

Part 21: The Danger of Knowing

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Today we are finishing up Jesus' sermon to his disciples in Luke 6. This whole chapter has keyed on Jesus' interaction with his disciples so that we might know what a culture of following Jesus really looks like. In my outline of the book of Luke I call this passage: "Jesus' Handbook of Discipleship." Matthew's account of this message is famously called, "The sermon on the Mount." Luke's account of Jesus' teaching has been summarized even more to include the greatest hits of Jesus' greatest hits.

We have the beatitudes, we have the call to love your enemies, and we have the call to judge not. To know this sermon is to not only know some of the most popular passages of Jesus' teaching but it is to know the heartbeat and DNA of Jesus' disciples. But to actually apply this passage is to live in an incredibly other-worldly manner.

In our three sermons so far on this text we have been called to a humble view of our experiences, a humble view of others, and a humble view of ourselves. Can you imagine what life would be like if we actively lived in light of these paradigms?

What would it look like if we vetted all of our experiences of pain and pleasure through the lens of eternity—knowing that one day everything painful will be wiped away and goodness finally and fully restored? What if the gospel gave us a framework to distrust our own experiences because we've seen that the cross promises life out of death, and surprise out of sorrow?

What would it look like if in the heat of the moment, when we are hated, offended, or insulted, we considered that we did all of those things towards God in our sin, but through Jesus, God himself loved his enemies, did good to them, and gave them what they didn't deserve?

How would we help others if we ourselves understood that we are works in progress? What if we moved towards the speck of others with the sobriety that together the church is fighting for change as simultaneously saints and sinners together—humbly advancing care instead of our own agendas?

It was considering the scope of what would change in my own life that I think the most fitting name for Jesus' message here is, "The Most Dangerous Sermon Ever Known."

It's because this sermon is so well known that it is so dangerous. Jesus himself seemed to be aware of this as he concluded the sermon. Read with me: **Luke 6:46-49**.

How many of us know this sermon, know these commands, and take comfort in knowledge without ever following the path of listening? To miss where Jesus lands the plane here is to miss the flight entirely. Jesus doesn't just want our minds to be different. He wants our lives to be different on account of the gospel which changes our hearts.

So today we examine a humble view of God's word—that is a view which protects us from the danger of knowing by holding up the need for listening obedience. It is this path of discipleship which is the safest and most joy producing labor any of us could ever endure.

What we are going to see today is this: **Following Jesus is seeing Jesus' words as work as our greatest need and deepest joy.**

We are going to see this in three parts. First we are going to see Jesus' ideal **Path of Discipleship** in verses 46-47. Then in verses 48-49 we are going to see the **Endurance of Gospel-Driven Obedience** and lastly we are going to look at the whole of this passage and see **The Treasure of Jesus' Words.**

The first thing we encounter in this text is a wonderfully helpful guide to any of us who would seek to follow Jesus. This is Jesus' ideal **Path of Discipleship.**

The presentation of this path actually comes couched in a warning. Read with me: **Luke 6:46-47.**

So what we see first of all is a warning to those who claim to know Jesus! Jesus speaks about those who call him, "Lord, Lord."

This title not only communicates that Jesus is confessed to have total authority over their life (which is what lordship implies) but the repetition of the title implies a special sense of communion. In the Hebrew language the repetition of a name communicates intimacy, deep knowledge and profound relationship.

Jesus' point here is simple. It's one thing to claim to be under my authority, it's one thing to claim to be in an intimate relationship with me – but to not listen to my commands and my words means you don't know me or trust me!

One of the greatest challenges the church faces is how easily it is to illicit a confession of the mouth and how difficult to see a confession of the heart. How great is the danger of healthy tongues and deaf ears!

My family and I were in Phoenix earlier this spring and we were driving on their great mess of interstates trying to navigate. At one point both my wife and I thought we had discerned the right lane in order to make our exit. But after a while we realized that the lane we were in broke away from the rest of the interstate and took us somewhere we were not intending to go.

Jesus' words here should cause anyone who feels they are in the right lane a moment of pause. In Matthew's account of this same passage these people who cry out "Lord, Lord" are ones who boasted in the works they did in the name of Jesus. These are people who thought they were in the right lane, going to the place they hoped, only to find their path had broken off.

But the beauty of the sobriety Jesus wants to bring here is that he wants you to have confidence that you are in fact in the right lane. He wants you to know for certain that when you cry, "Lord, Lord" that you are genuinely in the right place to do so.

