***No 19 True and False Disciples Matthew 7:21 to 23***

This is the third of Jesus’ four warnings that close the Sermon on the Mount. They are unambiguous and leave no room for fence sitting. In v 13 & 14 we saw the narrow and wide gate (note the gate comes before the road) – Jesus is the ‘gate to life’ (he said so himself) by which we enter into a life of obedience and discipleship. That road can be hard (that’s why it’s described as ‘narrow’) but it leads to eternal glory. We must never think that we travel on a road earning our way into heaven where we reach a welcoming gate. But on the way we will encounter false teachers (v 15 to 20) who we must respond to according to the fruit of their lives.

Now Jesus calls us to realise that there is such a thing as a false disciple.

1. When you hear the phrase false disciple, what do you think of?

Have you ever encountered someone you would describe as a false disciple?

There are dangers for us here. We might make judgements about people in our fellowship after they have done something wrong. (Matthew 7:1 to 6) But beware – it is Jesus who makes the decision at the final judgement (v23)

1. Have you ever said ‘surely s(he) can’t be a Christian – look what they’ve done’?

Have you ever doubted your own faith when life has been tough and your intimacy with God seems to have evaporated?

We must understand the type of person Jesus is talking about here. He is describing an individual who has publicly confessed Jesus as Lord but whom Jesus knows has not truly repented as a condition for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. He may say ‘Lord. Lord’ but Jesus’ lordship is not a reality in his life. We all have moments where we think we’re not living as we should but Jesus is talking about someone whose life is motivated and led by something/someone other than Jesus.

1. Do we all have days when we feel we have not lived as Jesus would want us to live – that’s probably everybody in the room?

How do we deal with them and get back on track?

The one thing we mustn’t do is to deny the reality that sin can drag us down. But we must equally be aware that God is a forgiving God who wants us to say sorry and move on. (Read 1 John 1 v 8 to 10). The very fact that we want to get back on track shows we are a TRUE disciple.

Do you tend to be optimistic or pessimistic about your life as a disciple?

There is real hypocrisy in the false disciple addressing Jesus as ‘Lord’. In Matthew’s gospel the word ‘Lord’ is the title used by people in search of divine help. (8:2 & 5, 9:28, 15:22 & 25) including his own disciples (8:25, 14:30). Jesus makes it clear that saying the word isn’t enough. It is those who ‘do the will of my father in heaven’ (7:21) who know what it means to call Jesus ‘Lord’. Since Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament (5:17) he is the ultimate example of obedience to the Father’s will.

1. Do we find obedience easy?

Is it easy to do God’s will on a daily basis?

How do we find out what God’s will is for our lives?

The false disciples that Jesus describes even claim the status of prophets. They claim to have done all manner of miracles including the casting out of demons, prophecy and many other miracles. False disciples are able to gain power ‘in Jesus’ name’ but their activities are meaningless. They did not come through the ‘true narrow gate’ of Jesus. One commentator describes such people as ‘self-seeking showmen’. Jesus never emphasises the external as being the true sign of authenticity.

1. When we see or hear of miraculous events how do we discern if they are real or counterfeit?

Should we always assume that any miraculous happening is from God?

God may use a person who claims to follow Christ even if the person has deceived themselves or others. How should such deceivers be treated by the church?

Jesus’ rejection of false disciples is clear and unequivocal. ‘I tell you plainly, I never knew you’. But his judgement comes ‘on that day’ (v22). It comes when we meet our maker so we have a lifetime to put it right if our walk with God is unworthy or disobedient. So, we have a clear divide between those who have obeyed God in their lives and those who haven’t. Yet another ‘one or the other’ scenario.

1. God wants us to be confident in our discipleship. So why not pray in your group that each and every person will be confident that they are following Jesus even though there are trials and difficulties on the way.

Thinking of that possibility of rejection on the final day, ask God to help you put your own life in his hands and LONG FOR the day when you will meet him and hear ‘well done good and faithful servant’.

**PRAY that false disciples will not corrupt our own fellowship**

**PRAY that each of us will seek only to do God’s will**

**Pray that each of us will spend time with him to discern his will for our lives**