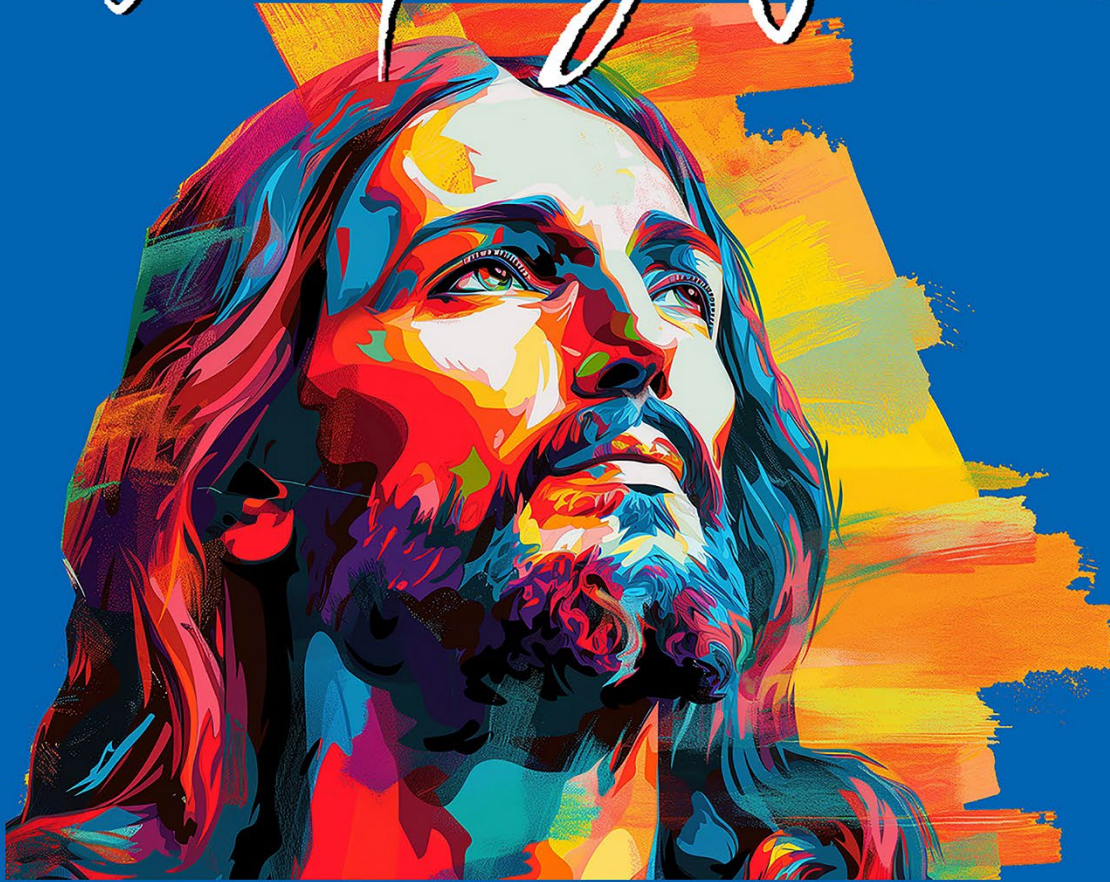


Finding Jesus



Embracing the Complete
Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

CHARLES S. STUART

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SIXTH FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

Every. One. Matters.

VI. Every. One. Matters.

To the Jews of Jesus's day Samaritans were anathema. They were religious as well as social outcasts. So much so that Jews would go the long way around Samaria rather than contaminate themselves with any contact. The Judeans thought less of Samaritans than they did of Romans.

We are familiar with segregation even among ourselves. In our own country's history, Protestant colonies fostered separation, if not elimination, of Catholics. The introduction of slavery to the colonies, and its brutal, inhuman application, existed on the assumption that slaves were not human, without soul or intelligence. This scourge was followed by other groups isolated because they threatened the original "founding fathers," groups like Native Americans, Irish, Italian, German, Scandinavians, Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, former slaves, segregation, and more recently Muslims and "illegal immigrants."

But it doesn't stop at ethnic or national identity. In recent years large parts of our politics have found other groups not deserving of respect based on their beliefs, including a wide range of sexual identities symbolized by L.G.B.T.Q.+.