That's why he states it in the positive for us in verse 47: **Luke 6:47.**

As I sat with the text this week I was struck with how profound this verse is for two reasons. First it really is Jesus' clearest roadmap of discipleship (we'll talk more about that in a moment), but it also is profound in that it answers who might follow Jesus. Did you notice who that might be? Everyone.

Who can come to Jesus? Everyone. Anyone.

In a world that clamors and calls for inclusivity and equality there is nothing more inclusive than the gospel. Who might be included in this everyone? Well, who have we seen already in the book of Luke? We have seen struggling fishermen and sickly widows. We have seen deceitful tax collectors and life-long priests. We have seen barren women, and a betrothed teenager. We have seen political zealots, and possessed men.

Who can come to Jesus? Someone raised in a Christian home who has never touched a drop of alcohol, and someone who has drank themselves into a ditch. Who can come to Jesus? The heterosexual soccer mom who refrained from sex till marriage and has been only faithful to her husband, and the homosexual man who has been active in his sexuality since being a teenager.

Who can come to Jesus? The homeless man who suffers with mental illness, sleeps on our porches and blights our streets, and the business man who makes more than we'd ever think. Who can come to Jesus? You and me. Who can come to Jesus? Everyone.

It's the broad call of the gospel which confounds the Pharisees and legalists, comforts those who are aware of their sin and commissions the global call for evangelism.

But though this call is unconditional in its scope, it is conditional in its response isn't it? The call of the gospel is a call without definition (it doesn't matter who) but it is not a call without distinction.

Don't we see this? Everyone (broad and universal) who (conditional) comes to me, and hears my word and does them.

Anyone can come to Jesus. But coming to Jesus looks like something doesn't it? Come to Jesus, hear his word, and do them. That's Jesus' path of discipleship. Here's where good Bible study helps us here. Do you remember who all was listening to this sermon? Look back at **Luke 6:17-18**. This crowd included Jesus' apostles, his closest disciples, but it also included those who wanted to come, those who wanted and who wanted to hear. And Jesus is warning of those who are willing to come, willing to hear, but unwilling to listen. Look at how Ezekiel puts this in **Ezekiel 33:30-31**.

The Greek word for "hearing" is *akouein*. The Greek word for obedience is *hyperkouein*. In other words Jesus is not simply after those who hear, he's after those who hyper-hear. He's after those who come to Jesus because he alone is the one who can save, who listen to Jesus because he alone has the words of life, and who applied Jesus' teaching for both their joy and their safety.

Who would seek to go to a concert only to plug their ears? And who would come to Jesus who didn't also desire to hear and obey the words of this savior king?

Three times in this text Jesus is speaking about doing something with his words. When we think of obedience we often think of wooden mechanics. But Jesus' is opening our eyes to the joyful reality of this life of discipleship. The Greek word for "do" in this passage is the same word used in other places as "create," "craft," and "produce."

In other words the gift of redemption in the word and work of Jesus is so profound that it is now our privilege to create something out of those resources. It is faith in Jesus' perfect obedience alone which saves us, but that salvation gives us the tools we need for a life of creatively beautiful obedience.

Have you ever watched a competition show where they ask the contestants what they would do with the prize money? We hear wonderful aspirations of what they want to produce and create with that wealth.

Do you realize that in coming to Jesus, and in hearing his words, we have the richest resource in the world to do something with it? We think of obedience as an unmovable caste which we have to follow, but the joy of gospel obedience is that it is the act of grace driven creativity where we have the privilege of saying: "What do I get to make next?"

This is why anyone can come to Jesus. It's not about who you were, it's about who the gospel of grace will make you out to be as the word of Jesus saves and sanctifies you. This is the path of discipleship: come to Jesus, hear the word of Jesus, and do something with it.

Jesus now gives us an illustration of what this kind of creation might look like. What do we create out of our obedience? A refuge that lasts. This is our next point: **The Endurance of Gospel-Driven Obedience.**

Read with me Jesus' words in **Luke 6:47-49.**

As one of your pastors I wish to be as honest as I can in this pulpit and I can honestly say that the past three years of my life have been the hardest years of my life. But this passage contains the deep truths in which God has endured me and proven himself faithful. If I could give away a single truth about the gospel that has the ability reshape one's life it would be this truth: there is no sweeter comfort than laboring to obey Jesus in the storms of life.

