

“Two Ways to Live” Shane Hatfield Matthew 7:13-29 7/24/22

Hi, my name is Shane and I'm the teaching pastor here. I'm so glad you came to worship with us this morning! We believe that the Bible is the word of God and it brings truth and life, so every Sunday we gather to read and meditate and study God's word. If you have a Bible, or a Bible app, and you want to open it up, you can open it to Matthew 7:13. We are going to conclude our series on the Sermon on the Mount, arguably the most famous sermon that has ever been preached. It has been a fantastic study and in this sermon Jesus presents two ways: the way of the world, and the way of the Lord. He has been constantly showing us how the way of the Lord is the way to the good life. The way of the Lord creates a counter cultural community that gives us a new way to live, a new way to be human, a new way to glorify God, and a new way to enjoy Him, and experience a life that is better than we could have ever imagined. So this morning, as we look at Matthew 7:13-29, we're going to see that Jesus shows us the path to the good life. Hear the word of the Lord:

13 “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. **14** For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16** You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. **18** A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

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.’

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** 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. **26** 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. **27** 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.”

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, **29** for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”

As Charlie read, the psalmist says that God's teaching is wonderful and it gives light and life. Let's pray that God would show us the wonder of His teaching now.

I have a confession to make. I am not good at taking vacation. I'm not good at it. Pray for my wife and kids, we're going to Colorado next week. Pray for me. But I'm not good at taking a vacation, and usually every vacation kind of follows the same pattern. I come into vacation, I've been working hard for weeks or months, I've been trying to be a good dad, a good person, a good pastor, I've been trying to love and serve others. So I come into vacation, and now, vacation is my time. I get to do all those fun things that I haven't been doing for months, and it is my chance to have my world revolve around me. You can guess how that turns out. It doesn't take long before my expectations are not met. I get angry and frustrated and bitter and self-righteous.

Well, the same thing happened around the fourth of July, I always take a few days off around the fourth of July to kind of catch my breath during the summer and I started out the week with these high expectations and inevitably the expectations weren't met and by the end of the week I was bitter and cranky and self-righteous and I did what I normally do during those times, I said, 'I'm leaving. I'm going to go ride my bike. You guys fend for yourselves.' So, I got on my bike and I started riding it around LaFortune and as I'm riding my bike around LaFortune park I started praying and saying, 'Lord, what is going on? I have been working hard for you. I've been trying to be a good dad, and a good pastor, and all I feel like I experience is disappointment. One disappointment after another.' It was in that moment when the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit whispered to me, 'And my Father said, all that I have is yours. What more do you want?' And the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to see my self-righteousness, to see my bitterness, to see my anger for the sin it was. I saw that my heavenly Father has loved me and been gracious and kind to me. So, I repented of my self-righteousness. I asked the Lord to forgive me, I received His grace, and I was able to thank Him for His gifts, and the rest of the vacation was a lot better for everybody.

What had happened was the little Pharisee in my heart had gone to work and I had drifted from the way of the Lord, which is the way of grace, and I had gotten back onto the path of the way of the world, which is the way of self-righteousness and hypocrisy and performance. That road, in the end, leads to what? It leads to destruction! Destruction of relationships, of families, of churches and organizations. The path to the good life is not the way of performance, it's not the way of hypocrisy, it's not the way of self-righteousness, it is the way of grace. That's what Jesus shows us here in the conclusion to His sermon, and that's what I want you to see this morning. The path to the good life is the path of grace. We're going to look at three things: the way to the good life, the influence of the good life, and the foundation of the good life. Kids, if you're listening out there and you want to take some notes, write down the names of the people who have been good influences in your life, and why. We're going to talk about good influences in the middle. So, write down some good influences and why they have been good influences.

