

Matthew 12:33-37 | Mark Minnella

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[0:00] Morning, everyone. So after last week, Tom Grass talked about you're not supposed to wear shorts, but I said, you know, I see all the young guys wear shorts when they come up here and speak, and it's only the old guys that wear long pants.

So, Tom, I'm part of the young guys. So there was a pastor of a small church, and he buys a lawnmower at a garage sale.

He takes it home, and he tries to start it. And no matter how hard he tries, the lawnmower won't start. So he takes it back to the previous owner, and he says, this mower's no good.

I can't get it started. And the man says, well, you have to cuss at it. The pastor says, I'm a pastor. I don't curse. In fact, it's been so long, I don't even remember how.

You keep pulling on that cord, it'll come back to you. A young girl was admiring her aunt's beautiful necklace, and the aunt said, well, I'm leaving that to you in my will.

[1:19] The little girl said, oh, I'm looking forward to that. WebMD is updating its server because of a virus. It takes a minute.

Stephen Wright says, a conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking. Ambition is a poor excuse for not having enough sense to be lazy.

Hard work pays off eventually, but laziness pays off now. Our passage today is only four verses. I'm not sure if Teddy was trying to take it easy on me, or he just wanted to make sure we got out early. Matthew chapter 12, verses 33 to 37.

Verse 36. Make a tree good, and its fruit will be good. Or make a tree bad, and its fruit will be bad. For a tree is recognized by its fruit.

[2:20] You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man will bring things out of the evil stored up in him.

Verse 36. But I tell you that everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

Let's pray. Father God, we just thank you for your word. We thank you that it's truth, and that we can rely on it for our eternal lives. Just in this next few minutes, Lord, that you would give us the words that would help us to draw closer to you.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, last time I spoke, I talked a little bit about my Sicilian grandfather. His name was Rosario. He was quite a character.

And I talked about him making wine, and I got to make wine with him. He was also a master gardener. He was a great gardener. His family in Sicily had been in the agricultural business, and he was quite a gardener.

[3:37] And so in the summertime, when I would go down to his house, we would very often go out in the backyard, and then we would talk about the garden. He spoke broken English, and so it was a place where I could get him to talk more.

And he grew all kinds of things, fantastic things, tomatoes and big zucchinis and all kinds of things. One of the more interesting things in his backyard, he had this apple tree that grew five different kinds of apples on one tree.

And I asked him to explain it to me, and as best I could tell, when the tree was little, he took branches from other different apple trees and grafted them in.

And this thing was magnificent, and the apples were really, really terrific. And I say that because it sort of relates to our passage today.

But, you know, if that tree in my grandfather's backyard, if it never grew any apples, he would have hacked it down. Last week, Tom talked a little bit about the unforgivable sin.

[4:40] This is in verses 28 through 33. So our passage today is kind of sandwiched in between two passages. So we need to look back, and then we need to probably look a little forward so that we can kind of see where we're at in this dialogue that Jesus is giving.

So back to verse 28. It says, But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's home and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong men?

Then he can plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. And so I will tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

So what we need to understand here is not that Jesus' death is insufficient to pay for all the sins a person commits, but that if a person attributes the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil, this is what they were doing, well then they're not going to be saved.

[6:07] And so then when it says blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the truth is, the one sin that will separate a person from God forever is unbelief.

Unbelief. You see, the religious teachers of the law, Jesus is here and he's showing the Jewish people, he's holding these guys up and saying, look, these guys, they're teachers, they know the law, but they don't know God.

If they knew God, they would know Jesus, and the Holy Spirit would guide them to the truth. What we have in our passage today, it's a continuation of Jesus addressing the crowds.

The main theme is that the heart is the heart of the issue. So let's look back for just a minute to verse 1, verse 1 where the chapter starts.

At that time, Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pick some heads of the grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, look, your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.

[7:21] We have a real similar passage in chapter 15. Chapter 15 of Matthew in verse 1 says, Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem asking, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?

They don't wash their hands before they eat. Now this is a ceremonial thing. This is not cleanliness. This is not, you know, you go in the bathroom, it says employees wash your hands before you go, you know, after you go to the restroom.

Okay. I think that's always, I always think that's for the customer's sake. But anyway, this is not a cleanliness thing. They had this ceremonial washing they had to go through before they ate. Jesus answers them in verse 8, and he says this, These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain. Their teachings are merely human rules. Verse 10, Jesus called the crowd to him and said, Listen and understand.

What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth. That's what defiles them. Then the disciples came to him and said, Do you know the Pharisees were offended by this?

[8:34] He replied, Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them. They are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

So I'm going to do a little illustration here. I'm going to ask for a couple of volunteers. Jeff and David, they volunteered. And we're going to do a little illustration here.

Please. Please. So Jeff, I'm going to put a blindfold on you.

All right. Can you do that? I should have got shorter, guys. It would have been easier. Okay. Now I'm going to ask you, Do you think you could drive your family home safely in this condition?

No. No. No. Now I don't know how your wife is. My wife tells me how to drive all the time. Maybe Teresa doesn't do that to you. But I don't think she could get you all the way home.

[9:35] Right. But I got your buddy David here. David, have you been to Jeff's house before? I have. So let me ask you, Jeff. Would you trust David to get your family home safely?

Yeah. You would. Okay. Okay. Okay. So take your blindfold off. Look at David. I'm going to ask you the same question.

