

Thought for Sunday 9th August 2020

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Read Matthew 7:13-29

As we read those first two verses I am reminded of Jesus saying Matthew 19:23 & 24; *'I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'* What Jesus is saying is, you cannot just do anything and come and ask God to forgive your sins and then go and do the same thing again, and come and ask for forgiveness, and keep on doing this without some change of heart. You have to make an effort, you have to try. We will make mistakes, we will sin, but we must try and grow to be like Jesus. As I said a few weeks ago, Jesus was able not to sin, but he was also not able to sin, sadly the same cannot be said for us, and I include myself in that. In Romans 7 we have lovely verses where Paul says; **read Romans 7:14-20**... So we do sin, and we can come back to God our Father and ask for forgiveness, but if we go back a few verses in Romans and **read Romans 5:20-6:7**...we see Paul admits to his struggle with sin. There is a difference between going out to sin, and falling into sin, but we are called to be ever vigilant in the way we live our lives, and when we sin, come back to Jesus and ask him to forgive us, by grace he will. If you have ever read Pilgrim's progress, you will know that the narrow road and thereby the narrow gate are not always easy paths to tread, but they are worth it. When Sue and I went to Budapest, one day we went from Pest to Buda and got off the tram a couple of stops too early which left us a few steps to climb, well a few is a bit of an understatement, we never counted but I would guess in the region of one hundred, maybe more. When we got to the top we took a short break and then walked on, and the view was well worth the pain of walking up the steps. There will always be a cost in the Christian life, but the rewards are out of this world, literally. Again as we look at these next few verses, Pilgrim's progress, if you've ever read it, you will know highlights the dangers. *'Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing.'* Be ever watchful of any person who purports to be a Christian minister. For some of you, receiving the notes I have been producing for the last few months, I hope that you have checked out what I have said. I guess this is one of the benefits of having the words in front of you, you can always check out what I have said, which isn't always easy when you just sit and listen. Some people recommend you take a note book when attending a service so you can write things down so you can confirm that what is said is correct. Verse 15 ends; *'inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognise them.'* Let's remember what we said last week 7:2; *'you will be judged with the measure you use, it will be used to measure you.'* People will look at us and people will judge us by what we do and say. I have said it before, I'm not the greatest gardener in the world, I plant things and live in hope that they will grow and produce the promised fruit. Yes, I will make sure they are watered, when I am around, and try and make sure that others will do that if I am not around. If you are a gardener, you will know that there are small creatures that can get to your plants, some beneficial, like bees and the like, others, which are not so beneficial, like slugs and snails etc. all we can do is to encourage those that are beneficial and try and discourage those aren't. It reminds me of Paul talking to the Corinthian church 10:23; *'Everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible but not everything is constructive.'* Slugs and snails have their place in our gardens, we just have to encourage hedgehogs and thrushes, who find them quite tasty. If we are going to encourage others to become believers, then we have to shield them from the slugs and snails, those who are trying to draw them away from the faith, and encourage them to associate with those who want to see them grow in Christ Jesus. You will

know those who believers should be around. As it says in Matthew 7:16; *'by their fruit you will recognise them.'* As there are plants that can be false, they can look tasty to eat, they can also be deadly if you do eat them. I'm sure we have all heard of tales of people who have eaten fungi, believing it to be edible, only to find it was deadly to the body. It is the same with false prophets, they can lead you into a false sense of security. So use your bible to check that what people say is God's will, especially God's will for your life. Sadly there are people who profess to be something they are not, and are unlikely ever to be. **Read Acts 8:9-25** it tells the story of Simon the sorcerer, he appeared to be someone who he wasn't, but we see in verse 18 that his motives were purely selfish. So as we come back to Matthew 7:21 we see that not everyone who says to Jesus 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of Jesus' Father who is in heaven. As we sung a couple of weeks ago, *'When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will, He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey!'* Have a personal relationship with Jesus. You will remember what it said in Matthew 6:6-8; *'When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.'* Jesus is not telling you to not share your faith, rather than to live your life as a witness to living your life in his footsteps, Philippians 2:5; *'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.'*

How can I be free from sin?
Lead me to the cross of Jesus.
From the guilt, the power, the pain?
Lead me to the cross of Jesus.
There's no other way, no price that I could pay;
Simply to the cross I cling.
This is all I need, this is all I plead,
That His blood was shed for me.

How can I know peace within?
Lead me to the cross of Jesus.
Sing a song of joy again!
Lead me to the cross of Jesus.
Flowing from above, all-forgiving love
From the Father's heart to me!
What a gift of grace – His own righteousness
Clothing me in purity!

How can I live day by day?
Lead me to the cross of Jesus.
Following His narrow way?
Lead me to the cross of Jesus.

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