Part of the human makeup is the freedom to make choices, even those that are contrary to God's heart and His law. What humans have been doing since recorded history, even in the Bible, reflects our choices to selfishly care only for me and my kind based on a false ego belief of being "better" than others. And then to reject, even castigate, any who are not in my group. It can be said this way: "I am me, and you are you, and I am better than you."

We have justified such actions by applying excuses like "they take our jobs," or "they steal our land," or "they don't speak our language," or the catch-all, "they aren't like us."

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

We're all guilty to some degree of this behavior, but that doesn't mean it has to be so. Jesus came to change the "I am me" statement to: "I am me, and you are you, and **YOU** are better."

He expects His followers to put "the other" first and me, and you, last — treating all with dignity, respect, and removing oppression. As John the Baptist proclaimed, paraphrasing Isaiah 40:5, *'the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth.'*

All this I write to validate a point that Jesus makes in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Here's the complete story told by Jesus.

10 ²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus, "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷ He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

Luke 10:25-28

The story starts with a 'lawyer' asking Jesus in verse 25, 'Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' An honest question.

The 'lawyer' was not a civil or even criminal lawyer, and he was not recognized by the Romans for participating in Roman courts. His law was the laws of Moses and the prophets as well as commentaries of the day from learned rabbis, like Nicodemus.

This is why Jesus asked him to explain what he thought the answer is to his own question. The 'lawyer' answered in verse 27, *'Love your God...and your neighbor as yourself.'*

This is the same definition Jesus gave in Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34 and is referred to as the "Great Commandment."

Jesus affirmed his answer in verse 28, *'You have given the right answer; do this and you will live (eternally).'* Looks like the 'lawyer' got it right.

But the 'lawyer' had a follow-up question that changed everything. In verse 29 he asked Jesus, *'And who is my neighbor?'*

Then Jesus started telling the parable. The Samaritan is the "hero" of the story, but there are "villains" introduced before he comes on the scene.

10 ²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy."

Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:29-37

I can imagine the crowd listened to Jesus intently even nodding with understanding when the 'priest' and 'Levite' crossed the road to avoid the 'left for dead' victim.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

But what really got their attention was when Jesus said, '*But a Samaritan... came near him.*' Imagine what they thought. "He's going to finish him off," or "He will show no pity" as he passed by.

Jesus was challenging the prevailing cultural and spiritual prejudice. So, Jesus said the Samaritan '*was moved with pity.*' I wonder what the 'lawyer' thought when he heard this.

Years ago, I told this story in a chapel service at a Christian school to middle and high school students.

Reframing the characters, I made the victim one of them, and the priest a pastor, and the Levite a politician.

They listened politely, but were, at best, disinterested.

Then I replaced Samaritan with Muslim, and every face changed. Now they were very interested.

Then, concluding the story, I asked, 'Which of these three, do you think, would be a neighbor to you when you fell into the hands of the robbers?'

It took some prodding to get the answers, and when the first few students replied, "the Muslim," several more joined in. What followed was a deeper discussion about the neighbor we don't really know personally, and how prejudice can prevent even Christians from doing what Jesus expects.

I close now as I closed at the chapel service, quoting Jesus...

"Go and do likewise."

CONCLUSION.

With this graphic example Jesus challenged the listeners to see beyond their biases and into the heart of the other. He showed the hypocrisy of the church leaders for ignoring the victim and the mercy shown by a stranger. Jesus was saying 'where mercy is needed, there you will be' when you live by the Gospel of Jesus.

Where do you stand?

What was the last time you faced a 'mercy is needed' situation, and what was your response?

Are there types of people in desperate need that you would hesitate to help? Please explain.

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SEVENTH FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

Woe to you...

VII. Woe to you...

Beware of False Teachings! *

Our focus here is drawn from Matthew 23. Jesus is outside the Temple talking with the crowd that includes 'scribes and Pharisees.'

A 'scribe' was an expert in the Law of Moses and the prophets. He interpreted what was said in the scriptures and commentaries by learned rabbis. The 'scribe' concentrated on the 'jot and tittle' of the law, not the bigger, fuller picture of the spiritual applications. 'Pharisees' believed in resurrection of the dead and were also experts in the law and tradition.

23²"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; ³therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. ⁶They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces . . .

