DO!

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 7.! I have no idea how long this sermon is, because I usually need to move it to a word processing document and then look at the page numbers to see how long it is.

And so hopefully we're not here for three hours, but I think, and I trust that we'll be okay. So please bear with me. Matthew chapter 7, verses 13 to 27.
The main substance of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount has been concluded, and so now he is really bringing everything to a close, at that point, tying a bow on it, with a series of warnings highlighting the importance of obeying and putting into practice everything he has taught in the Sermon on the Mount.
And so that's where we are today, Matthew 7, 13 to 27. But before I read, let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, this is your Word, and we are your people. So we humble ourselves before your Word and place ourselves under your authority. It is a hard word, but you give it, Lord, because you love us.
[1:43] So help us to receive it, and help us to not be hearers of the Word only, but doers of the Word. Energized by your grace in Jesus Christ, empowered by your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. If you are able, please stand to honor God as we read from His Word, as He addresses us in and through His Word.
Matthew 7, 13 to 27. Enter by the narrow gate.
For the gate is wide, and the way is easy that leads to destruction. And those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow, and the way is hard that leads to life.
And those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.
[2:47] You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits. 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.
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?
And then will I declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.
Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.
[4:00] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. This is God's holy and authoritative word.
Please be seated. There are billions of professing Christians in the world today.
There have been billions more throughout history. But what if many of those professing Christians don't actually make it into the kingdom of heaven?
What if God's word teaches us that many who profess Christ outwardly will not actually be saved?
[5:09] On the one hand, it's true that the Bible teaches us that in the end, the saints of God will be an innumerable throng. Revelation 7, 9 describes that throng. It says, There's going to be many of us in the end, the cumulative number.

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The cumulative total of all saints throughout all history will indeed be an innumerable throng. On the other hand, the Bible also teaches us consistently of the fact that, relatively speaking, compared to the rest of the world, at every time and juncture in human history, those who believe and trust in him and who are actual regenerate Christians are few.
In the parable of the wedding feast, later in Matthew 22, 1-14, Jesus says that many who are invited to the wedding feast, which symbolizes heavenly bliss and in the fellowship with God, they actually do not come, even though they've been invited.
And some who come to the feast, they show up, it says, with no wedding garment, meaning they don't have the means. They don't have, they've not been cleansed by Christ. They don't have the right to enter in.
And so they are cast into the outer darkness. Jesus, then, at the conclusion of that parable, says this, Many are called, but few are chosen.
[6:39] In Luke 13, 23-24, someone asks Jesus explicitly, Lord, will those who are saved be few?

And Jesus gives him a straight answer. Strive to enter the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
Meaning, there will be a few. This passage is what parallels our passage this morning in Matthew 7, 13-14, where Jesus says, Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.
And those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life.
And those who find it are few. How, then, can we tell true Christians apart from the false Christians? From those who, true Christians who are on the narrow gate and the narrow way, from those who are on the broad way to destruction? Jesus' answer is obedience.
[7:48] And the key word that recurs throughout this passage is the word do. It began with verse 12, which summarizes the ethical commands of the entire Sermon on the Mount and, indeed, of the entire law and the prophets, where it says, Do to others what you wish they would do to you.

The word do, it first occurred there. And then you see it again in verses 17-19, where it says, So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.
A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. The word that's used there, translated as bear, in Greek, is actually the exact same word that's translated do, earlier in verse 12.
So if you translate it literally, it would be that every healthy tree does good fruit, produces good fruit. This theme of doing continues in verse 21.
Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Then who will enter the kingdom of heaven? But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
[8:58] Similarly, Jesus says in verse 24 and 26, Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. Given this prominent theme, we can summarize Jesus' main point in this passage with the words of James 1.22.
Be doers of the word and not hearers only. To drive his point home, Jesus gives us four illustrations, really warning vignettes, that emphasize the importance of doing God's will, not just hearing it.
And he warns us against four types of people, that we should not be like that, and also warns us against such people who will not enter the kingdom of heaven. First, I'm going to call drifters, people who are drifting along with the patterns of this world and conforming to the patterns of this world, conformists.
Second, deceivers or imposters, the wolves in sheep's clothing. Third, the deluded, those who think that they are saved but are not, but are actually hypocrites.
[10:09] And lastly, the dabblers or the dilettantes who dabble in the faith, who hear things and pick up things here and there, but are not actually practicing it and living by it.

