

Sermon for August 2, 2020
Matthew 7:15-23

“I never knew you!”

If there were ever words that should frighten us, they are these words from Jesus: “I never knew you.” “I never knew you!” “I never knew you!”

Jesus had just finished preaching to a multitude about “A Tree and Its Fruit.” He compares the production by a tree of good or bad fruit to one who calls on His Name. Some apple trees produce good and healthy fruit that nourish those who eat their juicy apples. Other apple trees produce bad fruit that no one wants to eat. The fruits are bad - diseased or rotting apples they are. They are not useful but harmful. They don't taste good and they make people sick.

By implication, Jesus compares good and bad fruits to teachers of the faith who are good and bad. Those who teach good things and proper things of the faith teach faith in the One whom God has sent, who is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of the Only True and Living God. They teach repentance and faith. They teach truth. By teaching truth they teach Jesus, for He is the only truth to be found in this world. There will always be some truth teachers – faithful followers of Jesus - until the day Jesus returns.

But there will always be bad teachers, also. There will always be teachers who teach other things – things other than Jesus dying to redeem the world from its sin – – things other than God loving the world so much that He sent His only Begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life - things other than salvation by grace - grace which is nothing else than the undeserved pardon of God given through faith in His Son and His merits.

There will always be teachers who teach bad things that mislead people away from God - seeking other ways to heaven than salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Unfortunately it seems that the bad teachers always outnumber the good teachers. In this dangerous and scary world, there are always false teachers whose aim is to lead people to worship false gods. There will always be false teachers – unfaithful followers of Jesus - until Christ comes again.

And so it is that many people call on the Lord's Name some believing good things and other not believing good things. In Jesus' day and in our day many believe things about Jesus that are not true. Many believe in the “prosperity Jesus” of teachers like Joel Osteen. Just believe, Osteen says - saying nothing about Jesus and the forgiveness of sins - and saying that if you just believe enough you will be rich – like your believing produces riches on its own or that there is a god who produces riches and only gives riches to those who believe in Him. And then there are those who believe that God comes to them willy nilly out of the air and the imaginations of their minds. They do not believe that the Holy Scriptures reveal God to us as He would have Himself revealed but they believe – like the Mormons – that God comes to certain people and reveals His will to them by talking to their mind or even talking out loud to them. They only believe the things in Scriptures that they want to believe. They don't believe the words of Hebrews 1:1 which says: “*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son whom he*

created the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

The “spoke” of the previous sentence is in the aorist tense in the Greek. In the aorist action is indicated. The aorist does not indicate whether the action has been completed, continues now, or continues into the future. But in the next phrase the aorist changes to past tense “has spoken”. The speaking from God has been completed. There is no more need for revelation from God. He has revealed his great love to the world as His Son hung on a Roman Cross dying for the sins of the world then raising Him from the dead for all the world to see and believe. He has spoken but His words continue to have effect. God creates by speaking. The Word of the Lord endures forever.

Then Jesus says to the great crowd that “*Not everyone that 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.*” Jesus speaks here of his Heavenly Father – not Joseph his earthly father. He speaks of where his Father lives – in heaven – as the identifying mark of who His true Father is. And what is the will and work of His Heavenly Father? That we should *believe in the One whom He has sent.*

Jesus goes on to say that on the day he returns in judgment many will say to Him that they prophesied in His Name, that they cast out demons in his Name, and that they did mighty works in His Name but that He would say to them that He Never Knew them. Why would Jesus say this? Because they did not have faith in Him to save them from their sins. They did not believe that He is the One whom God has sent. They did not believe that Baptism saves. They did not believe that this bread is His body and this wine is His blood. They did not believe that He hears their prayers. They never called on His Name as being their God when their times were troubled. They called on the gods of this world to lead them through life, money, fame, power, idols all, dead gods – yet they called on them rather than Jesus as their God. Any good works that they claimed were not through faith in Jesus - but works done in hopes of a reward from men or idols or the devil himself.

In chapter 25 of Matthew, Jesus discusses a similar scenario by saying to some people that they did call on his name in times of need and they said, “Lord, when did we do this?” And so is the Christian as he lives the Christian life. He lives his life doing good things – things done in faith in Christ – just because that is what Christians do – sometime and even most of the time - we don't even know when we do things as a result of our faith in Christ. We trust in God for our sustenance and livelihood – for our daily bread – and for all good things – and while so doing we share with others - knowing that God takes care of us.

Oh, Lord have mercy on us. Though we put our trust in you, many times we are weak, help our unbelief, strengthen our faith and trust in you. We know that it is not our knowing you that makes our relationship with You, O God, but it is your knowing us through faith in your Son that makes our relationship with you, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. In your Name, Lord Jesus, the Son of the Only True and Living God. Amen.