

Location, Location, Location

Scripture: Matthew 7: 21 – 29

To start this Sunday's message, let me share two pieces of wisdom.

#1 - When buying a house the three most important things to consider are?

Location, Location, Location!

#2 - A sermon needs to have a strong beginning but it is more important to have a stronger or as strong ending. Many preachers work harder on the beginning of a message than on the ending. They feel that they need to hook you in early in order for the message to succeed. But I know better, I do not need to hook you in because you are a captive audience. Anyway, if you do not bring the message home - then the sermon is lost!

In our scripture reading today, Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with a strong conclusion. Jesus brings it home to be sure! And quite frankly, it is a frightening ending.

The ending has the power to make us nervous and guilty. The ending seems directed at the disciples, not the crowd. Did you hear that – Jesus' ending of the Sermon on the Mount was directed at the disciples – that is us – the Disciples of Christ!

It seems to speak to those who are Jesus' friends. It talks to those who witnessed his work, to those who claim him as their Lord. It should speak to us, those who have a faith in Jesus Christ, those who have witnessed his wonderful works within our church, and those who claim Christ as our Lord and Savior. The ending speaks to us!

Jesus says, "But not everyone who says to me, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven will enter the kingdom of heaven."

Are we giving Jesus lip service as we proclaim him Lord? Are we the ones who are doing the will of the Father therefore we will enter the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus is most definitely preaching to us!

What we call the Sermon on the Mount is but the first of five major sections of teaching that Matthew has Jesus present.

This first sermon, however, sets the tone for all his subsequent instruction. Jesus has seen the crowds. Jesus knows the world. Jesus offers this sermon so that his disciples might be the light of the world. The sermon is full of statements and statutes. The sermon is full of blessings and commands. And at the end comes this terrifying and surprising word.

Jesus is addressing those nearest him on the mountain. This warning is directed to those Jesus calls and those who have answered his calling. This warning is directed to those who know his name which is above every name.

They say – Lord! And they have the right words but not the right works. They have done works and great ones in their own estimation. They have preached powerful sermons and exorcized powerful demons. They have done mighty things and all in the name of Jesus.

But it seems as if they have not done the first work or answered the first call!

Jesus first call to the disciples was to be with him. The phrase suggests intimacy and friendship. That is exactly what is missing in Matthew's Gospel when Jesus says – "I never knew you. Go away from me!"

When we are called to serve Jesus, how do we ensure that we know Jesus and are known by him?

Mother Teresa said – ‘Pray for me that I do not loosen my grip on the hands of Jesus, even under the guise of ministering to the poor.’ Mother Teresa was afraid that she would lose contact with Jesus even as she was ministering to the poor. If she was worried, how about us!

Our first task in serving Jesus is to grip the hand of Jesus with such tenacity that we are obliged to follow his lead and seek first his kingdom. Our first task is to hold on tight to the hand of Jesus.

I would like you to find someone to hold hands with. I do not want anyone to not be holding someone else’s hand. So if you need to move around, do so. No one shall be without someone else’s hand.

Now hold on tight without squeezing the other person’s hand so to hurt them.

The problem that the disciples faced was that they let go of the hand of Jesus and did stuff on their own. They did works for themselves and not for Jesus. In short, they built their houses in a bad location, on a bad foundation. And when judgment came, they were judged indeed!

The problem we face is that we let go of the hand of Jesus and do stuff on our own. We do work for ourselves and not for Jesus. In short, we built houses in bad locations, on a bad foundation. And when judgment day comes, we will indeed be judged!

Do not let go of the other person’s hand. If you have let go, reconnect and hold the other person’s hand.

Wise disciples know the first rule of discipleship, location, location, location! In all our work we must stay near to the heart and hand and will of God. And in that way our discipleship will have a strong conclusion.

You may now let go of the hand you were holding.

So now let us come to this table – our communion table. Let us hold on tightly to our communion, so take out your individual communion kit and hold it between your hands like this (demonstrate).

In your hands are emblems of the body and blood of Christ. Hold on tightly but do not squeeze the communion kit. Sense the presence of Jesus in your hands. Sense Christ presence in this place.

Now, hold your communion kit in one hand and take out your bulletin and let us read together our denominational communion words – *We are the Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the Body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.*

Our hymn of communion is #386 'We Come as Guests Invited'.