Jesus' first warning concerns the conformists. He says in verses 13 to 14, This is a decision that confronts every man and every woman, and there's no way around it.
Jesus makes several stark contrasts between these two spiritual options. And these two options differ in four ways. First, in the point of entry.

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Second, in the path itself. Third, in the people, the number of people who choose them. And fourth, and finally, in their destination, where it leads. First, the point of entry is different.
Jesus tells us to enter by the narrow gate, but in contrast, the other gate is wide. The narrow gate implies a high barrier for entry.
[11:28] The wide gate implies a low barrier for entry. Repeatedly in the ensuing chapters, Jesus speaks of the high cost of following him.

He says that his disciples are like sheep in the midst of wolves. What happens to sheep in the midst of wolves? They get devoured. He says in the same way, you will be persecuted.
You'll be reviled. You will be killed for his name's sake. Matthew 10, 16 to 33. Similarly, he says in Matthew 16, 24 to 26. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?
According to Jesus, following him entails losing our lives. Counting our very lives forfeit for the sake of following Christ.
[12:29] It means denying ourselves our own selfish purposes and priorities and submitting them to God's purposes and priorities. It involves taking up our own cross, dying to our sinful desires, and saying along with the apostle Paul in Galatians 2, 20, I have been crucified with Christ.

I no longer live, but Christ lives within me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. According to Jesus, following him entails first, losing our lives.
Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. We must lose our lives. And a necessary corollary to that is that we must also lose the world.
Jesus says, what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul? We must lose the world. James 4, 4 says this, Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. What exactly is the world? 1 John 2, 15 to 16 explains, Do not love the world or the things in the world.
[13:46] If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

In order to follow after Christ, we must leave the sinful world behind. This is what it means to enter by the narrow gate.
I imagine a narrow passageway, maybe in the cave, from a scene in The Lord of the Rings or something in the two towers, where you have to drop all your bags, you have to leave your horse behind, because it's only barely narrow enough for you to get through with your body.
Or I imagine this like crawl like hobbit hole, you know, where you have to get on your hands and knees, and you have to crawl through because it is so small and narrow. The narrow gate through which every Christian is saved is one that requires us to humble ourselves before God.
It requires submission to the Lord and renunciation of the world. The other gate, on the other hand, is wide.
[14:59] In fact, it's so wide, it's almost as if there's no gate at all. It says those who enter by it are many. The barrier for entry is very low.

So low, in fact, it's as if there's no barrier, because this is the default gate at which every single human being finds him or herself. No tickets are required.
There are no security guards. There are no bag limits. This gate is wide. It's open to everyone. Anyone. There's something about this notion of inclusivity and openness that appeals to people who are naturally compassionate and considerate toward people, which that, in and of itself, is a good thing.
Who among us wants to be known as the exclusive one, right? For this reason, well-meaning Christians sometimes lower the bar, and they widen the gate.
Oh, you don't believe certain fundamental doctrines of the faith. Oh, you disagree with the Bible's ethical teachings.
[16:14] Oh, you're living in willful disobedience to God's commands because you don't think that that particular command is important. Don't worry about it.

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Don't worry about it. Come right in. God is gracious. He overlooks our sins. Everyone is entitled to the freedom of conscience. The problem with that approach is that we do not have the authority to widen the gate.
We think that we have widened the right gate for people to enter in. What we have actually done is direct them to the wrong gate, to the wide gate and the easy way that leads to destruction, not the narrow gate and the hard way that leads to life.
However compassionate and considerate it might appear to us, giving people a sense of security, a false sense of assurance, on the broad way to destruction, is not compassion but cruelty.
Second, the two spiritual options before us also differ in their path or way. The way to life is hard, but the way to destruction is easy.
[17:33] The words hard and easy don't quite capture the imagery that's being employed here by Jesus. The word translated easy here in the ESV is not the exact same word that was translated in the earlier verses wide, but it has a similar meaning.

