



I Never Knew You - Matthew 7:21-23

There are moments in Christ's teaching that seem intended to make you uncomfortable. Those warnings are not inconsistent with our good and loving God, but a reflection of His desire to be in relationship with us. However, that relationship must be authentic. Our relationship with God cannot merely be for show.

Our relationship with God will always be established on His terms, not our terms. We cannot earn our way into God's good graces. Thus in v. 22, Jesus notes the response of those who believed that their works would save them. Doing mighty works in God's name while not humbly submitting our lives to the Lordship of Christ is a non-starter.

When we talk about the relationship between good works and salvation, our sinful human understanding tends to always come back to some form of works of righteousness. It simply does not make sense to us that salvation would be a free gift given to the undeserving. This seems too good to be true. We often look at people who do many wonderful things but do not know Christ and wonder if somehow by their good deeds, God will be gracious to them.

This portion of the Sermon on the Mount seems to rule that out. While I cannot claim to know the full counsel of God, the text makes it clear that it is not what we do that matters, but who we know and are known by. As previously noted, when we abide in Christ, good deeds (fruit) will come naturally. However, our "good deeds" generated by our own will are not judged by God as good fruit. Our works do not earn us a relationship with God. Only in Christ, while still undeserving, are we restored to a right relationship with God. Only then will Jesus acknowledge before His Father that He knows us.

Thoughts for Reflection

Why do you think we struggle to understand the relationship between works and our relationship with God?

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 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?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'