Matthew 23:2-7a ¹



This is a different teaching of Jesus. Here, Jesus is warning, in the strongest possible terms, the religious leaders who are pretending to be followers of Jesus but are, in fact, hypocrites, full of personal greed for power, status, and wealth.

* See page 97-98 for additional background.

1 Additional scriptural background found at Matthew 23:1-36.
Other versions found at Mark 12:37b-40 & Luke 20:45-47.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

Meriam-Webster defines hypocrite as “a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion; or a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.” We all know about being a hypocrite; if we are honest, we only need to glance in a mirror.

There are many types of hypocrites — political, parent, spouse, business, and religious. It’s bad enough to be of two-minds, or two-faced, when dealing with a child, a spouse, or at work; but it is something else entirely when we profess spiritual belief with one face and ignore or reject those beliefs with a second face. The consequences can be misleading and catastrophic at the same time.

These leaders taught falsely what they themselves would not do. Even worse, they used their position of control to make sure the people had no chance to rise beyond their oppressed state. All while puffing up their personal standing as superior to the very people they were meant to serve.

Jesus expects transparency and honesty of those who follow Him, and certainly for those in positions of leadership in His churches.

Jesus’ words in this passage fly from His lips, as someone has said, like claps of thunder and spears of lightning. Out of His mouth on this occasion came the most fearful and dreadful statements that Jesus uttered on earth.

The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* on Matthew 23

* From *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 16-23*. By John MacArthur. ©1988 Moody Publishers & John MacArther.

David Platt, in a sermon preached on August 17, 2020, summarized how Jesus's 'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' might apply to us today.

It is possible for you and me to genuinely believe that we are doing God's work, obeying God's Word, and accomplishing God's will, yet to be deceived and to experience eternal damnation.

Let me say that again.

It is possible for you and me to genuinely believe that we are doing God's work, obeying God's Word, and accomplishing God's will, yet to be deceived and to experience eternal damnation.

Excerpt from a sermon preached by David Platt on August 17, 2020.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

23¹³ "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them.

Matthew 23:13

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Your false teaching keeps people out of heaven.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

23¹⁴ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive greater condemnation. False teaching keeps people out of heaven. Matthew 23:14⁺

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

You use pious or arrogant teaching to take advantage of the “least of these.”

23¹⁵ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Matthew 23:15

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Don’t teach a soft, easy Gospel, teach the complete Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

23¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.’¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred? *(verses 18-22 omitted for brevity)*

Matthew 23:16-17

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Do not put wealth, greed, or anything before following the Gospel of Jesus.

⁺ This verse is not found in many original manuscripts of Matthew. It does appear in Mark 12:37b-40 & Luke 20:45-47.

23 ¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.’ ¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred? *(verses 18-22 omitted for brevity)*

Matthew 23:16-17

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Do not put wealth, greed, or anything before following the Gospel of Jesus.

23 ²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!

Matthew 23:23-24

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Stop concentrating on the inerrancy of scripture minutiae and legalism, instead teach loving others, doing good, and showing mercy and kindness for all.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

23 ²⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean.
Matthew 23:25-26

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Stop wearing the mask of a clean, holy life when you are really hiding greed and selfish indulgence. Seek first the Kingdom of God on Earth for yourself and others you know.

23 ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. ²⁸ So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Matthew 23:27-28

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Don't present a self-righteous or prideful facade. Let your light reveal your love of God as expressed by the Gospel of Jesus.

23 ²⁹“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous, ³⁰and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Matthew 23:29-31

Woe to you church pastors, teachers, and those professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you hypocrites!

Don’t pretend you are more righteous than others. Be humble, pure of heart, showing mercy and compassion, obeying what Jesus said in the Gospel of Jesus.

23 ³³You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell? ³⁴Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, ³⁵so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, (rest of verse 35 omitted for brevity) ³⁶Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.

Matthew 23:33 ~ 36

You snakes, you brood of vipers!

Stop persecuting others for their belief in the Gospel of Jesus. Fill your heart with what Jesus taught, leave no room for anger toward others or ridicule of what they believe.

CONCLUSION.

From the Hebrew to the Greek, 'woe to you' was an intense exclamation of preventable grief, a wailing against who is responsible for the grief. Use these synonyms for 'woe' and see how the meaning becomes even more pointed.

