**Calvary Fellowship 6.26.2022 Matthew 7:13-29 “A Faith That’s Unshakeable”**

* **So quick question as we get started - anyone here a competitive person?**
* Here’s the weird thing - the ultra competitive people looked around & said, “I bet U I’m way more competitive than the rest of these people.”
* In the spirt of full disclosure, I am a super competitive person & I can turn anything into a competition - even if the other person doesn’t want to compete
* That just means it will be easier for me to win
* **A couple of years ago I bought a grill that Amazon kindly delivered to me**
* About 30 minutes into my project, my wife says, “Bob, do U want to take a break from the grill so we can have dinner?”
* I say, “No. I’ll have this done in 15 minutes.” - She disagrees w/ my time projection & says, “There’s no way you’re going to finish this in 15 minutes.”
* I say, “There’s no way I won’t. In 20 minutes, I’ll finish building this & I’ll grill up some burgers.”
* So she sets the oven timer for 20 minutes & says, “Look, I even gave U an extra 5 minutes & U still won’t get done.”
* I say, “Challenge accepted.” - So I start working as fast as humanly possible on this grill b/c no matter what, I’m going to finish on time
* I’ll admit, before accepting this challenge, I should have thought about the fact that this grill came w/ a side burner & there were wires involved
* But no matter the level of complexity, when that buzzer went off 20 minutes later, I was finishing the last 2 screws & ready to proclaim my victory
* In all fairness, I’m really good at building things like this - I’m so good, I don’t even need all the parts they send b/c at the end I have a bunch of extra pieces
* **So I stand up & announce that I have won - I say, “So what do U think?”**
* Carey says, “I’m really impressed that U finished in 20 minutes. But U built the grill backwards, so you’ll burn to death if U use it, but I’m impressed.”
* 45 minutes later, after I took the entire grill apart & reassembled it, we finally sat down to eat dinner & Carey says, “When I say I’ll be ready in 5 minutes & I take a little longer, you’re never allowed to complain again.”
* **Listen, there’s a way that seems right, but in the end it’s all wrong**
* And that’s at the heart of what Jesus is going teach us as we conclude the Sermon on the Mount - this is probably the most important message
* B/c this is the message where Jesus puts all of it together
* It’s here that Jesus is getting to the heart of the matter & it’s only when U understand this last section that U see what Jesus was talking about all along
* And it will shake us to the core b/c Jesus is going to compare 2 types of people who look exactly the same outwardly, but inwardly are totally different
* Here’s the truth, if these words of Jesus don’t rattle your cage, U didn't get it
* I want U to understand as we go unto this - when Jesus talks about 2 ways to live, He isn’t talking about those who believe in God & those who don’t
* Everyone who was listening to Him was Jewish - they all believed in God
* They all tried to keep the law, but there’s a motive that is at the heart of what Jesus is getting to & that’s what’s important for us to understand
* Jesus isn’t talking to those inside the church & those outside - He’s talking to us
* Some of us might be here & not know God at all - we might come to church b/c we like how we feel afterwards or b/c U heard the pastor is funny & handsome
* But even though our activity looks exactly the same on the outside, the inner motive reveals the intention & ultimately the destination of our lives…