It's a word that means broad and spacious. This path is easy because it is broad and roomy.
Imagine a well-paved 10-lane highway like the ones you see in California, though somehow they still have traffic in it.
You have all the room you could want. You can do somersaults on it and cartwheels on it, and you never have to worry about falling off the road. The word translated hard, on the other hand, in verse 14, is also not the same word that's translated as narrow, but it's also a similar word.
It's a word that means to press upon or to be narrow. It's a word that describes the crowd pressing in against Jesus in Mark 3, 9, so that it says that his disciples fear that he might be crushed.
It's the same word that's used in the New International Version of 2 Corinthians 4, verse 8, to describe the life of faithful followers of Christ.
[18:50] It says that we are hard-pressed on every side. That's the same word, but not crushed.
So the reason why this way is hard is because it is narrow.

It's tight. Imagine a wilderness journey where you have a narrow sliver of path to walk on, and you have little room to the left or to the right.
You're pressed in by rocks and crags and tree branches and bushes everywhere, and you're navigating through this hard-pressed path.
The Christian's pilgrim journey is like that. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed.
Perplexed, but not driven to despair.
Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. Becoming a Christian does not make your life automatically smooth and easy. Jesus guaranteed to us in John 16, 33, in this world you will have tribulation.
[19:57] And 2 Timothy 3, 12 says, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. The broad way that leads to destruction is easy.

It's smooth. It's well-paved and inviting because it's the path that appeals to the sinful, natural man.
It's the path that fits with, that's conformed to the well-grooved patterns of our sinful world.
So it is natural, it feels natural to go down that path. But the narrow way that leads to life is hard, full of toil and pain.
Why? Because our sinful flesh rails against this way, against the Spirit of God within us. As it says in Galatians 5, 16 to 17, we must fight to keep in step with the Spirit.
We must fight to mortify our sinful flesh, disciplining our body and keeping it under control, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9, 27, laying aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and running with endurance the race that is set before us, as it says in Hebrews 12, verse 1.
[21:17] Our sinful flesh resists the way. The sinful world also resists the way of God. It pressures us to conform to the sinful values and patterns of this world, and when we don't, it ostracizes us and persecutes us.

So we must fight daily to renew our minds in God's Word and to be transformed in doing so. So the world resists it, our sinful flesh resists it, and the devil also resists it.
He rages against the people of God, prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, as it says in 1 Peter 5, 8 to 9. And we must stand in faith firmly and resist them, putting the whole armor of God through prayer and supplication and by wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, as it says in Ephesians 6.

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So these two spiritual options differ in the point of entry, they differ in the way itself, and third, they differ in the number of people who enter them. Those who enter by the wide gate and the broad way, it says, are many.
But those who enter the small gate and the narrow road are few. In other words, the path of the Christian disciple is not popular. It's not the normal way in this sinful world.
[22:40] Right at the onset, Jesus is counseling us to give up the hope of world's acceptance and acclaim. Even in historical times when there was great revival among the churches of God, like the first century that we see recorded in the book of Acts, even in such times, Christians were always a small minority.

The sinful world hates the light of Christ because they don't want their dark evil deeds to be exposed, as it says in John 3.20.
Christians are never going to be loved by this world because our belief exposes their unbelief, because our obedience exposes their disobedience to God.
If we are ever approved by this world or acclaimed by this world, that should be a cause not for celebration but concern. Jesus said in the Beatitudes earlier in Matthew 5.11-12, Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you on account of me. Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven. For so they persecute the prophets who are before you. In the same parallel, the Beatitudes, in Luke 6.26, Jesus adds this, Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.
[24:10] If we find ourselves aligned with the many people of this world and not with the few of Christ's disciples, that's not a sign that we're this enlightened Christian who's not like those other backwards and bigoted Christians.