Anguish, Grief, Affliction, Distress, Sadness,
Despair, Misery, Calamity, Trouble, Trial

_____ to you *church pastors, teachers, and those
professing Christ but not following the Gospel of Jesus, you
hypocrites!*

While the "woes passages" speak to all people — they have special emphasis for religious leaders since they were addressed to them. The Temple leaders had destroyed and polluted the law — making it to be something far from God's original intention. No wonder Jesus was so angry!

Jesus did not say all these things lightly, but with deep sorrow and righteous anger. The 'scribes and Pharisees' had harmed His people; the ones He came to free.

Their teachings and actions were just wrong — and Jesus convicted them of it in no uncertain terms, so much so that they retaliated by conspiring to have the Romans crucify Him for "threatening Pax Romana."

It seems to me that we should take Jesus's
'woes' in Matthew 23 seriously.

Very seriously, indeed.

Don't you?

CHARLES STUART

Where do you stand?

What application, if any, is there in these passages to today's Christian faith? Are any of us still in bondage to false leadership today?

Why do so many make it easy to claim to be a Christian? ("here's your ticket to heaven")

Too many ignore the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus. Why?

Why aren't believers aware that it's their responsibility to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth?

How is it that far too many who call themselves 'Christian' fail morally, pursue greed, power, and control more than pleasing and obeying Jesus?

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EIGHTH FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

Seek and Serve the
Least of These.

VIII. Seek and Serve the Least of These.

Jesus and God Care for the “Least of These” and Expect Their Followers to do Likewise.

The story in the Gospel of Jesus, found in Matthew 25:31-46 about the sheep and the goats, has been framed in two contexts by churches.

One, primarily expressed in many Evangelical Protestant churches in America, has the story being told by Jesus referring to the “second coming” described in the previous chapter. In this version of the story, it only has eternal salvation implications for believers.

A second meaning of the ‘goats & sheep’ passage is to give instruction for the kind of actions that are important to Jesus and to set a “Jesus-standard” for performing them. The Sermon on the Mount provides more detail about the “Jesus-standard” that Jesus expects of His Followers.

But could it be that this isn’t the only meaning?

Accepting as I do the Gospel of the Christ for my eternal salvation, perhaps another purpose of this story is to warn salvation-only believers that rejecting or ignoring their responsibility to usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth calls into question the sincerity of their salvation commitment.

The Judgment of the Sheep & Goats.

25³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?'

⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

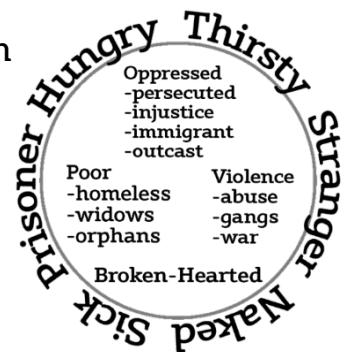
Matthew 25:31-36

Who are “the least of these?”

Jesus specifically defines “the least of these” by repeating the list that He uses to judge “all the nations:”

25³⁵ for I was **hungry** and you gave me food, I was **thirsty** and you gave me something to drink, I was a **stranger** and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was **naked** and you gave me clothing, I was **sick** and you took care of me, I was in **prison** and you visited me.’
Matthew 25:35-36

The six words in **bold above** should be taken literally when understood through the Gospel of Jesus. They, or words with similar meanings, were used by Jesus, and by God in the Old Testament, hundreds of times. These words are also illustrative of the issues of poverty and justice.

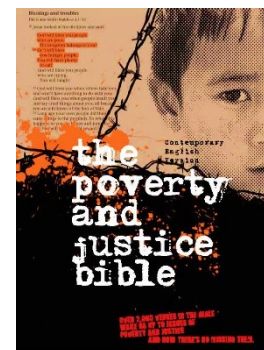


This graph, illustrated by the author, helps us better understand “*the least of these*” in today’s culture.

Suffering under oppression or injustice or persecution or poverty, or any other expression of dominance by another person, institution, culture, or religion, is not the will of God for our lives.

To usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth is the will of God, and it is for this purpose that Jesus lived among us showing His followers how to fulfill it.

