

Jesus Teaches about Entering God's Kingdom, False Prophets, and Strong Foundations

SCOTT HOEZEE

At the seminary where I teach preaching, we always encourage our students to conclude their sermons on notes of grace, hope, and joy. Let's end our preaching with the gospel—with the proclamation of good news. It really is a wonderful way to preach. Jesus, however, did not exactly follow this. In his most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus ended with what at first looks like an ever-dimming picture. Well, today on *Groundwork*, we will see how this famous sermon concludes. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is the final program of our six-part series on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew Chapters 5, 6 and 7. We already covered the Beatitudes, words on our being salt and light, how Jesus taught God's law, his teaching on prayer, his well-known words about not worrying, and now we are still in Chapter 7, where the Sermon concludes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Matthew Chapter 7: it starts at verse 13. Jesus is saying: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, there is a sense, Darrell, that here is a passage that seems to be loaded with kind of bad news and foreboding. This is the kind of stuff you might hear in Chicago or something. This is the stuff you might hear from a street preacher on a city corner. You know, he has a five-gallon plastic bucket there and he's got it upside down, and he is standing up on there with a little miniature microphone, you know, screaming at people about: the broad way that leads to destruction, the road to perdition, and so forth. So, the question, I guess, as the Sermon on the Mount is in its final chapter here in Matthew 7, is there any good news here or is this just a stark and dark warning?

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, let's first things first, Scott. He says: Enter through the narrow gate; and what we need to know about entering is that entering...we know that we live in a walk with God that is grace filled; and salvation...it comes from God. So, it is not about oh, I got up today and decided to enter the narrow gate...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

No; it is actually your responding to God's grace in your life that you would think that you want to enter the gate. That idea came from God. So, God must have been working in the background to get us to decide whether we need to enter the narrow gate or stay over in the wide one. So, I think the first thing is, we need to understand that God initiates the prompt to enter, and we respond to that prompt by actually entering.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; like you said, you know, you don't get out of bed in the morning, put *narrow gate* into your GPS and then say: Well, I am going to find the narrow gate on my own, you know, and...recalculating. No; you don't find it on your own; you find it by grace, as you just said. We are saved by grace not works. We are saved by Jesus' complete sacrifice on the cross; not because we made the right choices and the right turns as we navigate through life. We will never find the narrow gate on our own; but if we do find it, it is because we have been called, right? It is the same way Jesus called the disciples: Follow me, Jesus said.

DARRELL DELANEY

You reminded us of this, Scott, I think, earlier, when you said: Hey, Jesus is not talking to everyone. He turns away from the crowd and talks to the disciples...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, literally, the people are within earshot of him teaching the disciples this Sermon on the Mount series. So, he is really trying to help them to go deeper with their walk with God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; the audience is important. We said that already in the first episode. If you realize that Jesus is talking to people he has already called by grace, then you realize, like the Beatitudes are not entrance requirements...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is like, okay, I have to make myself poor in spirit, and I have to get meek, and I have to hunger and thirst after righteousness; so, once I get all my own act together, then God is going to bring me... No; you have been brought into the kingdom by grace, as the disciples were; and so, the Beatitudes are how you live after you have been brought into the kingdom...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is after Jesus brings you to the narrow gate that you can then enter it by grace alone.

DARRELL DELANEY

[0:04:23.5 So, you are saying that this is discipleship teaching and not evangelism teaching.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is the first thing. The second thing is that Jesus, when he was washing the feet of the disciples...Peter says: You are not going to wash me. He [Jesus] says: If I don't wash you, then you won't have any part of

me; and he [Peter] says: Well, wash my feet, hands and head as well; and he [Jesus] says: No, no, no, no, no; you have already been cleaned; all we need to do is wash your feet. This teaching is definitely a foot washing for those who have already been made clean by Christ, already been made clean as being forgiven of their sins and being children of God. This is a foot-washing teaching.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; however, back to the street preachers, to give them a little bit of credit. This is still something that we need to pay sober attention to, because I do think it implies several things, Darrell, and that is that the narrow gate that leads to life is not going to be the popular gate.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right

SCOTT HOEZEE

In any society in history, this is the proverbial road less traveled. The broad road is going to look better; it is going to make bigger promises; it is going to be easier; in fact, Darrell, it is quite possible that what Jesus here calls the wide gate and the broad way is how a lot of people today, and in history, might define the good life.