The first thing we're going to look at is the way to the good life, verses 13-14. In this section, Jesus describes two different ways. The first way is the easy way! It's got a wide gate. It's broad. There are a lot of people going down this way, but Jesus says it ends in destruction. The second way is the hard, narrow way. It's got a small gate. There's only a few people going down it. Jesus says, "This is the way that leads to life." Now, we read this section and it's

tempting to go, 'Okay, I know Jesus has been talking about grace, and Shane has been talking about grace and he's been trying to help us understand the law in the context of grace, but here it is Jesus is really talking about obedience. He's really talking about works. The bad people, over here, are the atheists, the unbelievers, the partiers,' whatever you think is the bad people. 'They're going down this broad path, the wrong way, and they're going to end in destruction. And over here, on the religious side, these are the good people. These are the people who are honest and hard-working and loving, and they're going to go to heaven! So, you've got the bad people over here, and you've got the good people over here. You've got the irreligious people over here, and you've got the religious people over here.'

When I was just thinking about this, do you think Jesus is a good preacher? Do you think Jesus was a good teacher? Do you think Jesus would end His sermon with a totally different message than the rest of His sermon? No! Right? Every teacher knows that you start with your intro and you tell everybody what you're going to tell them, and then you get to the middle and you tell them what you want to tell them, and then you get to the end and you tell them what you told them. That's what good teachers do! So, if we want to understand what Jesus is saying, we've got to step back and look at this in context and go back to the beginning and middle of the sermon. To whom did Jesus address the sermon? To His disciples! To the religious people! Who did Jesus correct all the way through His sermon? He corrected the religious leaders for their self-righteousness and their hypocrisy, and then, in the middle He corrected the Gentiles which would have been the ancient people who worshiped a different god than the Jews. We might call them the irreligious people, the outsiders, and He corrects them because they think their relationship with God is based all on performance! And so, when you look at this in context, what you see is that the easy way, the broad way, the way that leads to destruction, is both a religious and an irreligious way to live based on performance! It's the way of performance, it's not the way of grace. Whether it's religious or irreligious, right? In this way, this mentality is, 'I obey, therefore, I'm loved and I'm accepted.'

Now, think about the sermon, think about the beginning of the sermon, think about the beatitudes. Who did Jesus bless? He said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, the contrite, the humble, the ones who are hungry and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure, the peaceful and persecuted. These are the people,' He says, 'Who will inherit the kingdom of God and its benefits.' The hard road, the narrow road that leads to life, is the way of grace. It's the way of looking at yourself and saying, 'I have no spiritual righteousness on my own. I'm spiritually poor! I am a sinner who is broken and needy, and I need God's righteousness from outside of me!' To enter this door and to walk in this way, what we have to do is lay down our self-righteousness and our hypocrisy and our pride of the broad way and let Jesus be our Lord and Savior. The heart of this way says, 'I am loved and accepted in Jesus, therefore, I obey.' Do you see that? There are two different ways here that Jesus is pointing out, but only one of them leads to the good life. You can either live as if 'I obey, therefore, I am loved and accepted,' or 'I am loved and accepted, therefore, I obey, and this is the only way to the good life,' and if you get those two things backwards, if you reverse the order, guess what? Whether you're religious or you're irreligious, at some point you're going to burn up and you're going to burn out.

I had this illustrated to me very vividly two days ago. Jack Richardson sent our community group a text message, he said, 'I'm at the gas station and my car just died, I need somebody to come give my van a jump!' So I said, 'Sure! I've got some jumper cables. I'll go down there and I'll help you!' So, I get to the gas station, Jack's car is right by the pump, I wheel around, I pull up, and Jack's got his jumper cables out and I'm like, 'Alright, this is my chance to help Jack. I've recharged a battery a thousand times, I know exactly how to do this.' So, I hope out, pop the hood, he pops his hood up, we put the jumper cables on his battery, I go to put the jumper cables on my battery, and I recently got a new truck and so, I just assumed I knew where the jumper cables were supposed to go! Black to black, red to red, right? So, I saw a black cap and I saw this post that had a little bit of red on it, and I'm like, 'Okay! Black to black, red to red, black, red.' I jump in the car, turn it down, fire it up, step back. Jack and I are looking at it, and within seconds, smoke begins to come up from the jumper cables, and I'm like, 'Oh no, something is wrong.' I jump in my car, I turn it off, and Jack and I just stand there and watch, mortified, as the jumper cables literally melt in front of us. This guy walks by and he's like, "Hey, you got your jumper cables backwards, didn't you?" I'm like, "Yes, yes I did. I got the jumper cables backwards." I got them backwards! I put the positive with the negative, I got them flip flopped! I got them backwards! And it burnt up!