“The Poverty & Justice Bible” was released by the American Bible Society in 2009 and features more than 2,000 highlighted verses that speak to poverty and justice, as well as a 55-page section of reflections and discussion topics. This is a great resource that contains a broad definition of “the least of these.”



Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

The American Bible Society webpage for this bible can be found by scanning the QR code.



For those on His right hand... the Sheep.

All people, especially the followers of Jesus, are expected to show the love of Jesus by seeing and serving “the least of these.” This may mean providing for their immediate needs of food, shelter, dignity, safety, and justice.

It means we should seek ways to do this through intermediaries like our churches or organizations of churches, through supporting effective non-profits in their work in our communities and around the world, or through government initiatives to provide essential needs at home or throughout the world.

Those who do this with a genuine heart can expect to hear...

25 ³⁴ “the king will say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” Matthew 25:34

For those on His left hand... the Goats.

Some people, even those claiming to follow Jesus, will reject “the least of these” making a conscious decision to turn away from or abandon them. Others will willfully ignore them, blinded to those whom Jesus loves.

In either case, they will be rejecting or ignoring Jesus — not something to be done lightly. And by disobeying and turning away from Jesus, the sincerity of any commitment for salvation must be in doubt.

And that is a chilling thought with eternal consequences when they hear...

25 ⁴¹ "Then he (the king) will say to those at His left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from Me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Matthew 25:41

"The goats" should be careful, very careful, when choosing to reject the will of God and the command of Jesus.

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to Me."

In the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew, Jesus spoke personally to each person as if he or she was the only person to hear Him. If He meant it personally maybe we should take it personally as well and let it change our heart.

We should take Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, the Messiah, and the Son of God, at His Word. He really did mean what He said. And because we can't figure out how it conforms to the salvation gospel doesn't mean we shouldn't feel a warmth — or a cold chill — in our soul based on our behavior and attitudes toward those in need.

One thing is clear. In the Words of Jesus, we are to care for "the least of these." Not just think good thoughts or pass the responsibility on to someone else. We are to act as Jesus commanded and do what He did.

It is personal, between me and Jesus. How about you?

CONCLUSION.



The response Jesus honors is to engage with the oppressed or those in need of “daily bread,” whenever they come our way. The Gospel of Jesus expects His followers to be sensitive to the cries of loneliness, hunger, sickness, doubt, and shame, and to help those afflicted without regard to price or time or reputation.

Where do you stand?

Jot down some “sheep” you have known in your life and what made them be sheep.

When have you challenged a “goat” to serve others like Jesus did?

One thing is clear. In the Words of Jesus, we are to care for “the least of these.” Not just think good thoughts or pass the responsibility on to someone else.

We are to act as Jesus commanded
and do what He did.

CHARLES STUART

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NINTH FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

**Jesus Rejects those who Claim
to be His Followers but Don't
Follow the Gospel of Jesus.**

IX. Jesus Rejects those who Claim to be Followers but Don't Follow the Gospel of Jesus.

“Not everyone who says to Me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...”

7 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 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 deeds of power in your name?’ ²³ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’ Matthew 7:21-23 ¹

Many have claimed these verses to be the scariest in the Bible when Jesus says – *“only he who does the will of my father will enter the kingdom of heaven.”* But aren't the actions of many who said 'Lord, Lord' part of the will of God? This is what makes these verses confusing.

“...only the one who does the will of my Father...”

Let's look first at the will of God – a very big topic indeed. I believe the will of God that Jesus refers to is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth (the Gospel of Jesus) and, through belief in His death and resurrection, a path to eternity with God and Jesus (the Gospel of the Christ).

Perhaps in these verses Jesus sets apart those claiming to be His followers merely by exclaiming 'Lord, Lord.' They thought that the proclamation alone entitled them to 'enter the kingdom of heaven.'

¹ Additional scriptural background found at Matthew 7:21-27.
Other version found at Luke 6:46-49.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

Saying magic words didn't work then, and it doesn't work today. When those claiming, "I am Christian," expect to 'enter the kingdom of heaven' without doing 'the will of my Father in heaven,' they are deeply misled. Jesus knows what we're thinking and, more importantly, what we're doing that fulfills the Gospel of Jesus.

7²³ Then I will declare to them, I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers. Matthew 7:23

Perhaps there is no statement by Jesus colder in its finality than "I never knew you."