More likely than that, we are on the broad way that leads to destruction and the world sees nothing in us to persecute. Brothers and sisters in Christ, are you spoken ill of by the people of this world? Then take heart. Be encouraged. For that's how all the faithful people of God in past ages have been treated. So Jesus is here warning us that the conformists who drift along the currents of this world rather than swimming upstream against the current, those who fear the judgment of man more than the judgment of God and therefore follow along with the masses, they will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
That brings me to the final contrast in Jesus' analogy, the fourth difference. The two choices differ in their final destination. This is the reason that Jesus commands us to enter by the narrow gate. For, he says, this is the reason he gives, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. Jesus is here speaking of eternal destruction and eternal life as we can see in the following verses.
[25:46] These two stark choices that Jesus offers us, there's no way around them. These are not two ways that take different routes to get to the same destination. No, they inevitably, unavoidably lead to two very different destinations, either to eternal life or to eternal destruction.

There is no third way on this spiritual pilgrimage. We are either on the way to hell or on the way to heaven. We are either with Christ or against him.
Indecision is a decision because if you do not heed Jesus' command to enter by the narrow gate, you are already at the wide gate and the broad way that leads to destruction.
It's keeping in view this ultimate destination that enables us to persevere in the hard and narrow way when it's frankly hard.
The people of this world might on the surface look like they're really enjoying themselves on that broad way and the easy way. Maybe they are doing cartwheels and somersaults along that 10-lane highway path.
[26:59] They don't have to fight greed. They can acquire and acquire and acquire and get as much as you want and spend on everything that you want, that you want on luxuries and the finer things in life.

They don't have to worry about chastity or purity. They can sleep around with as many partners as they want, have sex with whoever they want. They can drink, they can gamble, they can wield great power and abuse it and by getting that power and exercising authority they could earn the praises and the admirations of the people of this world.
But in the end, where does it lead? It leads to death, to destruction, to eternal damnation. in contrast, we who are on the hard and narrow way, we are wasting away outwardly, being

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persecuted, reviled.
But it says, in 2 Corinthians 4, 16-18, we are being inwardly, we are being renewed day by day for this light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen for the things that are seen are transient but things that are unseen are eternal.
That's the first vignette or the image that the metaphor Jesus shares. The second type of people that Jesus mentions in verse 15-20 are the imposters.
[28:45] So not all who are on the broad way are aware that they are non-Christians. So these people are those who pretend to be Christians. Verse 15 says, Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

These people look like sheep. They come in sheep's clothing. They know how to pass as Christians. They know Christian jargon. They know the Christian subculture.
They can quote scripture and appear pious and godly. They are invariably quite nice and they are winsome and persuasive as charlatans tend to be. They may for this reason even be widely respected within the church and among Christians as leaders and as prophets of the Lord.
And it's precisely because of their deceptive powers that Jesus warns us, Beware of false prophets. But how then can we tell these impostors apart from true Christians?
Jesus tells us in verses 16 to 20, You will recognize them by their fruits. Our grapes gather from thorn bushes or figs from thistles. So every healthy tree bears good fruit but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.
[30:00] A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Twice Jesus says you will recognize them by their fruits. The main point of this metaphor is pretty straightforward, right? Most of us live in the city.
I mean, we're all here in Boston and maybe we don't know trees very well and shrubs very well. It might be only a few of us probably can look at trees and bushes and recognize them by their leaves and trunks and branches.
You know, but all of us no matter how dull we are can recognize trees by their fruit, right? When there's an apple on a tree, that's an apple tree. When there's blueberries on a bush, that's a blueberry bush.
Likewise, we know how to tell a diseased tree or a healthy tree by looking at their fruit. If a vine produces juicy and plump and sweet grapes, then we know, oh, this is a healthy vine.
[31:03] But if a vine produces this shriveled up and sour grapes, then you know that there's something wrong with the vine.