If you get these two ways wrong, you will burn up just like those jumper cables! If you say, 'I obey, therefore, I am loved and accepted,' eventually you're going to burn up and you're going to burn out. The only way to live the good life, is to say, 'I am loved and accepted in Jesus Christ, therefore, I obey.' Those are the only two ways. Maybe you're here this morning and you've rejected the church, you've rejected Jesus, or maybe you're just not sure what you think, you have some doubts, right? And you're thinking, 'I think I'm just going to do my own thing. I'm just going to go my own way.' Jesus says, eventually that's not going to work. You're going to burn up, and you're going to burn out. That's the direction that the way of the world is leading to, and what He invites you into is the way of grace. Most of us in here are probably religious people who have already confessed: 'Jesus is my Lord and Savior, I love Him, I follow Him, I know Him, I'm in church, I believe everything that you're talking about.' That's me. I'm with you. What happens is, like what happened to me before that bike ride, that little Pharisee in our hearts goes, 'You know what? Life would really be better if you came over here and you really lived based on your own obedience.' Jesus is saying, no, that is not the way to the good life. The normal ordinary regular way of the Christian life is to live it out of the love and acceptance we have in Jesus Christ. That's the first thing we see here, the way to the good life is the way of grace.

The second thing we see here are the influences of the good life. In verses 15-23 Jesus talks about people that can influence us. He talks about these false prophets. Jesus knew that His kingdom was engaged in a spiritual struggle, it always had been. There were false prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus called the scribes and the Pharisees false prophets during His day, and every New Testament letter in some way addresses false prophets and false teachings in the church. The early church condemned heretics and false teachers. Jesus knew that there was going to be false prophets who would try to influence us to go the wrong way. He says, they will show up in sheeps' clothing, but they will deceive you. They're really wolves. So how do we recognize these false prophets? Well, let me give you three ways to recognize a false prophet.

First, we can recognize a false prophet by their attitude toward the sheep. The false prophet uses God's sheep to promote themselves. They are ravenous wolves that seek to devour. They use and abuse the sheep. The true prophet, the Christ-like prophet, is one who lays down His life for the sheep. That's what Jesus did. He was a good prophet, because He laid down His life for the sheep. The second way to recognize a false prophet is a false prophet is identified by his life and teaching. You have to ask yourself, is their life Christ-like? Are they growing in the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control? Are they encouraging their followers to grow in Christ-likeness? The false prophet is going to deceive, manipulate, and twist people to look like themselves and not like Jesus. The false prophet is always pointing people to themselves. The true prophet is always pointing people to Jesus, and saying, look more like Jesus. The third way we can identify a false prophet is by his priorities. The false prophet values success over obedience. They value position over service. They value gifts over grace. They're focused on externals, not on internal change of the heart. When we look at Jesus, Jesus didn't just come as a miracle worker to do all these miraculous things to impress people. What did He do? He came to change people from the inside out!

Part of our problem as people is we're always looking at the outside. We're always looking at the gifts, and not the grace. I was listening to a podcast this week where there was an older, wiser pastor on the podcast and they were asking him about the church's propensity to sort of elevate and create these celebrity pastors, and the celebrity pastors inevitably fall and they fail, and they asked him, "Why do you think this is? Why does this happen?" And he said, "Well, it's because we look for gifts and not for grace. There was a pastor that I knew that had a successful ministry, and then he fell into immorality, and his family and his ministry were destroyed, and then later on I got to talk to that pastor and I asked him, 'How did this happen?' And he said, 'Friday, Saturday, Sunday I'd be working on the sermon, and as I worked on it my conscience would be pricked and I would feel conviction that I was living this double life, and I would resolve, okay, I'm going to preach this sermon and then afterward I'm going to change, I'm going to repent. But then Sunday would come and I'd preach the sermon and I would see all the gifts that God was giving, I'd see people having changed lives, I would hear their compliments, and then when Monday would come around, I would never make the change.' He was looking at the gifts and not at the grace."