The metaphor Jesus used is a metaphor that speaks to my sinful, anxious, suffering heart on a daily level. If I had to point to why I believe the gospel, how I know Jesus is deep enough in the midst of my deepest sorrow and sadness, this is the text. Nothing has more fundamentally reshaped my coming to Jesus than hearing the life that is in his words and trusting that they are always and only for my good.

When you hear that you might just think that I'm talking about the Bible. I love the Bible. My heart yearns for more Bible. But what my soul needs, what my wife needs, what my kids need, and what you need is not only a heart that loves God's word, but a heart that obeys it and is built upon it.

Consider the profound nature of this illustration. If you had to offer an illustration of what your life would be like not obeying God how would you describe it?

Maybe you think of it like a child whose mother told you not to play in the big dirt pile in your backyard, but you went and did it anyway. Your mom then saw you and called you back inside with the right sort of motherly condescension. And you go, and you're sad you're caught, but you're also grateful for the fun you had. You know God's not pleased when we leave obedience untouched, but the fun of disobedience is hard to get away from.

Or perhaps you think of it as a worker who knows exactly what to do in order to avoid getting fired while still getting the same paycheck. You know you need to show up on time, and do the big tasks at work,

but you see those other people over extending themselves, doing all the extra labor, and they are getting paid the exact same amount. So why try if the rewards is the same? Maybe you think obedience is difficult and costly, but if grace saves us then why not find places where I can be a little lax while still avoiding the big taboos.

But did you see the nature of Jesus' illustration? The man who obeys is like a man who works hard, yes. But it is also the man who finds safety, shelter, belonging and purpose in a world which seeks to sweep all of that away.

The person who didn't obey isn't the one who simply disappointed God or appeared to be a hypocrite to others. He's the one who ended in total, personal ruin. Obedience is a matter of personal joy.

Notice that each man here is building a house. Why? Because we live in a world which is unsafe and inhospitable.

Don't we know that? Don't we spend our lives trying to construct places of relief, order, and peace? We know two things innately and we can see it in even our smallest children. The first is that what we want doesn't come naturally. That's why we cry. We can't produce it on our own. The very first cry of any child is a cry of finitude and limitation. We are not self-sufficient.

But we also know, as soon as that child gets the bottle or the blanket, that the world is a threat to that very provision. Other siblings snatch it, fabric tears, milk spoils, floods rise and rivers break. So what do we do? We build. The question of this text isn't who does the work of building, the question is whose work endures. Whose joy, whose security, whose shelter lasts?

Make no mistake, one man worked harder than the other here. In our English translation it appears there is a verb (dug) and an adjective (deep). But in the Greek it's two verbs: he dug, and he dug deep.

This man wanted something that lasted. He dug until he found something beneath the ground itself, something solid. The other man didn't dig at all and yet he placed his house on what was experientially firm as well.

He built on the ground not jello. This is always our temptation—to look at the things of the world and say, "I can build on this. It seems strong, it seems durable." But to anyone who has built a house before you know that's only foolishness! How easy is it to say: "I can go to church and have my walls, I can read my Bible and string up my roof, but my foundation is going to be the hopes of this world."

Though I go to Jesus for salvation, I turn to family life for satisfaction, good employment for safety, adventure for purpose, sex for relief and a strong government for peace. But those cannot save you when the storm comes. Those will not endure.

You see we often think of obedience in the same way Martin Luther did before he was saved. When walking home from Law school he was caught in a terrible storm and cried out to God that if he would deliver him, he would become a monk.

We often do the same. We see obedience as the fruit of deliverance. If God delivers me from the storms, from the floods, from the sorrows of life, then I'll obey. But do not miss Jesus' point here! Obedience and listening to Jesus' word is not the fruit of deliverance, it is the means of it!

It is the one who does the work of reaching into the depth of the firmness of the gospel, who refuses to settle for top soil and lose rock who endures the storms of this world. The best we have, the greatest resource provided for our joy and our safety is obeying and standing in obedience to Jesus. The greatest question you can ask yourself in the moment is: "Am I obeying Jesus?"

Anything else is great ruin.

The call to obey Jesus is a weighty and difficult call precisely because it's calling us to not trust ourselves. This is why we can call people to obedience without calling them to legalism. Jesus isn't asking people to trust themselves, he's asking them to trust the bedrock. He's not asking us to trust in our obedience or our faith, he's asking us to trust in the God who stand behind all those things.