**———(v. 13-14)———**

**#1 - True Spirituality is Accepting a New Identity**

* **What’s the point that Jesus is making? It’s that there’s 2 ways - 1 looks easy & the other looks difficult, but even thought they look similar, don’t get us to the same place**
* The idea is that there’s a gate that’s so tight U think it’s going to choke U out, but it leads to something wonderful - the life you’ve been looking for
* But the other gate is spacious & open, but it doesn’t lead to where I want to go
* The metaphor is that some things look similar, but they aren’t the same thing
* **Several years ago, we were at the Pembroke Garden Shoppes & we had lunch & Xander & I went to put some stuff in the car before we walk around**
* He wanted to hold the keys & put them in his pocket just like his Dad - he was 4 at the time - so we got to the car & I told him to open the back w/ the remote
* He pressed the button, but nothing happened - so I told him to hold it down
* Nothing happened - So I grabbed the keys out of his hand & I said, “Xander, watch. This is how U hold it down.” - So I did it & nothing happened
* So I went to the back of the car & I noticed someone had put an Arizona license plate on my car & they had taken off my Calvary sticker
* Then I noticed a car 4 spots over w/ my Calvary sticker & my plate & the back of the minivan was going up & down
* I could have sat there all day trying to make that remote work & would have never worked b/c just b/c it looks the same doesn’t make it the same thing
* **So now the question is, what does this illustration about gates mean?**
* It doesn’t mean that there’s 1 road that’s full of people trying to do the right thing & the other road is people doing everything immoral
* Remember, Jesus is going to give 4 illustrations & they all look the same on the outside, but upon further inspection, they’re very different
* That’s been the whole point of His sermon - from the counter intuitive way to find happiness - to being more righteous than the scribes & Pharisees
* In the broad way, I’m doing all of the right things & then I think God owes me
* In the narrow way, I do the right things b/c Jesus has done so much for me that my only natural response is to give my whole life to Him
* **The broad way is very insidious - it allows me to keep doing what I’ve always done & I just add God to the mix**
* The narrow way means I have to be willing to drop everything that I deem to be my identity for the purpose of knowing Jesus & following Him
* When we go through the narrow gate, we let go of everything else to gain Jesus
* Too often, we’re seeking to add Jesus to our program & make Him 1 more thing
* We might be willing to make Him a big thing, but we don’t want to let go of everything, we just want Him to bless what we already have going on
* “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:7-8)
* This is an issue of identity - what we try to do is invite Jesus into our program & make our lives just a better version of what it once was w/o Him
* That’s why the gate is narrow - there’s nothing I can carry in except myself
* It’s an invitation leave everything behind & follow Him
* And that includes all of the things that we used to identify ourselves w/ & even things what we use to measure ourselves to feel like we’re successful
* **Jesus is telling us that just adding Him as a side item in your life doesn’t get us the life we want - it leads to ruin**
* The idea is that the life we live as Christians is a place of laying down every weight that holds us back, so we can lay hold of something better
* This is why whenever I talk to someone who tells me they’re a Republican Christian or a democrat Christian - I think, you’re a Christian who doesn’t get it
* Christianity is not an adjective - Christianity is inviting Jesus into your life & letting everything else go b/c the narrow road leads to the life U want
* And by the way, nothing wrong w/ having political opinions
* However, those things should always come way down on the list than our faith
* B/c our faith should be what informs everything else in our lives
* **The broad road isn’t the path paved w/ blatantly sinful, ungodly behavior**
* Instead, it’s filled w/ religious behavior & the thought that if I do all of this, God is going to we me - and that thinking leads to a miserable life
* Instead, to enter into real life, we have to shed these false identities we create for ourselves & embrace the life Jesus offers us…