When it comes to the influences in our lives, our pastors, including me, our teachers, our friends, we have to ask ourselves, are we just looking for charisma, or are we looking for character? Are we just looking at gifts, or are we looking at godliness? Jesus tells us to look for grace and godliness in the hearts of your leaders. That is your true prophet, the one who looks like Jesus and is encouraging you to look more like Jesus. The next season of life in our church we're going to talk about elders, we're going to nominate, vote on, and train elders. So, as you're thinking about men in our congregation that you want to shepherd you, I want you to look at their character. Do they display a godly, gracious character? Are they growing in the fruits of the spirit? Those are the men that you want to be your shepherds. What is the root of these false prophets? Jesus tells us in verses 21-23, they don't know Christ! He describes their judgment, He says in the end, they're going to come to Him with good theology! If you look at this passage, it says they come to Him and they say, "Lord!" They use the right name, they call

Him Lord or Christ, maybe even His covenant name! They've got good theology. They also have emotion. It says, "Lord, Lord!" Any time the Bible doubles something that means emphasis. When David cries out over his son, Absalom, he says, "Absalom, Absalom." Here it says, "Lord, Lord!" They have emotion. They have passion. They've had an emotional, religious experience. They even have gifts! Look, it says, "Did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" So, they've got good theology, they've got passion, they've got ministry gifting, and what does Jesus say? "Depart from me, I never knew you." Why? You can have all of those things. You can have good theology, you can have a religious experience, you can do ministry, and not know Jesus, and miss Him, and not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Campus ministers see this a lot, I saw this a lot as a campus minister. Students would come to me, they went to youth group, they heard some good theology, they went to church camp and had a religious experience, they went on a mission trip and did some ministry, and then they come to your campus ministry and you sit down and talk to them, and they talk about all those things and they never say anything about Jesus. What you realize is their entire life was built on themselves and their own performance. These false prophets, it's kind of hidden in the English, but in the Greek, they say, "We, we, we." Their entire life, their entire ministry was based on themselves, not on knowing Jesus. In John 17:3 Jesus says, "And this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus whom You have sent." We need to make it our personal endeavor to know Jesus and to draw near to Him and to put ourselves under pastors and teachers and elders that know Jesus. Knowledge, passion, and ministry will flow out of that. How do we know if we've built our lives on Jesus or on ourselves? Jesus tells us that the trials of life will reveal our foundation.

That's what we see in the last thing, the last part here, the foundation of the good life. Jesus describes two houses. On the surface they look the same, but they have radically different foundations. One person builds their house on the sand. They hear the word of God but they don't practice it, or they hear the way of the world and so they build their house on the way of the world. And when trials come, what happens? Their house is knocked down, because it wasn't built on the right foundation. It wasn't built on the way of the Lord, and the word of the Lord. He talks about a second builder, and they build their house on the rock. They hear the word of God and they do it. They hear the way of grace and they believe it. They look at their life and they trust Jesus, they say, 'Jesus, I know that you ask me to do hard things, I know You ask me to lay down my life for You, but Your ways and Your words are good.'

And so, they go through something like the sermon on the mount that we've been through, and I want you to think about all of the different topics we've talked about. We've heard Jesus talk about anger, lust, divorce, promises, retaliation, loving your enemies, giving, praying, fasting, anxiety, judging, and loving others. That is a lot! What Jesus is saying is I want you to build your life on my life, on my ways. I am the only person who has kept all of this teaching perfectly. My words will give you a stable foundation on which to build your life, and when the trials and the tribulations come, your house will stand. Let me ask you this: when you're struggling physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, what does it do to you? Does it crush you, or does it shake you? If it crushes you, then that may be an area of your life that you have built

on the sand, and Jesus is inviting you to build on Him, because He is the rock. He is the only one that will stand. He is the only one that can support your marriage and your finances and your anxiety and your family and your friends, and when you're crushed by those things, it's a sign that that's one more area that you can build on Jesus. What will happen is when you build your life on Jesus you will be shaken, but you won't be crushed. Jesus never promises us that we won't go through hard things. He never promises us that we won't fail spiritually. He never promises us that we won't suffer, but He promises that those whose lives are built on Him will suffer and will be shaken, but won't be crushed. One day, some day, they will experience the good life. Jesus shows us the path to the good life is through grace. The influence of the good life, it's through people who have been shaped by Jesus. And the foundation of the good life, it's a life built on the person and work of Jesus, His life, His death, His resurrection. He gives us an invitation to receive that.