The actions mentioned by the many who said 'Lord, Lord' were actions that help to establish the 'Kingdom of God on Earth.' Should we stop doing these actions? There must be something deeper. Perhaps these actions were done with an unclean heart, wrong motivation, or a desire to receive personal acclaim.

God looks on the heart — the motive for our actions. When He finds hypocrisy, He does not know us.

The 'many' that Jesus referred to in these verses were hypocrites — calling him 'Lord, Lord' (master) when they really were their own masters.

A pure heart is important. Doing the 'will of My Father in heaven' wasn't wishful thinking — it was His basis for inclusion as one of His followers. And being His follower — imperfect as we may be — it is what Jesus sees in our hearts.

CONCLUSION.

Claiming to follow the Gospel of Jesus is wonderful. But know this...not following through on your claim is a serious affront to Jesus and God. So much so that Jesus said,

'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'

Where do you stand?

Imagine if you were to say one thing to Jesus but then do the other. What would Jesus think about your hypocrisy?

Now Imagine you lived your life in accordance with your commitment to follow the Gospel of Jesus. How would you feel then?

Finding Jesus

Embracing the Complete Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.



TENTH FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

**With His Last Words, Jesus
Commands His Followers to Teach
Others the Gospel of Jesus.**

X. With His Last Words, Jesus Commands His Followers to Teach Others the Gospel of Jesus.

In the Gospel of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew, Jesus, the Christ, delivers what is often called the “Great Commission,” the marching orders for His followers, later to be known as Christians.

28 ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

This passage has been interpreted through the salvation-only lens as a command from Jesus Christ for believers to share the “born again” message to “save” the world. I do not believe that any other interpretation has been offered or allowed.

But what did Jesus actually say? Let’s look closer at His actual words. By applying the Gospel of Jesus lens His words take on another “Great Commission” meaning — to continue the mission He declared in His first public statement, to fulfill the Kingdom of God on Earth, as it is in heaven.

“All authority...has been given to Me...”

Jesus, the Christ, tells us in clear, unambiguous language, that He speaks with the full power of God, His Father, and the Holy Spirit. This is the last Word of God giving His followers what they are to do with their lives.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

“Go...”

He says “go,” not wait. He says “go,” not debate. He says “go,” not delegate. He says “go” — and He means what He says.

“make disciples...”

Disciples don’t just believe what they are taught. They do what they are taught. Disciples are fully on board with the mission and are loyal to faithfully continue making disciples just as Jesus taught them.

“of all nations...”

“All nations” means places where people live together — from family, to neighbors, to villages, to towns, to regions — without regard for race, religious beliefs, language or culture, or oceans. Jesus’s message is for everyone and it’s up to them to choose to follow.

“baptizing them...”

To Jesus, and for the early church, baptism was important as a way of declaring an individual’s commitment to follow the teaching of Jesus, to turn away from old ways and to live by this new “Way,” and to indicate belief in the mystery of eternal salvation given by God’s grace.

“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

Jesus leaves no doubt about who is in control. Not a person or a preacher. Not a king or a prince. Not a nation or a culture. All disciples will have the same allegiance to the living and eternal God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

Jesus gives clear direction for what is to be taught to His followers. Called the Gospel of Jesus, it is right there in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. Nothing more. Nothing less.

“I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The use of “I am” by Jesus as expressed in Matthew refers to the original name God told Moses in Exodus 3:14, “I AM THAT I AM.” This is God in all His forms — God the Father, Jesus the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit.

“I AM with you always”

Jesus makes this two-fold promise: I AM “with you always — to the end of the age.” Think for a moment about what He said.

I AM is with me. He’s not somewhere far away in a different time and place. He is “with you always” from the moment you commit your life to following the Gospel of Jesus until the Gospel of the Christ assures your eternal salvation.

“until the end of the age”

At death, with faith in the Gospel of the Christ, we instantly are in eternal relationship with Jesus and His Father. Some followers of the Gospel of Jesus, the Christ, may be alive to experience the ‘end of the age’ spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24.

Foundational Truths from the Gospel of Jesus.

From the first words of His ministry to His last..."

Jesus's first words in His hometown synagogue in Nazareth and His last words, recorded in Matthew 28, frame the beginning and the end of His earthly ministry.

"I came to fulfill the Kingdom of God on Earth."

