

UNIT 1: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Lesson 7

April 19, 2026

The Christian's Commitment to Christ:

Christ desires full commitment from His disciples.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

What are the central aspects of Christian devotion to Christ? In the final section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents two life choices, differentiates between genuine and false prophets, and presents differing responses to His teachings. He instructs His followers to discern true prophets through their teachings and conduct, prioritizing authenticity over outward appearances. The lesson concludes with a parable illustrating two different kinds of listeners – one who practices His teachings to establish a strong spiritual foundation, and another who neglects them, inviting ruin. Obedience and authentic discipleship are recurring themes.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This passage concludes Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the pivotal theme of two contrasting paths – a concept deeply rooted in Old Testament teachings. Jesus elaborates on this duality through vivid illustrations: distinguishing true and false prophets by their fruit, contrasting genuine and misguided followers at the final judgment, and comparing wise and foolish builders. Each example reveals the importance of choosing the way that leads to a life aligned with divine principles. Jesus' conclusion is more than a summary; it is a call to action, urging us to commit to the path of wisdom and righteousness in our daily lives.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- 1. EVALUATE PROPHETS CAREFULLY: Matthew 7:13-20.**
 - A. The Two Ways, (13-14)
 - B. Test the Prophets Fruit, (15-20)
- 2. DO GOD'S WILL; KNOW HIM INTIMATELY: Matthew 7:21-23.**
 - A. Do God's Will, (21)
 - B. Know Him Intimately, (22-23)
- 3. MAKE JESUS YOUR FOUNDATION: Matthew 7:24-29.**
 - A. The Wise and Foolish Builders, (24-27)
 - B. The Authority of Jesus, (28-29)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. EVALUATE PROPHETS CAREFULLY: Matthew 7:13-20.

A. The Two Ways, Matthew 7:13-14.

Jesus concluded His sermon by contrasting two ways: one that leads to life and the other that leads to destruction. This imagery would have been familiar to His hearers as it was frequently used in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 1; Jeremiah 21:8). Like Moses, Jesus invited His audience to find and choose the way of life, though He knew many would not. In fact, many Jews assumed they were guaranteed eternal life simply because they were descendants of Abraham. Jesus knew that such assumptions were misguided, so He urged His audience to make sure they were traveling the path that leads to eternal life. The narrow gate is faith in Jesus, and the path is His teaching and example. There is no other way to enter the kingdom of God because Jesus is “the door” (John 10:9) and “the way the truth and the life” (John 14:6). This becomes more evident throughout Matthew’s Gospel. The Greek word translated as “few” in verse 14 may be understood as “fewer.” The church should never be content with the few in the pews. There is an obligation to see the fields of lost souls and be ready to gather the harvest (John 4:35-38).

Jesus described the way that leads to life as narrow and constricted (Matthew 7:14). Why would this be the case? Because there is a challenge to living the life Jesus described. Life in the Kingdom runs counter to the way of the world, the schemes of Satan, and the desires of the sinful nature. Consequently, following in the footsteps of Jesus results in opposition and persecution from those who reject it and are traveling in the opposite direction. Further, the way of Jesus will demand self-sacrifice and the denial of natural desires. This is why many will choose the more spacious, comfortable, and easier way. It is easy to yield to the flesh and to follow the world, but that path leads to “destruction” (Matthew 7:13).

B. Test the Prophet’s Fruit, Matthew 7:15-20.

Assessing the lifestyles of those who teach and speak in God’s name is a thoughtful approach. It reflects the importance of discernment and wisdom in recognizing sincerity and truth in their actions and words. Observing their lives, values, and the fruits of their teachings can often reveal whether they align with the principles they claim to uphold. This is not about judgmentalism but about ensuring that the guidance we follow is rooted in integrity and genuine faith. This is necessary because false prophets do not define themselves as false. They disguise themselves to hide their true motives. “Sheep’s clothing” could refer to the sheepskin cloaks that shepherds wore (Matthew 7:15). Rather than feeding the people of God, the false prophets were ravenous wolves that fed on the people of God (see Ezekiel 22:27; Zephaniah 3:3-4; Acts 20:29).

False prophets expose themselves by the fruit they bear (Matthew 7:16). The fruit of the prophet reveals who they are. For example, one test of prophets is the content of their prophecies. Are their prophetic words confirmed by aligning with the truth, and do the things they predict come to fulfillment? The Law was clear that a prophet whose predictions failed was not a true prophet (Deuteronomy 13:1-6; 18:20-22). Although most people will make mistakes, even honest mistakes, true prophets take care to speak only from the Lord and quickly repent if they discover they are wrong. False prophets persist in their error or ignore it altogether.