DARRELL DELANEY

The good life. It sounds a lot like the American dream...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Things that we think: Oh, to be rich, to be famous, to be loved by everybody, to be remembered, to be honored and get these awards and accolades. That is the wide way, because it actually distracts the heart, chokes out the Spirit, and moves us away from God as opposed to moving us toward God. It doesn't mean that people who go through the narrow gate won't have anything, but it means their heart...like we said in the last episode, the money is not their master, the greed is not their master...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

The intention is to please God and delight ourselves in him. So, that is really the challenge that is happening at the wide and narrow gates.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I also think another thing this tells us, Darrell, is that it is not only that it is grace that brings us to the narrow gate. It is grace that makes the narrow gate look attractive to us.

DARRELL DELANEY

Ah, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In a way, it doesn't. That is because grace doesn't just save us, it transforms us, right? It is sort of like your taste...your sensibility...your worldview; what you judge to be attractive and not attractive. It has all been transformed by grace. We see beauty in places that other people see ugliness or just something boring or commonplace. So, you get to the gate by grace, but it looks good to you once you get there, also by grace, because grace changes you.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you just mentioned transforming, and I love that, because God does invite us to a transformative life; and literally where our tastebuds and appetites are being changed by the Spirit, who is sanctifying us. So now, even death can look beautiful; even sickness can be not the end; even sadness can be temporary, because we serve a God who has overcome all of those things. As we walk through the narrow gate, he is giving us a new heart, a new life. Romans 12 says we are being transformed by the renewing of our minds. He has given us his very mind. So, that is part of the transformation that happens when we walk through.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; we see the image of God deep inside people. The rest of the world dismisses us as losers or sad, unsuccessful stories. No; our very vision: Be thou my vision, right? That old hymn says, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Our very vision has been changed, and so now the narrow way looks attractive; but what about the people around us who are on that broad way, who are living a comfy life and taking all their pleasures in money and in temporary pleasures? We have to witness to them, that is true; and we have to pray that the eyes of their heart will be opened, too, so they can recognize the narrow gate as being as attractive as we now see it, because it leads to no less than the glories of God's kingdom. But of course, people are on that broad way, Darrell, because there are lots of different messages being proclaimed as to what is the good life, and there are lots of false prophets in this world who proclaim those false messages; and Jesus has a word to say about that, too; so, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are in Matthew 7, the final chapter in the Sermon on the Mount; and let's get right back into it, Darrell. In verse 15...Matthew 7:15...Jesus says: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. ²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, wow! Well, Jesus does make it clear; he is warning the disciples and everybody who reads this passage that there are false prophets. One of my favorite songs says: Will the real Jesus stand up? Wait, there are eight of them, nine of them, a whole line of them. There are all kinds of them. Because there are so many people who will claim his righteousness, his deity, even his name, and they are leading people astray, and that has not been a new idea. It has been going on for centuries.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; it is a perennial challenge to recognize who is the real Jesus or who is really with Jesus and who is not; and you know, it is interesting, Darrell, I mean, here Jesus isn't warning us against what we might say today