It's a diseased tree. But when it comes to applying this self-evident principle to people, what exactly are the fruits that we're looking for?
Remember that in Matthew 7, 7 to 27, here in this large passage, there is an emphasis on doing the will of the Father in heaven. Are these so-called prophets doing the will of the Father in heaven? Are they doing to others what they wish they would do to them? In Jeremiah, the Lord God condemns the false prophets who are committing adultery, who are strengthening the hands of the wicked so that there is no justice in the land.
Definitely one of the things in view here are false prophets who live falsely, who undo the word of God by the works that they do.
[32:16] That's one aspect of it. However, I think there is a situation that is even more prominently in Jesus' mind when he warns of false prophets here. Because what prophets are primarily known for are not their works, but their words.

what they say, and they are called false prophets when they prophesy falsely, a message that God has not given them, but they relay it as a message of the Lord. And whenever Jesus uses the example of the metaphor of trees and their fruits, he seems to emphasize the fruit of our lips, what we say, our speech.
You can see this in multiple places in the gospel. If you go to Matthew chapter 12, verse 33 to 37, Jesus says, either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

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The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak.
[33:35] For by your words, you will be justified, and by your words, you will be condemned.
Similarly, in Luke chapter 6, verse 43 to 45, Jesus says, for no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit.

For each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are graves picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.
For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks. Again, whenever Jesus uses metaphor, he seems to focus on our speech and the things that we say and the things that we teach.
Earlier in Matthew 5, 17 to 20, when he was speaking about how he came to fulfill the law and the prophets, he said, not only those who relax the least of these commandments, but also those who teach others to do the same, those who teach others to relax God's commands, teach others to break his commands, will be held accountable to God.
I think that's primarily what God has in view here. I refer you again to the image of the false prophet, the second beast, in Revelation chapter 19, or chapter 12, 11, sorry, where this false prophet, the second beast, is described as looking like a lamb but speaking like a dragon.
[35:02] That's how you recognize a false prophet, by their speech. In what ways do they reveal that they are false prophets by what they say? It's the same thing that false prophets have always said.

In Jeremiah 6, verse 14, God denounces these false prophets saying, they have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace.
Jeremiah was prophesying sword and famine to the people of Israel because of their idolatry and their adultery, spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness to God. Sword is coming, war is coming, famine is coming, but then there was this whole host of false prophets who were telling the Israelites, oh, don't worry, peace, peace, you will have peace.
And God denounces them for saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace, healing the wounds of my people lightly. They were promising these sinners cheap grace, peace without repentance.
They were dismissing Jeremiah, saying, well, Jeremiah, you know him. He's always a Debbie Downer. He's always been. He's harsh, narrow-minded, a theological snob, a legalistic Pharisee.
[36:17] Don't listen to him. He understands nothing of the wideness of God's grace, the broadness of God's love. God's love. In other words, these false prophets preached a gospel without a narrow gate and a hard road.

they preached pleasant and unoffensive messages that appealed to the sinful natural man. When pressed, these false prophets might concede that sin is real, but they certainly don't like to talk about it.
They make light of sin. They heal the wounds of the people lightly, putting a little band-aid on skin cancer, prescribing some antacids for someone who's experiencing heart failure, saying peace, peace when there is no peace.
D. Martyn L. Jones concurs. He says, the false prophet very rarely tells you anything about the holiness, the righteousness, the justice, and the wrath of God. He generally emphasizes one truth about God only, and that is love.
He does not mention the other truths that are equally prominent in the scriptures, and that is where the danger lies. I believe such false prophets and false teachers are even more dangerous than the overt opponents and persecutors of the church, because when you have these persecutors of the church from without, it's obvious that they are there, and we can prepare ourselves and defend ourselves, but with the wolves in sheep's clothing, it's harder to recognize them, and they destroy the church from within and ravage the people of God, the sheep of God's pasture.
[38:14] But the imposters will all one day be exposed by God, and it says, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So that's the second kind of people.

