

Assurance in the Kingdom

Kingdom Living #16 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 13, 2025 - Matthew 7:21-29

INTRO: Good morning church! We're concluding our sermon series today entitled, KINGDOM LIVING. We've spent the last 16 weeks doing an expositional study of Christ's Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. And it's been both a challenge and a joy to study this great sermon together with you. For it is surely the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher who ever lived!

Throughout this series, Jesus has described what life in His Kingdom looks like—what it means to live under His rule and reign. He has called us to a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees. And now, He closes His sermon with a sobering warning and a gracious invitation, a call to examine whether we truly belong to His Kingdom.

Need: There are many today who assume they are right with God simply because they try to live a good life, say the right religious words, got baptized, and joined the church. But not everyone who claims to follow Jesus truly knows Him and are known by Him. The question is this: Do I have real assurance that I belong to the Kingdom of God? Can we have real assurance of our salvation?

Trans: As Jesus brings His sermon to a close, He contrasts those with a superficial faith with those who have a sincere and saving faith. He warns of self-deception and shows us how to be certain of our place in His Kingdom.

BODY: In Matthew 7:21-29, Jesus closed His Sermon on the Mount by both warning and inviting people to pursue a sincere faith that brings real assurance in God's Kingdom. We can have real assurance of our place in God's Kingdom. How can we have real assurance of our place in God's Kingdom? Jesus gives **three ways** we can have real assurance of our place in God's Kingdom.

Read text: Matthew 7:21-29 (ESV) 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.

WE CAN HAVE ASSURANCE OF OUR PLACE IN GOD'S KINGDOM BY:

1. Knowing that saying is not the same as submitting.

EXP: (21-23) Jesus warns that mere verbal profession, calling Him "Lord, Lord," is not enough. Even religious activity done in His name can be a facade. What matters is submission to the will of the Father. The issue isn't what we say, but whether we've surrendered our hearts in obedience to Christ as Lord.

"Everyone" (21, 24, 26 - 3x) (πᾶς, *pas*) - each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone

"Says to me" (21) (λέγω, *legō*) (PAP) - to say, to speak. This is an ongoing or habitual saying (present tense). These people call Jesus "Lord" as a regular religious act, but it lacks obedience to His Word.

"Lord, Lord" (21, 22) (κύριος, *kurios*) - Lord, Master. Repeating it aloud doesn't make it true.

"Enter the kingdom of heaven" (21) - Those who profess without repentance and obedience will not enter.

"Will of my Father" (21) (θέλημα, *thelēma*) - to do, to act rightly, to do God's will.

"On that day" (22) (ἡμέρα, *hēmera*) - this points to the Day of judgment under King Jesus.

"Will say" (22) (ἐρέω, *ereō*) (FAI) - to utter, speak, say. This is future tense. What they will say on that Day.

"Prophecy...cast out demons...do mighty works" (22) - impressive religious activity.

"In your name" (22) (ὄνομα, *onoma*) - name. Claimed to do ministry in the name of Jesus.

"Declare" (23) (ὁμολογέω, *homologeō*) - Lit., "to say the same thing." Confess, declare. Jesus is making a final, authoritative pronouncement. It is judgment language — possibly evoking a courtroom-like image.

"I never knew you" (23) (γινώσκω, *ginōskō*) - to know, to be in relationship with. They were "never" true Christians because they were "never" in relationship with Jesus. As Paul wrote to Timothy...

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2 Timothy 2:19 (ESV) But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

"Depart from me" (23) (ἀποχωρέω, *apochōreō*) - to go away, depart. A terrible imperative to hear!

"Workers of lawlessness" (23) (ἀνομία, *anomia*) - no law. Living a licentious life contrary to the Word.

Luke 6:46-49 (ESV) Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?

ARG: John addresses the problem of profession without obedience: (walk must match talk)

1 John 1:6-7 (ESV) ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

John explains how to have assurance, "to know we are in Him:"

1 John 2:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

ILL: **The Parable of the Two Sons:** ²⁸ "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." (Matthew 21:28-31)

APP: A merely verbal profession without submitting is unacceptable. Do we merely say "Lord, Lord" without obeying Him? Let's live in obedience to Christ, doing the Father's will from the heart.

2. Understanding that hearing is not the same as heeding.

EXP: (24-27) Both the wise and the foolish man heard the words of Jesus. But only the wise man obeyed. The storm revealed the foundation. The one who obeys Jesus stands firm. But the foolish one fell.

"Hears these words" (24) (ἀκούω, *akouō*) - to hear; to attend to, consider what is or has been said. "These words" meaning the words Jesus has just taught on the Mount.

"Does them" (24) (ποιέω, *poieō*) - to do; to act rightly, do well; to carry out, to execute. There is a big difference between hearing and obeying. We can hear Jesus but do we obey Him, this is about lordship.

"Wise man" (24) (φρόνιμος, *phronimos*) - intelligent, wise; prudent, i.e. mindful of one's interests

"Built his house on the rock" (24) (οἰκοδομέω, *oikodomeō*) - to build one's "house" (life) on Christ.

"Did not fall" (25) (πίπτω, *piptō*) - to not fall, not descend down.

"Hears ... does NOT do them" (26) - Hearing without doing. They've heard the Sermon, but not heeding it.

"Foolish man" (26) (μωρός, *mōros*) - foolish, impious, godless, dull, stupid, blockhead

"Built his house on the sand" (26) (ἄμμος, *ammos*) - sand, sandy ground. Not on Christ the Rock.

"Fell ... great was the fall" (27) (πτῶσις, *ptōsis*) - a great crash, a fall, downfall. Not a partial fall, this is a massive downfall, the whole structure is busted. Nothing is left standing.