**———(v. 15-20)———**

**#2 - True Spirituality is Recognizing a Proper Motive**

* **Jesus is contrasting something else here - He isn’t saying that some trees bear fruit & others don’t - that’s too easy - anyone can see that**
* He’s saying that some people bear good fruit & others bear bad fruit & U can’t see if it’s good or bad until U get beneath the surface & examine the tree
* Jesus says to look at sheep, but to be careful b/c some of them aren’t sheep at all, they’re ravenous wolves - that word ravenous is a strange word to use
* B/c the Greek word “Harpax” means to extort or blackmail - how in the word does that make sense? It only makes sense in context to the sermon
* Jesus says back in chapter 6 that everybody fasts, everybody gives, everybody prays, but some are giving for a specific purpose
* “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” (Matthew 6:5)
* They are praying so they can feel righteous & good by the people watching them - And it’s so easy to get there
* When U build your identity of what other people think of U, it’s only a matter of time before everything U do is built around their approval
* **So a few years ago, a bird ran into our window & from what we can tell, knocked itself out - this wasn’t the smartest bird in the flock**
* I wonder if there’s some kind of bird training where they share some of the common pitfalls of being a bird in the city
* Listen, if you’re flying & see a bird that looks exactly like U coming at U, that’s actually a window. Do not engage the enemy bird, b/c it’s U.”
* So Carey & my kids come outside & see the bird & think it’s dead - then 1 of them prays for the bird & get some water - the bird wakes up & drinks a little
* Maybe the problem is, the bird was drinking & that’s why he crashed into my house - anyway, the kids nurse the bird to health & he flies away
* So I pick up dinner that evening & we were talking about Christmas & my kids are talking about earning money if they don’t get what they want
* So as we’re eating, Mia says, “Dad, I feel weird.” - I said, “Why?” - She says, “I told U that we helped that bird earlier, but now we’re eating wings for dinner.”
* I said, “It’s the circle of life & it moves us all.” - then I tried to lift Livi like she was Simba, but I hurt my back - that’s another part of the circle of life
* But after dinner, Mia picked up the table & cleaned the entire kitchen by herself while Carey & I talked - Carey said, “Mia, are U trying to earn some money?”
* She said, “No. U guys do this every night & I just want there to be 1 night where U don’t have to worry about it.”
* **This is what Jesus is talking about - cleaning the kitchen to get blessed versus cleaning the kitchen b/c you’re already blessed**
* If we love God b/c we’re trying to get something out of it, we’re no different than the hypocrites who pray in the streets
* This is why Jesus says they are ravenous or blackmailing wolves - they see the good they do as a means to leverage God to do what they want
* If we pray or give or fast or do anything as a response to the love of God, then we’re a tree that bears good fruit b/c the motive is right
* **Now Jesus is going to to give another illustration & it’s even heavier…**
* “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21-23)
* This group had good theology - they believed the right things, but they miss the point entirely - they saw their faith as a means to extract something from God that’s why they always think that God owes them something
* **U know this if you’re married - marriages who keep score rarely do well**
* **Guys, here’s how this works - U come home from work & what you’d like is some romance from your wife & that’s a good thing**
* So U decide to help clean the house, bathe the kids & do the dishes after dinner
* Then the evening doesn’t go the way U planned & the romance has to wait until tomorrow & you’re bothered by this turn of events
* So U get an attitude & your wife says, “What’s your problem?” U tell her , “I did the dishes, bathed the kids, & cleaned the house & nothing’s gonna happen?”
* Then she says, “So the only reason U cleaned & spent time w/ your children was b/c U had an ulterior motive?”
* U say, “Of course that’s why I did it. I’m not cleaning to get the Good Housekeeping seal of approval.” - that’s not what U say
* U say, “Of course not baby. I live to help U & the kids. It’s my joy to clean & vacuum the house.”
* **But listen - when you’re only engaged in your marriage for what U can get out of it, U are guaranteeing that you’re going to struggle**
* Marriages thrive when both parties decide to make the other person’s life better without requiring anything in return
* Then the other says, “Wow, my spouse is so good to me. How can I bless him/her & honor him/ honor her?”
* That mutual attitude is the making of a healthy & happy marriage
* And this is at the heart of what Jesus is saying - if you’re walking w/ God & somehow U think God owes U, you’re going to be miserable
* When U walk w/ God realizing you’re already blessed, U will have a joy that no 1 can take from U