The third kind of people Jesus warns us about here are the hypocrites, the deluded. Jesus is bringing this comparison even closer to home.
There are people who are really convinced that they belong in the kingdom of heaven, but in fact, they don't. Jesus says in verse 21, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom

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of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
Jesus is speaking of those who confess him as Lord, which we are supposed to do that. He's not saying, don't worry about confessing Jesus is Lord. He says, not everyone who confesses Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but no one who does not confesses Jesus is Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven.
That's true too. So we are supposed to confess him, but that confession itself isn't enough. What does it say in Romans 10? You must confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you must believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead.
[39:27] These people don't actually fully trust him, believe in Jesus. They don't have a personal relationship with Jesus. So Jesus says of them, I never knew you in verse 23.

They are the hypocrites that Jesus announces in Matthew 15 verse 8 who honor God with their lips while their hearts are far from him. James 2 also speaks of such people, the people who claim to have faith but who had no good works to accompany their so-called faith.
James 2 19 says, you believe that God is one, you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder. A mere cognitive belief, intellectual assent that God exists and that he is one is insufficient.
That kind of faith, even demons have it. They believe that God exists. Later in Matthew 8 verse 29, the demons will address Jesus as, oh son of God.
But do these demons have saving faith? Of course not. That is, that confession, oh son of God from the demons is light years apart from the confession of Peter later on in Matthew when he says, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.
[40:47] a mere acknowledgement of Lord, Lord confessing him is insufficient. It's those who do the will of the Father in heaven who will enter the kingdom of heaven.

But here's the sobering reality and the reason why this passage has troubled the conscience of many people throughout history. These hypocrites are genuinely deluded. they think that they did do the will of God in heaven.
On the day of judgment they will say to Jesus, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty deeds in your name?
And there's no indication in the text that they're lying or that they're being misleading, making misleading grandiose claims. No, they sincerely believe that they prophesied and cast out demons and that they did mighty wonders.
Prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit as Ed mentioned earlier in the service. It's the gift that God gives to enable people to receive messages from God and relay them to others to build up the church of Christ.
[42:00] However, spiritual gifts are natural gifts sanctified, consecrated by the Holy Spirit. So, if I could use some examples, a university professor who is very gifted in teaching might be converted to Christianity and now he has a consecrated gift of teaching to build up the church of Christ through preaching, perhaps.

Or, there might be a woman who seems to have premonitions. Even from a childhood, she received visions and has dreams. when she's converted, now those dreams and visions are also converted in a sense.
They are sanctified and consecrated for the purposes of God and they use it as a gift of prophecy to build up the church. The reason why I mentioned these examples is to show that a person can prophesy without being a genuine Christian.
Perhaps the most famous example is Balaam in Numbers 22-24. The Lord enables this pagan seer to prophesy with striking accuracy and specificity of the future.
And yet, the Bible's assessment of Balaam is not good. 2 Peter 2-15 describes him as someone who loved gain from wrongdoing. Revelation 2-14, Jesus himself condemns those in the church of Pergamum who hold the teaching of Balaam.
[43:29] And Jesus rejects Balaam as someone who put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel so that they might eat food, sacrifice to idols, and practice sexual immorality. So it is possible for unsaved, unregenerate people to do these kinds of impressive deeds.

Not only that, these people have cast out demons. In Matthew 12, 22-32, when Jesus himself casts out a demon, the envious Pharisees accuse him of casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons, Beelzebul.

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And Jesus asks them a question to challenge them. He says, if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast out demons?
Therefore, they will be your judges. In other words, Jesus is saying, well, why don't you go ask your own Jewish sons who go around and casting out demons and see if they can cast out demons by demons because that doesn't make any sense.
Jesus is here admitting that there were Jewish exorcists who were casting out demons. That's what you see in Acts 19, 13-16, the sons of Sceva.
[44:40] It's not as effective as the Christians who are indwelled by the Spirit of God and have the authority of Christ behind them. But nevertheless, it can happen in a limited way, in some way. And of course, we see in Revelation the false prophet, the second beast being empowered by the devil to do similar things, although it's not casting out their own demons.