The most accurate way to test the prophets is to compare their words and teachings with the truth of Scripture. Do the prophet’s word align with what God has said already? Sometimes, false prophets claim special revelation that contradicts or contravenes Scripture, which exposes them

as frauds. Other times, they are more subtle and must be carefully examined with an intimate study of the Bible. In addition to prophetic pronouncements or teaching, the prophet's life should be scrutinized. Throughout the sermon, Jesus described the righteous life expected of His followers. Does the prophet's life line up with the type of life Jesus described? Is his life secretive, or is it transparent and open for others to observe? One common theme among public ministries often lived a secretive life that was unaccountable to others. The true prophet has a life that is transparent and authentically faithful to God. There must be room for growth and correction of innocent mistakes, but the prophet should be marked by maturity and a record of unquestionable faithfulness to God.

Walking the way of Jesus is not always easy, but it offers a deeper, more fulfilling journey. It challenges us to rise above the comforts and distractions of the world, calling us to live with purpose and intention. While it may go against our natural inclinations for ease, it leads to a life rich in meaning and joy. We need to think about the path we are on and the voices we follow. Are they guiding us toward truth, love, and growth? Choosing the way of Jesus means embracing teachings that inspire our lives with grace and integrity, even when the road feels difficult. It's not about being perfect but about progress toward perfection and unrelenting faith in the journey.

2. DO GOD'S WILL; KNOW HIM INTIMATELY: Matthew 7:21-23.

A. Do God's Will, Matthew 7:21.

Jesus continued His warning against false prophets. More is required than claiming or using Jesus' name. A true disciple of Christ will pursue the Father's will. Jesus' statement is striking. The third of the Ten Commandments is not to take the Lord's name in vain (Exodus 20:7), which is not just a prohibition against blasphemy by using the Lord's name as a curse word. Closer to the heart of the commandment is a prohibition against claiming God's name but having no intention of being faithful to Him. Jesus warned His disciples against taking His name in vain by calling Him "Lord" but not living according to the Father's will.

The will of the Father was what Jesus was teaching in this sermon. The implementation of God's will on earth was part of the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples (Matthew 6:9-13). Doing God's will is the heart of discipleship and the heart of relationship with God (see John 14:15; James 2:26; 1 John 2:4-6). Those who call Jesus "Lord" but do not live the kind of life He described are denying in practice what they affirm in words – the lordship of Jesus.

B. Know God Intimately, Matthew 7:22-23.

There is some shock to this passage. Jesus said on the day of final judgment, many will claim to have performed marvelous deeds in His name and therefore to have been part of His kingdom. Even during the era of the early church, the name of Jesus was sometimes used as a charm by those who did not follow Him (see Acts 19:13-17). The performances of great deeds in Jesus' name, even miracles, is not a sign that one has a relationship with the Son of God. When it comes to the final judgment, Jesus will reveal those who had no relationship with Him. The Greek word for "knew" (Matthew 7:23) is used to express a genuine relationship. To know Jesus is not merely to know about Him, to be well-versed in His life, or able to quote what He said. To know Jesus is

to recognize His identity as the Son of God with authority over all life. It is to understand who He is and relate to Him according to that knowledge, which means living according to His Word.

Those claiming His name but not knowing Him are “workers of iniquity” (v. 23). They deny the authority of Jesus over their lives and, therefore, have no relationship with Him. Living in alignment with the Father’s will is a transformational journey of faith, understanding, and devotion, rooted in a genuine relationship with Christ. By seeking Him daily through prayer, Scriptures, and reflection, we gain the clarity, wisdom, and purpose to walk in His ways, letting His light shine through our lives as we honor Him and serve others.

“You who practice lawlessness” (Matthew 7:23 KJV) is a powerful term that invites consideration. While it’s vital to avoid a legalistic mindset where salvation feels earned, grace doesn’t equate to lawlessness. God’s grace invites and empowers us to embrace life within His kingdom, guided by love and truth. It’s an opportunity to live in alignment with His teachings, not as a burden but as a gift. Take a moment to reaffirm your commitment to the life Jesus offers, rooted in grace and dedicated to His path.