**———(v. 24-29)———**

**#3 - True Spirituality is Taking Appropriate Action**

* **Here’s the heart of the matter in this sermon - that U can hear everything that Jesus is saying & think that it doesn’t apply to U**
* And U can build our house - here’s the thing that people miss - if U were looking at these 2 houses, you’d never know there was anything different
* Why? B/c they look exactly the same - this is the heart of the entire sermon
* **But when the storms of life come - when rain, wind, & floods come & beat on the house, 1 will crumble & 1 will stand - why?**
* B/c of the foundation - but what does that mean? If U don’t get this, you’ll never understand the sermon on the mount
* The foundation is I don’t obey God to be loved by God - I am loved by God & that’s why I obey - these 2 things are as different as lightning & a lightning bug
* When I build my house on the good things that I do for God, on the record that I produce b/c I am following the letter of the law & b/c of that, God owes me
* When I live like that, there will come a storm that I didn’t think I deserved & it will blow everything away & leave me w/ nothing b/c my faith was built on me
* And that is the saddest person in the world - b/c they were doing good things, but ultimately they were worshipping what they did for God, not God Himself
* But when U understand that U are more loved by God than U could possibly imagine & He provided forgiveness long before U & I were doing good deeds
* **When U realize that, your only response is to love & serve the God who has done so much for U**
* And even when the storms come - and they will come - U will have a faith that is unshakable b/c it’s not built on what God owes U-it’s built on God’s love for U
* So when difficult circumstances come, I can still have joy - that’s how Jesus opens the sermon - b/c it’s build on Jesus’ love for us, not God owing me
* Being salt & light is possible b/c even when people persecute me, I won’t cry foul b/c God shouldn’t allow this b/c I’m a believer - that house won’t stand
* Every atheist I know is someone who had some thing bad happen & said, “I can’t believe in a God who allows bad things to happen to me.”
* That was never a problem for the early church - why? B/c they saw Jesus crucified & He was the best man they had ever known
* When I look at all of the OT laws & how love demands more - we get it b/c keeping score is about extracting something - and love doesn’t keep score
* When I pray, when I give, when I fast - I don’t do these things so God will owe me - I do them as a response to God’s love for me
* When I think about what I’m going wear, or eat, or live - I won’t shake my fist at God if things aren’t what I think I deserve - b/c I know that house won’t stand
* I don’t judge b/c I know the grace that God has shown me - And I treat others the way I want to be treated b/c I believe that God is good & has been good
* Listen, this whole sermon has been one point hammered in 10 different ways
* “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:28-29)
* **That word astonished means they were knocked out or thunderstruck**
* The sermon was making everyone who heard it rethink their walk w/ God
* It was making them rethink what it means to be human & what it means to really be a follower of God - that it isn’t just about what we do
* That’s the difference between what Jesus was saying & what the scribes were saying - the scribes were telling them how to do religion well
* Jesus was telling them how to embrace true spiritual reality that transforms us
* It’s about the motivation behind what we do & what our motivation is will be the difference between a faith that fails us & a faith that endures
* **Some of U know this story if you’ve been around for a while, but if U don’t, my daughter Mia almost died at the age of 3**
* She contracted what her doctors believed was Steven-Johnson Syndrome - an illness that only has a 5% survival rate
* I remember her going by ambulance to Jo DiMaggio Children’s Hospital & the doctors telling there was nothing they could do except make her comfortable
* And I remember Carey falling asleep in the bed w/ Mia & I was sitting in the chair in her room & I had this moment of indignation where I started telling God everything I had done for Him & how He owed me
* I said, “God, how could U let this happen to me of all people? I have given U everything. I don’t understand how U could do this to me.”
* In my desperation God spoke to me - He said, “Bob, I know. I know what it’s like to watch your child suffer. I watched my Son suffer as well.”
* In that moment, I knew the challenge that was before me - I had to decide if I was going to follow Jesus for the stuff He gives me - the blessings
* Or was I going to follow Jesus b/c He saved me & I owe Him everything
* I prayed the hardest prayer I’ve ever prayed in my life - I said, “God, if U want to take Mia I am going to be heartbroken b/c I love her so much. And I will count it as the best 3 years of my life when I got to be her dad. But I want U to know that I am still going to follow U.”
* The next morning Mia was noticeably better - she was able to take a few steps & wanted to eat - I said, “Mama, whatever U want to eat, I’ll get it for U.”
* She said, “Dad, I’d really like a vanilla milkshake.” - So I go down to the ground floor b/c they have a McDonald’s in the lobby of the hospital
* Now, why a hospital would put a McDonald’s in their lobby makes no sense to me - I mean, unless their goal is to create repeat customers to the hospital
* Then 24 hours they sent us home - It took her about a month to get to 100% & today I can tell U that Mia is 100% healed & whole
* But people ask me what God was doing in me when this all happened
* My answer is, God was parenting me & He was teaching me to build my house on a rock
* B/c when we do, no matter what life throws at us, we won’t be shaken
* And that’s God’s desire for U - that U would have a faith that won’t be shaken & can’t be moved no matter what life throws our way