ARG: James addresses the problem of knowledge without obedience:

James 1:22-25 (ESV) ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

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ILL: - Mirror illustration as letting the Word reflect areas you need to repent and change.

- Beach houses built on the sand. The village of Rodanthe, located within the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, has experienced a significant number of collapses, with at least 10 homes falling into the ocean since 2020. Recent storm events like nor'easters and hurricanes have accelerated the damage, leading to more frequent and sudden collapses.



APP: We must build our lives on the rock-solid foundation of Christ by putting His words into practice. This means daily obedience to His Word. Let's ask: What am I doing with what I've heard? Choose one or two of His sayings (prayer, giving, anger, lust, anxiety, loving your enemies, judging others, discernment...) in this Sermon and ask the Spirit's help to repent and change.

Trans: Jesus has warned us of two unacceptable responses: **1)** a merely verbal profession without submitting and **2)** a merely intellectual knowledge that hears without heeding. Now, He confronts us with Himself! How will you respond to the Person of Jesus Christ?

3. Recognizing that amazement is not the same as allegiance.

EXP: (28-29) The crowds were amazed at Jesus' authority, but being amazed is not the same as submitting to that authority. But Jesus isn't looking for fans; He's calling followers.

"Finished these sayings" (28) (συντελέω, *sunteleō*) - to end completely, finish. Matthew records the reaction to His Sermon. Jesus finished with this terrifying word, "great was the fall."

"Crowds were astonished" (28) (ἐκπλήσσω, *ekplēssō*) - to be struck with amazement, astonished. The imperfect verb, "depicts an ongoing feeling of wonder as they went home" (Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, 276). "Jesus did not preach [the Sermon on the Mount] in order to be admired for his homiletical skills. He preached it to produce obedience" (Sinclair Lewis, *Sermon*, 171). Not to hear, "Good sermon, pastor."

"One who had authority" (29) (ἐξουσία, *exousia*) - the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege). "This teacher, the Lord Jesus, is unlike any other teacher who has gone before him and any other teacher who will come after him. His authority resides in himself" (Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount*, 166). Jesus spoke like a King!

"Not as their scribes" (29) (γραμματεὺς, *grammateus*) - a man learned in the Mosaic law. A teacher.

ARG: **Assurance is more than astonishment with Jesus. It's receiving and believing in Him:**

John 1:12 (ESV) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

1 John 5:11-13 (ESV) ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

ILL: **Throughout history, many have been amazed by Jesus without truly following Him.** Thomas Jefferson admired Jesus' moral teachings so much that he created his own version of the Gospels—but he removed all the miracles and references to Jesus' divinity. He respected Jesus as a great teacher, but not as the Son of God. Mahatma Gandhi often quoted Jesus and said, "I like your Christ; I do not like your Christians." He was deeply moved by Jesus' life and words, especially his SOM, yet he never received Him as Savior.

Albert Einstein once described Jesus as "the luminous figure of the Nazarene," and H.G. Wells called Him "the most dominant figure in all history." Both were intellectually impressed, but neither bowed in faith. Even the Qur'an honors Jesus as a prophet and miracle-worker, but it denies that He is God, that He died for our sins, or that He rose again. You see, being amazed by Jesus isn't the same as being surrendered to Him. Admiration doesn't equal allegiance.

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APP: Jesus isn't looking for fans; He's calling followers. Do we merely admire Jesus, or have we submitted to Him as Lord? Have we moved beyond being amazed by His words to being aligned with His will? Let us give Him our full allegiance. Let us bow to Him as Lord.

CONCLUSION: As Jesus concluded His sermon, He left no room for casual response. His words demand decision. He paints a picture of two confessors, two hearers, two builders, two foundations, and ultimately, two destinies. So let me ask you today: Are you building your life on the rock of Jesus Christ? Have you moved from:

- 1) Just saying to submitting?
- 2) From merely hearing to heeding?
- 3) From amazement to allegiance?

Jesus isn't just calling us to admire His teaching. He's inviting us to enter His Kingdom and live under His reign. You can have assurance today, not merely by what you say or do on the outside, but by a heart that is fully surrendered to Christ and transformed by His Spirit.

The key to assurance is both the confession of the mouth and the submission and obedience of the heart:

Romans 10:9 (ESV) because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

SERIES CONCLUSION: Over the past 16 weeks, we've walked verse by verse through the greatest sermon ever preached—Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In it, Jesus revealed the upside-down values of His Kingdom, calling us not to mere external compliance, but to radical inner transformation. He blesses the humble, the merciful, and the pure in heart. He redefines righteousness, not just as what we do, but who we are in the heart: where anger is like murder, lust like adultery, and love reaches even to our enemies.

We've seen how Kingdom people live, not for show, but from secret intimacy with the Father through prayer, fasting, and generosity. We've heard Jesus teach us to trust God fully, pursue His Kingdom first, and judge others not with hypocrisy, but with grace and discernment. He warns us that the path to life is narrow, and that true faith bears fruit—not just in words, but in obedience.

Together, we've seen the character of Kingdom citizens in Matthew 5, the conduct that flows from that character in Matthew 6, and now in Matthew 7, the choice we each must make. Jesus is the narrow gate, the firm foundation, the final Judge, and the authoritative King.

The Sermon on the Mount ends with both a warning and an invitation. Jesus is calling us—not just to admire His words—but to obey them. Not just to hear, but to follow. Not just to say “Lord, Lord,” but to submit to His Lordship in every part of our lives.

So let's not leave this series as mere hearers of the Word. Let's be Kingdom people who live under the rule of our King—Christ Jesus—building our lives on the solid rock of His Word, both now and forever.

Let's pray.