Jesus gives us, in another place, He tells a parable and I want to finish with this, as this parable illustrates the two ways that we can live, the two ways we can pursue the good life and how we can find it. In this parable He talks about a younger son. He says there is a young son who goes to his father and says, 'Give me my inheritance!' Which is the ancient equivalent of saying, 'Dad, I want you to die so I can have your money.' That's not a good thing. So, the father gives him his inheritance and the son takes his inheritance, and what does he do? He moves to the city, and he spends it all partying. He wastes all his father's money. He pursues the way of the world. Well eventually, the money runs out, a famine hits, he needs work, he needs food, so he hires himself to feed pigs and it's there in the pig pen that he says he longs to be filled with the pods that the pigs ate. He's empty. He's hungry. In a moment of clarity he remembers that 'the servants in my father's house had it way better, this isn't the good life, my father's house is the good life. I'm going to go home. I'll apologize to dad, and maybe he'll let me be a servant.' So, he gets up and he goes home and when he's still a long ways off, his father sees him, because his father's been waiting on him, and the father runs to him, and before the son can even get the apology out of his mouth, the father hugs him and kisses him, and welcomes him home. He tells the servants, 'Go kill the fattened calf, we're going to throw a party, my son was lost and is found. My son was dead, and he's alive!'

If that's you, if you've been running from the father, if you've been running from God, if you've been following the way of the world, know that Jesus is offering you an invitation to the good life in the Father's house. He has paid it all. His life, death, and resurrection paid, so you could come home and experience the love of the Father. All you have to do is be willing to lay down your self-righteousness, and your performance, and your hypocrisy, and say, 'Jesus, I want You. I want to build my life on You.' Ask Him to forgive you, and He will lead you to the good life. He makes that offer to younger brothers and irreligious people who have rejected the Father.

But He also makes an offer to religious people, He makes an offer to self-righteous people. In that parable there's an older brother, he's a dutiful person. He's a servant. He's a farmer. He's hard-working and honest. He's an Oklahoman! Right? When the younger brother comes home, he's out in the field, of course! He's doing what he's supposed to be doing, he's working in the field! He hears all the commotion and he asks one of the servants, 'Hey, what's

going on?’ And the servant said, ‘Well, your younger brother is home! The father is throwing him a party.’ What does the older brother do? He gets mad. He gets self-righteous. He gets on a bike and he goes for a ride around LaFortune park, instead of going to the party. So, the father goes out to him and begs him to come to the party, and the older son says, ‘I have been slaving away for you for years, I have done everything you have asked me to do, and you’ve never thrown me a party. You’ve never killed me a calf. You’ve never celebrated me.’ And the father comes to him and says, ‘All that I have is yours.’ And the parable ends right there. The question is: will the older brother come into the party and experience God’s grace, and receive God’s grace? That’s the invitation that Jesus offers us.

If you feel the Pharisee in your heart telling you to live by obedience, to live by self-righteousness, to live by pride, to live by hypocrisy, Jesus invites you to a better way. He invites you to a way of grace. He invites you to a way of laying down your self-righteousness and your pride, saying, ‘Jesus, my life is built on you, nothing more. Your life, your death, your resurrection. Thank you. Thank you for your goodness and grace.’ That’s it. That’s the way to the good life. Whether you’re religious or you’re irreligious, whether you’re the younger brother or the older brother, it’s to come to Jesus and say, ‘You are good. Your way is good. I want to follow You. I want to know You. I want to be like You. And I want to experience the good life that you have to offer.’ So, let’s go to Jesus wherever we’re at right now and let’s ask Him to help us do that. Please pray with me.