are complete atheists...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Or people who are totally proclaiming a completely different religious faith. This is intramural—this is inhouse here—these are people who are going to be doing things in Jesus' name...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But Jesus says that isn't enough; that is not enough for you to tell the sheep from the wolf—the fake from the real deal. So, that makes it even more challenging.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the whole analogy of wolf in sheep's clothing, it makes it even more confusing and difficult to try to identify them, because the ones who are really following Jesus are saying this...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the people who are pretending to follow Jesus are saying the same thing; and so, we need to be able to have a discernment; and Jesus makes it clear we will know them by their fruits...we will recognize them by their fruits...because good trees cannot bear bad fruit. So, now we have to be fruit inspectors, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; well, and we said in the previous episode when Jesus says: Judge not; and some people use that as being: Oh, Christians may never judge; and we said, no, that is not true. We just judge rightly and carefully and with humility. Jesus is clearly calling us to judge. He is clearly calling us to discern who is the good tree and who is the bad tree, right? And as you just said, Darrell, it is all a matter of fruit; and in that sense, it is common sense, right? You do not go to thorns and thistles to get cherries and figs, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Naturally.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But there are trees that produce fruit, but it is bad; and a bad tree, Jesus says, produces bad fruit. Jesus doesn't get really specific here, though, Darrell. We could maybe wish he had gotten more specific what kind of fruit, but maybe we can make some educated guesses.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, the good news is we have the full counsel of God's Word. Now, these people, they are standing there on the mountainside. They didn't have the New Testament epistles we have; they didn't have the gospels in written form like we have. So, we can see their fruit from personally Jesus' life. I mean, he is showing love, he is showing forgiveness, he is showing grace. That is our example, right? And we also find out that in Galatians the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. This fruit is good fruit. So, we need to be embodying those and allowing the Spirit to bring those out of us so that we can actually be the ones who God is calling us to be.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and I think you are right, Darrell. When we ask the question: Okay what is good fruit, Jesus? Could you tell us? Could we get a footnote here or something? It is what we saw in Jesus. We have said all along in this series, Jesus is the perfect embodiment of the kingdom. He is Mr. Beatitude, he is, you know, the perfect fulfillment of the law; and so, in Jesus we see living kindness, patience, goodness, a willingness to forgive, gentleness; those are the things that if you see that growing on someone's life, they are probably the real deal; and you know, it reminds me, Darrell, that somebody once said to me...or maybe it was in a book I read...If you know religious leaders...pastors, evangelists, maybe even TV preachers and the like...if you want to sort of see if they are the real deal, watch how they act when they are not in the pulpit, right? Watch how they act in restaurants.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

How are they toward servers? How are they on airplanes toward flight attendants? How are they toward the person bagging their groceries at the A&P, right? How do they treat people? Good trees treat people with the fruit of the Spirit all the time; bad trees treat other people with contempt.

DARRELL DELANEY

And what is interesting is that God is always looking at the fruit in our lives, and he doesn't wait until the cameras are on to do that. He does it when the cameras are off; he does it at 2:00 in the morning when no one is watching; and so, we can actually discern what type of character a person is, because out of the abundance of the heart your mouth will speak, and what you say and what you do, Jesus is talking about heart and motive all the time, and especially in these teachings. So, we need to see from these passages that if there are people who we consider beneath us, we need to be careful how we treat them, because that is bad fruit when we treat them with contempt because we think they are lower than we are.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Oh, the little people around me, right? Anybody who refers to "the little people" probably aren't in touch with the good fruit Jesus is talking about here. There was a news story a while back: there was a well-known TV preacher...there were plenty of reasons to think his theology was shaky already, but his wife had been on an airplane, and she treated the flight attendants horribly...just with contempt and with arrogance...and people noticed, and said that doesn't look like Jesus; that doesn't look like a good tree bearing good fruit; and indeed, I think that is a pretty good test; and again, it is not because we are earning our way to heaven by being nice and kind; no, no, no; these are the fruit, not the root; the root is grace, the fruit grows on the tree, rooted in grace. When somebody proclaims a different gospel other than grace alone, as Paul said to the Galatians, don't believe them. People say: Hey, you know, don't worry about sin. God forgives you anyway. As Paul wrote to the Romans, that is not the gospel. Don't believe them, right? We can look at their behavior as the fruit; but also, as you said, Darrell, we have the Bible. We can bring people next to the gospel and see if they are lining up.

DARRELL DELANEY

When we undertake that task of discernment and we judge, we just need to be careful...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And we need to be humble, and we need to allow ourselves to be at a place where we can do that with humility; and when we are living epistles that way, we actually can preach the gospel in our actions and what we do, and we will bear the fruit; and we bear it by God helping us to bear it in the first place; and we need a