3. MAKE JESUS YOUR FOUNDATION: Matthew 7:24-29.

A. The Wise and Foolish Builders, Matthew 7:24-27.

Jesus concluded this sermon with a parable about two kinds of builders. In Israel, builders had to be careful about their locations. What appeared to be a dry sandy ravine in the summer could turn into a torrent of raging water when the winter rains came. Even in locations away from the riverbed, builders had to dig down through the loose soil until they found the solid rock beneath. The foolish builder would invest time, energy, and money into a structure that would collapse into ruin during the rainy season.

Similarly, what separated the wise people from the foolish was what they chose to build their lives upon (v. 24). This is in keeping with the theme of the two ways throughout this season. Those on the path to destruction assumed that merely hearing Jesus’ sermon and agreeing that it was good would be enough. They continued to invest everything into building their lives in the wrong place or in the wrong way and were destined to lose it all when the storms came. Jesus’ imagery of the storms should be read in a twofold sense (vv. 25-27). First, the language Jesus used here envisions the final judgment. Like the false teachers, foolish builders will suffer repudiation and loss of the life they hoped to gain. Those who acknowledge Jesus’ lordship in word and deed will lose nothing work keeping. Second, other kinds of crises in life have the same effect. The storms test the structure, but the house built on Jesus’ words stands.

B. The Authority of Jesus, Matthew 7:28-29.

Matthew noted that the crowds were astonished at the teachings of Jesus because of the authority with which He taught them. There are three truths to mention here. First, the Sermon on the Mount has to do with how people live in the kingdom of God. While elsewhere in Matthew the crowds were astonished at Jesus’ power and authority manifested through signs and wonders, here it was concerning His ethical teaching. Jesus’ teaching is as important, if not more so, than displays of God’s power. The transformation of the human heart is the most marvelous wonder of all. Second, the crowds contrasted Jesus’ teaching with that of the scribes.

The scribes taught by citing the opinions of older sages. Sometimes they wavered indecisively between differing opinions instead of guiding the people. Jesus, however, taught in a direct manner that put forward a fresh interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. Last, Jesus said the wise builder was the one who obeyed His words. Jesus employed the imagery of the Old Testament when talking about the two ways and the houses of the righteous and wicked. He was claiming here that the way of life is His teaching, which reveals His profound authority.

Notice the language Jesus used: The wise man's house endured "for it was founded upon a rock" (Matthew 7:25), but the foolish man's house ended in ruin. Jesus did not even mention the foolish man's foundation, for there was none. Those who think they are doing well by listening to good Bible messages but never living them out have no foundation. We do well to heed the words of the Apostle James: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (1:22). We deceive ourselves if we think hearing is enough.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Disciples of Jesus embrace His teachings by obeying them. Obedience leads to life, while disregarding His teachings leads to death and destruction. There is no middle ground.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

Take a moment with the class for all to examine their commitment to Christ. The church should provide opportunities for people in attendance to review and renew their walk with Jesus.

WORKSHEET

Giving All of One's Life to Christ

Becoming a Christian has been likened to joining an organization where the membership is free, but the dues are everything. Salvation is free; we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; but to be His disciple, we must give Him all of our life, not bits and pieces of it.

After foretelling His own death and resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25).

To be disciples of Jesus Christ, we must lose our life to find it by giving our life wholly to Jesus Christ. We must stop clinging selfishly to our life, determined to do what we will with it, and give it to Christ, to find the immeasurably better life He gives when we allow Him to be the Lord (Ruler) of all of our life.

We must regard all of our life as our Christian life. It is a mistake to think we are being a Christian only when we are doing religious things, such as praying, reading, and studying the Bible, and attending church services. All of our living is to be informed and guided by the fact that Jesus Christ is our Lord, and that we are committed to following His example and teachings in all aspects of our living.

For some Christians, the cost of discipleship has been to literally die for Christ's sake. But for all Christians, the cost of discipleship is to live for His sake by giving all of our life to Him. This is possible. We can do it if we sincerely decide to do it and give ourselves to it because He makes it possible for us.

Our commitment to giving all of our life to Christ should be evident in all aspects of our living: our attitudes, words, and deeds in all of life's situations and circumstances. This does not mean we will be perfect, but we should know, and others should be able to see, that we are sincerely committed to having Jesus Christ be the Lord of all of our living.

Two Ways
Matthew 7:13-14

- Why do “many” choose the “wide” way?

- Why do “few” choose the “narrow” way?

Two Kinds of Fruit
Matthew 7:15-20

- How are “false prophets” (v. 15) like “thornbushes” (v. 16) and a “bad tree” (v. 17)?

- Describe some of the “bad fruit” produced by false prophets, and the end result (vv. 18-19).

- What can people “know” about you by the “fruits” of your life (v. 20)?