me add a word of caution...the word of man is not the same as word of God. You know this! Much that is served up as "Christian teaching" is little more than moralism or self-help psychology. **Amos 8:11** says, **The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land-- not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.** The NT warns that some preach "another gospel that is no gospel at all" while others "preach themselves" The command of **II Tim. 4:2** is crystal clear... **Preach the Word!** By God's grace, this is one of the core values that shape the ministries of MBC.

But let me say it again...hearing and doing are two different things altogether! In a single week you can listen to 5 Piper sermons / 4 by MacArthur / 3 by Francis Chan / 2 Alistair Begg's and a parson in a pare tree! But we can do all that listening and learning without a single practical response. You can even throw in a Stewart sermon without so much as a slight change of behavior. This sedentary sickness is epidemic in the church. We've got MP 3's / I-pods / I-pads / smart phones / headphones and ear buds...but many who profess faith in Christ are dead in the water. We haven't trained ourselves to respond to God's Word with deliberate obedience. In God's Word we discover His will yet apart from His word we're adrift and treading water. Here's a short commercial...the Sunday evening format is a deliberate attempt to review the AM message / to make sure we've understood it / and to discuss how we should apply it to our lives. Whether in a Life Group or gathered here at 6 PM, we invite you to be intentional about applying God's truth.

But this unresponsive way of hearing isn't a new problem. To first century believers James wrote, **Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does. - Jas. 1:22-25**

Despite his extensive training and the experience he gained by so many hours in the cockpit, at a crucial moment, Major Young trusted his own instincts above his instrument readings. He was self-deceived and the result proved to be fatal. In a similar way, each of us face crucial moments in life...moments when we're forced to make critical decisions about our moral and spiritual direction. It's in these moments that we must learn to resist our "earthly instincts," which are worse than useless. We must choose instead to follow the instructions given by God. We must be doers of His Word.

So here at the end of a sermon that may have lasted several hours, Jesus drew a line in the sand. He knew that among those who listened to His teachings there were two categories of people. There were many who judged His teachings to be too narrow and restrictive. Unconscious of what they were doing, they were choosing the broad road that leads to destruction. Though some would attempt to do their best and others would be active in their churches and accomplish many wonderful things, they were rejecting the narrow gate for one that is wider, less demanding and more appealing.

Yet in that same crowd Jesus knew there would be a few...just a few...a few with ears to hear. The Spirit of God would stir their hearts and incline them to follow Him in faith and obedience. This group would claim Him as king and submit to His Word. By trusting His shed blood on Calvary's cross they would be born again. Their lives would be eternally changed by the ministry of His Spirit at work in them. These are the ones who will enter the kingdom of heaven. How is it with you?