strong foundation to stand on to do that. As we wrap up this episode, we are going to talk about that, because that is where Jesus goes next. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are now in the final segment of the final episode of this six-part series on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5 through 7; so, Darrell, let's get right back into it, and here are the concluding words of Matthew 7, beginning at verse 24.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says: "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down and the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But 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. ²⁷The rain came down and the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." ²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is it! That is the end of the Sermon on the Mount, and as we said at the outset of the program, Darrell, it seems like Jesus didn't get the memo about concluding sermons on an upbeat note, because after three blockbuster chapters of this Sermon on the Mount, the final words are: great crash! Let's pray. But, he does quite literally end the sermon with a bang.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, yes; it is really crazy how we have heard these stories so many times, and we can sometimes glaze over because we have heard them so many times. When I have taught scripture, I always taught or preached it as if it was the first time ever...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Because I wanted a fresh take on that; but what Jesus is making clear is that foundations matter, and foundations are very important.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Growing up in Ada, Michigan, Darrell, I saw...we were in the township hall one day, my dad and I, and we saw a cartoon on the door of the Ada Township Building Inspector, and the cartoon showed what was supposed to be the construction site for the Tower of Pisa in Italy, which we all know, of course as the *leaning* Tower of Pisa...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But anyway, in the cartoon, of course, the tower is standing straight up as they are building it, but the construction foreman is whispering to the architect in the cartoon. He said: You know, I saved a little money on the foundation, but don't worry; nobody will ever know. Well, now we know; the building is leaning and could fall over. Foundations are pretty important.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is true...that is true; and you know that the highest skyscrapers always have a deep, deep foundation; and even before buildings, there were trees that have deep, deep roots; and even though the strongest tornadoes come through, those trees are not blown over because they have a deep root structure and a deep foundation; but you also know that when you build skyscrapers like the ones in 9/11, the Freedom* Tower has to have deep, deep roots of foundation way, way down underground where nobody can see it. The foundation works deep down where nobody can see it, but it holds up everything that it supports.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and in fact, if you go...you can now see it. Before the destruction of the towers from the airplanes flying into them, you couldn't see, but now the museum is below ground, and you ride a very long escalator down, down, down to the bedrock of Manhattan Island; and the foundations of the twin towers are all the way down there sunk into the bedrock. Foundations are important; and in this case, one of the foundations, Darrell: Jesus' words—Jesus' teachings—everything you ever saw in Jesus—everything you ever heard from Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is beautiful because Jesus starts this passage by saying: You know all those words you just heard? If you put them into practice, then you will be wise. If you don't put them into practice, you are going to be foolish; and the same storms...the same streams...the same wind...come to both situations, but if you put those words into practice, that is the foundation—Jesus' teachings, Jesus' words, Jesus' model...his example. If we put them into practice, we are wise.

I used to watch GI Joe as a kid, and at the end they would have this moral, and the kid would say: Well, now I know; and they would say: Knowing is half the battle, but they never told us the other half. Knowing is one-half, but putting it into practice is the second half.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that is what is interesting here. We miss this sometimes. It is not that the foolish builders didn't have access to the right stuff...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They had access to the exact same, if you want to say "building materials", as the wise, they just didn't use them, right? They treated Jesus as a reference point, you know, as an older authority figure, maybe, but you know, you have to be a fanatic to actually do everything Jesus said. Okay, Jesus said. You can live that way, but when the storms come, great crash...the last two words of the sermon, which is really, really interesting; and again, it is not because we are saved by what we do. We have been emphasizing that throughout this whole series. We are only saved by grace; but once you are saved by grace and brought into the kingdom, then Christlikeness is part of the deal.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is interesting to talk about the fool here because we talked about when Jesus says "you fool" in the sermon teaching. This isn't the same kind of fool.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

When Jesus was talking about when you call somebody a fool you are humiliating...you are murdering...their character, but this person is foolish in this passage because they look at what is right to do and choose the wrong way anyway; and that is a foolish decision that has consequences to it; and the foolish do not apply the words or put them into practice to have that foundation when trials come. That is what makes them foolish.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I don't know, maybe Jesus is saying that the fools might still get saved in the end anyway, but don't take that chance. I mean, if you get it, right...if you are called into the kingdom and you have access to everything Jesus has taught, including everything just in this sermon, which is a lot...of course, Jesus teaches many other things in the course of the gospels...but you know, we have what we need for flourishing, and that is what God wants, Darrell. He wants us to live lives of delight and flourishing. Jesus modeled that for us. He is the embodiment of the kingdom. Why would we not look to him and want to be like him and build on this terrific, indestructible foundation?

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is a beautiful foundation because the foundation is not built on our own righteousness...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is not built on our own merits. We actually have gratitude to God for the reason that he has done, and the way he has helped us to live, showing us this way; and we give gratitude to God because he is the one who embodies the kingdom. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen. Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Please join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at our website: groundworkonline.com, to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information.

***Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Darrell Delaney misspeaks, merging the names of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and Freedom Tower, when he says "Memorial Tower." He is, in fact, referencing Freedom Tower, the popular name for the reconstructed One World Trade Center in New York City.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/jesus-teaches-about-entering-gods-kingdom-false-prophets-and-strong-foundations>

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