Would you trust David to drive your family home safely? Not like that. Not like that. Thank you. Thank you. That's my little illustration.

You see, we're in a driving culture, so I had to do that. In a walking culture, Jesus says, look, if a blind person leads another blind person, they're both going to fall into the ditch.

Nobody's getting home. The illustration here is this. How can a person who doesn't know the Lord lead somebody to the Lord? You understand that Jesus reserved his harshest criticism for the religious leaders of his day.

[10:33] He really did. And I would have to say this. I grew up in a religion where the leaders claimed to have the truth.

They did. And we were supposed to listen to these religious leaders. They had lots of rules and traditions, although some kept changing. Can't eat meat on Friday.

Well, now it's okay. Things like that. When I got saved, I realized these people were leading people astray. They didn't know the truth.

And so they knew religion. They knew rules. They knew regulations. But they didn't know the truth. There were blind guides leading the blind. How sad. Back to Matthew 15 and verse 15.

Peter said, explain the parable to us. Now, you've got to love Peter. Because if it weren't for guys like Peter, we wouldn't know as much as we know. So Peter says, hey, Lord, we don't understand.

[11:37] Jesus' answer in verse 16 says, are you still so dull? Jesus asked them. Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart.

And these defile him. From out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. This is what defiles a person. But eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.

The heart is the heart of the issue. You know, it's been said that Jesus never called anyone a sinner. But he called these guys whitewashed tombs and lots of other bad names.

All of his harshest criticisms were reserved for the people that were supposed to be leaders in the nation of Israel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the synoptic gospels we call them.

What is mainly happening here, this is in Matthew, but Jesus is offering the kingdom to the nation of Israel. If we look back at verse 28 in Matthew 12, Matthew 12, 28, Jesus says, but if it's by the spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

[12:55] And so this is Jesus, he's offering the kingdom to the nation of Israel. He's their long promised Messiah. And yet the scribes, the Pharisees, the religious leaders of that day, they were leading the people astray.

They were leading the people in the wrong direction. If they knew God, they would have known Jesus. Matthew chapter 9 and verse 36, and also in Mark chapter 6, verse 34, it says this, when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

At least four places in the Old Testament this phrase is used, sheep without a shepherd, I put them on your outline, you can look them up later. These guys were supposed to be leading people to God.

And instead, what were they doing? They were leading them away. In John chapter 10, verses 11 through 14, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep.

Matthew chapter 7, verses 24 to 27. Therefore, if anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house upon the rock.

[14:20] The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house, yet it did not fall because it's had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. Jesus is trying to go around the religious leaders and speak to the people directly. And today, I want to say, God speaks to us through his word, right? A lot of the religious leaders today, sadly, are much like these guys. There's so much involved in their own thing. There's so much vanity going on. There's so much untruth that these guys, they don't know the truth, and so they can't show the truth. But we have the truth.

This is where the truth is. It's in the word of God. Romans chapter 10 and verse 9 says this, If you declare with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you'll be saved.

[15:39] For it's with the heart that you believe and are justified. It's with the mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Verse 13 says, For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

So I have to ask this morning, where's your heart? Does your heart, your soul, belong to God? Have you built your house on the rock, the rock that's Jesus Christ? Or is your house built on the sand? See, we're all going to face the judgment.

In Revelation, it talks about this judgment, and it says the books were opened, right? And we have to give an account of our life. And then it says there's another book that's opened.

It's called the Book of Life. And it says, Anyone whose name is written in the Book of Life will not come under the judgment of God. So man, if I have to stand before God in my own good works, I'm going to be banished.

[16:48] I'm going to be in the lake of fire. But if my name is written in the Book of Life, and it is, I don't have to pay for my sins.

Jesus paid it all, right? That's what we sang about this morning. Jesus paid for all my sin. And so my name's written in the Book of Life. And I just have to ask, Have you come to a place in your life where you've realized that nothing that you could do could save you?

Not your good deeds, not your prayer, not your church attendance, not any good works, not following a set of rules. Nothing can pay for the sin that you all have committed.

You see, the sin that I've committed, I can't pay for it. But Jesus says this. It says in 2 Corinthians 5.21, God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

You see, a transfer can take place. Jesus went to that cross for me and for you. He had no sin of his own. He died to pay for sin.

[17:58] And you know, if he stayed dead, boy, what an awful thing, but he didn't. He took his life back. He rose again. He defeated sin and death. And the scripture tells us, because Jesus rose, we can rise again.

John 3.16, you see all these guys hold it up at the football games and the baseball games. It says, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3.36 says, Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son, God's wrath remains on him. And so, I just asked this morning, friends, we had a short passage and we see Jesus condemning religious leaders, but we see Jesus saying this, You're either for me or you're against me.

There's no in between. There's no walk in the fence. There's no, I'm kind of a Christian. It's like being kind of pregnant. You are or you're not. And so, if your name is written in the book of life, congratulations.

I'll see you in heaven. If it's not, I urge you this morning to think about your eternal destiny. Let's pray. Father God, thank you so much for your word.

[19:17] Thank you for the surety of your word. Thank you for your Son, the Lord Jesus, who came, who lived a perfect life, and who laid it down for us. And thank you that he took it back again, that he rose, and he looks to welcome us into a great place and a great eternal future that we

know for sure we can have if we trust you.
Amen. Amen. Amen.