What do you think the greatest threat to the Christian worldview is? Today we might think it's the chipping away of gender as a creation category. Or perhaps the power-hungry drift of both major political parties. Ten years ago it was homosexual marriage. Twenty years ago it was evolution in schools. Thirty years ago it was Communism. A hundred years ago it was Imperialism. Two hundred years ago it was enlightenment. A thousand years ago it was the expansion of Islam.

But Jesus here speaks to us with stunning clarity as to what the greatest threat is to a Christian worldview. It is those who wish to build a house to live in a way that appears to please God without having as a foundation that our greatest treasure, deepest joy, and enduring hope is exclusively and entirely in fidelity to Jesus Christ and his word.

What the tower of Babel shows us is not that our problem is a desire to reach the heavens, the problem is we seek to go up where the gospel calls us to first go down—down, deep into the gospel of grace.

What a comfort this is for those of us who know the joy robbing, bank breaking floods of this life! This life is not heaven. Our refuge here is not that all storms cease, but instead that we might know how to endure.

When the storms of life assail us, when the sun taps our strength, we are called to remember that this work is enduring work. We know when things get difficult a thousand thoughts flood our minds, but here is the guide rope of Jesus' grace. When everything seems convoluted, we lean into obeying Jesus. When it seems ridiculous to question our present affliction in light of an eternity which seems an eternity away, we lean into obeying Jesus. When it seems impossible to love our enemies in the face of harm and hurt, we lean into obeying Jesus. When it seems scary to address our sin and help others address their own, we lean into obeying Jesus. When it seems we are alone, wounded and vulnerable, we lean into obeying Jesus.

Why? Because even in the strain of the shovel and the heat of the sun, we know that our work will not be wasted. Look the Psalmists hope in **Psalm 84:10-12**.

In seasons of difficulty our hearts seek to grab for the rest of the world, but Jesus would have us grab the shovel of meaningful obedience. This is your hope. Athanasius wrote to his own church saying: **"Understanding the word, do not faint under trials; although from time to time, circumstances of great trial are set against them, yet continue faithful...So passing through water and fire, they find relief and duly keep the feast, offering prayers with thanksgiving to God who has redeemed them."**

It's in light of this I want to remind us of what we read right before this passage: **Luke 6:43-45**. Good trees bear good fruit. Good people out of the good treasure of their heart speak good things.

What's lost on us in this passage in English is that when Luke says the house didn't shake because it had been "well built," it literally reads, "good built." The same word Luke used in talking about trees and fruit in verse 43.

What is the foundation on which we build? What is our good foundation? The good work of Jesus Christ himself.

This is our final point in closing this morning: **The Goodness of Jesus' Words**.

You see we are not to find our hope in our obedience. We are to find our hope in our foundation on which our obedience rests. That's the good promise of Jesus Christ. Do you realize that Jesus is sharing from his own heart his own treasure? Jesus is speaking out of the treasure of his own heart.

Jesus is our foundation because he tested it and proved it faithful. He obeyed perfectly like none of us could. He died sacrificially the scornful death all sinners deserved. Our ruin became his reality! But in the midst of this obedience his own foundation held, he was raised in glory, he ascended to the right hand of God the father and he is robed in nothing but joyful riches of righteousness.

This hope is our hope! We know the foundation lasts—for Jesus himself is our proof.

This is now our reward, to build on the foundation of Jesus is to build on the foundation of great joy. Look at how Paul puts this in **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**. Will you build in such a way that endures through the veil of death?

I heard it said that everything for the Christian everything begins and ends with "God said." Will you take God at his word and bury our hopes, our labor and our joy in the work and words of Jesus?

I want to close with a poem by John Bunyan which is fitting for this occasion:

*This house, you may be sure, will always stand;
She's builded on a rock, not on the sand;
Storms, rain, yea floods have oft upon her beat,
Yet stands she, here's proof she is no cheat;
Fear not therefore in her for to abide
She keeps her ground, come weather, wind or tide.
Her corner-stone has many times been try'd...
Safety! Where is it if not here?
God dwelleth in her, doth for her appear,
To help her early, and her foes confound,
And unto her will make his grace abound;
Safety is here, and also that advance,
Will make a beggar sing and a cripple dance.*