His First Words as paraphrased by the author.

At the beginning, He asked those listening, and us today, to believe what He said — the prophecy of the world set right, where justice reigns among all people, as the Kingdom of God on Earth has been fulfilled in the name of God and His Son and the Holy Spirit.

"Now it's in your hands to fulfill My mission."

His Last Words as paraphrased by the author.

Jesus's last words to His followers transferred responsibility to those listening, and to us today — but remember — words mean nothing without actions.

Amen.

CONCLUSION.

With this command Jesus expects us, His followers, to work to fulfill the Kingdom of God on Earth through our lives. This is our prime directive just as it was for Jesus. If you believe in Jesus for your salvation, you are, then, committed to being a Follower of the Gospel of Jesus.

Where do you stand?

Have you accepted the Gospel of the Christ for your salvation? If so, do you also accept the Gospel of Jesus for your way of living?

If you do accept the Gospel of the Christ and the Gospel of Jesus, will you share your commitment with your pastor and others in your spiritual community?

We are to go, make Followers everywhere, baptize and teach them to obey what Jesus did, said, and taught - the Gospel of Jesus.

And He will be with us now and forever.

In the name of Jesus, His Father,
and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

CHARLES STUART

Finding Jesus

Embracing the Complete
Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.



The Follower's Creed.

Followers of the Gospel of Jesus.

In the Gospels, the living Jesus taught those who listened and sought to continue His mission how to live and act as Followers of the Gospel of Jesus.

Churches, from the 3rd century CE to today have embraced creeds defining what a Christian believes or should believe. Earlier, in the section titled Early Church Fathers, we touched on the Nicene Creed, perhaps the most famous of statements of Christian faith for 1,700 years. But there is little to no mention of the elements of the Gospel of Jesus as this quote says.

“Notice that the (Nicene) creed is still silent on the life and teachings of Jesus, making it difficult to claim this as part of the essence statement of Christianity because it ignores the Gospel of Jesus.”
Charles Stuart, see page 13

The Follower’s Creed on the next page invites those who pledge to follow what Jesus taught, and commanded, to make a public statement by signing it, then share a copy with a respected leader or mentor in the church.

Most church members are not actively and regularly engaged in ushering in the Kingdom of God on Earth. The love of Jesus requires action by His Followers, not just ‘thoughts and prayers.’

CHARLES STUART

The Follower's Creed.

Believing Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth; and believing what He said about how His followers were to show their love for others and for Jesus by their actions to others; and believing others will only hear about the Gospel of Jesus from my actions:

I pledge and affirm that I will follow Him in fulfilling His mission to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth with my life and actions, by embracing what Jesus taught becoming like Him in spirit, mind, body, and soul, for as long as I can, as often as I can, and with all I can offer.

I affirm my belief in the following:

- ☐ Jesus was totally human and the Son of God.
- ☐ His Words are the latest Words of God.
- ☐ He fulfilled the will of God by establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth, and He expects me to follow His example.
- ☐ With His death and resurrection Jesus became "the Christ."
- ☐ Jesus expects me to commit to follow Him with "all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my might, and to love my neighbor as myself."

I will follow Words of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, and help heal the world.

Follower's Name

Church Name

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

The Last Words of Jesus, the Christ.
Matthew 28:19-20

Let's Just Imagine!

Let's just imagine what might happen in our family, community, church, nation, and world if all believers **KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH!** helped usher in the

When people embrace their role in the Kingdom of God here on earth, their **EYES, EARS, MIND, HANDS, FEET & VOICE** will be used to reflect their faith.

They will use their **EYES** to look for needs that are unmet, and to watch over those in positions of authority.

They will use their **EARS** to listen for the cries of those in pain, and to hear and address comments that demean those in need.

They will use their **MIND** to think of ways to get involved and to question for themselves what God would have them do for Him.

They will use their **HANDS** to do what is needed, remembering that it is through their hands that Jesus touches the "least of these."

They will use their **FEET** to go where needed...overseas, across the street or into the voting booth...to bring the Kingdom of God to those in need.

They will use their **VOICE** to speak up and out for those without a voice, and to hold those with power accountable to remember "the least of these" when making decisions.



**Wouldn't it be lovely to live
in a world like that!?!**

Charles Stuart

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