They do other wonders and signs. This is still not all. These people say in verse 22, did we not do many mighty works in your name? That word do is again the key word that recurs throughout this passage.
They're claiming to have done what Jesus says that we must do to do the will of the Father in heaven. We did it, Lord. We were not hearers only, we were doers.
Nevertheless, Jesus declares, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.
Jesus is not saying that he has never heard of them. Jesus is the omniscient, risen, and ascended Lord and judge of all the earth in this scene.
He's speaking rather of personal relationship. He's speaking of election. in the same way God speaks of it in Amos chapter 3, verse 2, referring to his people Israel. You only have I known among all the families of the earth.
[45:56] That doesn't mean that God doesn't know about any of the other families and peoples in the world. It means that you only have I chosen as my people, my own special possession. That's what Jesus is saying.

I never knew you. He means you never belonged to me. You were never one of my people. But how can that be when these people prophesied and cast out demons and did many mighty works in Jesus' name?
Notice that Jesus calls them workers of lawlessness. They were hypocrites. They did many public impressive works that were ostensibly for God, but they weren't really doing it for him.
Because in other, perhaps less visible areas of their life, they were workers of lawlessness. This reminds me of Deuteronomy 13, 1 to 5, where there's warnings against false prophets.
He says, If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams rises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, Let us go after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams.
[47:14] For the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

even if what this false prophets say is true, even if they do signs and wonders, if they then say, Let's turn away from the Lord, that's a false prophet.
I think that's what these self-deceived, deluded people were doing. The obedience that Jesus demands here is not just external acts.
Jesus is after our hearts. Not just what we do, but why we do these things. When you do your acts of devotion and service and righteousness, do you do those works out of your personal relationship with Jesus?
Are they expressions of your wholehearted love for him? Maybe you love debating theology and the finer points of theology.
[48:27] You love charts and cross-references and you're greatly stimulated by dissecting the word of God. But maybe you're not a lover of Jesus.

You're a lover of logic and argumentation and literary analysis. Maybe you love apologetics. You love to engage unbelievers with the cosmological argument or talk to them about the credibility and the reliability and the historicity of the scriptures.
But maybe more than loving Jesus, you love your intellect and showcasing it to others. I'm not saying that these activities are bad in and of themselves. They're good things and we should do.

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You should study theology. You should learn apologetics, but I'm trying to show you how they can all go wrong if our heart's not in the right place. Maybe you love to talk about your devotional practices, how much scripture you've read or memorized, how much you've journaled, how much you love God.
You're always trying to produce tears when you're talking about God. You want people to know how genuine you are. But what if your zeal is misguided and more than loving Jesus, you love to show people how much you love Jesus.
[49:56] What if you're a pastor or a missionary and you have given your life to building up the church? You've worked yourself haggard, but in the end, you're doing it for yourself.

You're gaining followers after yourself. What if ministry was not a context for loving and serving Jesus, but was actually a pretext for making much of yourself? What if Jesus said you could never preach again?
Would you still read your Bible? What if Jesus said that you could never be a missionary? Would you still evangelize the lost around you? What is so alarming about this passage is that Jesus says in verse 22, on that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, but then I will declare to them I never knew you.
The word many here matches the many who enter the wide gate and the broad way that leads to destruction. It's not few who are self-deceived. It's many who are self-deceived.
And this reality should make all of us examine ourselves for all that we are doing to serve the Lord. Do we have a personal relationship with Jesus? If all your titles and positions and reputations and ministries were stripped from you, would you still love God with all of your heart?
[51:21] The final vignette in verses 24 to 27 summarizes this whole passage and brings it to a close. Everyone who then hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house. But it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.
And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it. This is a particularly hard-hitting passage in light of the recent flash floods along the Guadalupe River in Texas.
Maybe some of you guys have seen videos, literal houses floating down the river that's swelling up, destroying people's lives.
This also happened in this arid area, part of the world that Jesus is preaching in and Jesus is warning against that. And notice that the two builders, they build houses that probably look very much the same.
[52:31] There's no indication that they're radically different houses. They look the same on the surface. This is what I call the dabblers, the dilettantes, the people who go in and out of church, people who've heard sermons and know how to say Christian things, people who give the appearance that they are Christians.

Yet, fundamentally, there's something amiss because they did not build their house on the rock. They did not build their house on submission to Christ and obedience to his commands.
Rather, they started without the foundation and built to show what appears to other people to be a house. instead of starting with humbling oneself before God and before Jesus.
I do want you all to hear these things and examine yourselves as I did, but I also don't want you to go back home with despair if you are a genuine follower of Christ, which I suspect most of you are.
I was reading a chapter in the sermon, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones on this chapter, and he was mentioning a preacher named Robert Murray McShane, and he said that this preacher walked so intimately and personally with God and was so full of the Spirit that people who in the audience who heard him preach said that when he came to preach at the pulpit that people would start weeping right away because they sensed that this man came straight from an audience with the living God.
[54:25] And I read that and I wept. And I wept. If I could be a preacher like that.

How many times when I should have shut my mouth, blabbered to make myself look good instead of trying to make Christ look good.

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If you are being convicted by the sermon, I want to leave you with this hope because as Jesus goes through the sermon, he makes an interesting and suggestive shift.
He says in verses 21 to 23, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Notice he said, not everyone who says to me, not everyone who says to God, not the Father.
This is the first time in Matthew when Jesus calls himself Lord. The Lord, Lord. And then look at verse 24 when he says, everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like wise men who built his house on the rock.
[55:46] He doesn't say here everyone who does the words of the Father, the will of the Father as he said in the previous passage. No, he says these words of mine. Jesus is putting himself in the very place of the living God because he is the son of God.

And he's doing this because he knows what he's going to accomplish on the behalf of his people by going to the cross and dying for the sins of people to save them and to make a way for them to go to the kingdom of heaven.
And that's what we read about in John 10 that Ed mentioned in the assurance of pardon in our service. What is the narrow gate that leads to the kingdom of heaven?
Jesus says in John 10 verse 7 truly truly I say to you I am the door of the sheep. And he says I am the good shepherd I know my own and my own know me.
I laid out my life for the sheep. That's what Jesus did for us. He doesn't just point to a way and say well that's a really hard way but you have to make it.
[56:57] You have to get through there. You have to squeeze in somehow. You need to push a little harder. No Jesus says I am the way. In John 14 6 I am the way the truth and the life.

I am the door. Jesus says in John 14 6 John 15 5 I am the vine. Whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears fruit.
1 Corinthians 10 tells us Jesus is the rock. 1 Corinthians 3 says that there is no other foundation upon which we can build but Jesus Christ.
So all these things if we go back from this passage and say you know what I just need to kick myself a little more be a little harder on myself and work a little hard and push harder and do it do it do it and I'm going to make it I promise you you will not make it.
It's too hard. The gate is too narrow. The way is too hard. You will not make it. But if you go now and hear Jesus say I am the door I am the way I am the tree the vine in which you can derive nourishment from I am the rock upon you should build it's not about just here's what you need to do here's a list of things go do it Jesus says no I am the way come to me come to me and believe in me come to me that I died for you on the cross for your sins and was raised from the dead so you might have eternal life come to me so you might be one with me so you might live with me and have fellowship with me that I might come and live inside you and dwell in you so my spirit might empower you that's the hope of the gospel so let's cling to that together let's pray yes father thank you for sending your only son
[59:22] Jesus Christ to be the way that we need it Lord for there is no other way Lord many of us in this room have tried we've tried these other ways they don't work they don't lead us to you they don't lead us to the kingdom of heaven but Lord we confess and we worship you because of this that Jesus is the way the truth and the life and because of him we have a pathway to you we have been reconciled to you Lord help us to cling to this truth so that we might be able to persevere till the very end in

Jesus name we pray amen

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