

Creekside Community Church
Return of the King: The Gospel of Matthew
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Warning Signs: Matthew 7:13-29

Have you ever refused to admit that you were lost? Or have you ever assumed that you knew where you were going when really, you had no idea? I made a terrible mistake my Senior Year of High School. I was taking a friend of mine to prom. And I was really into this girl; like, totally enamored with her. So I wanted our prom to be perfect. And I planned the night in excruciating detail. This is how obsessive I was; a few days before the prom, I actually drove to prom site, so I'd know exactly how to get there. And then I memorized the directions, so I wouldn't have to look at them while I was driving with her (Did I mention I was into this girl?). So the big night comes. And everything is going according to plan. I mean, I did a really good job. We finish dinner. And we begin driving to the dance. The drive is smooth. There's minimal traffic. And I make the final turn. And...the place isn't there. It's gone. And now, I'm on this street; this street that looks exactly like the street I was supposed to be on. But it's not that street. I'd made a wrong turn. But I had no idea where. And so my date turns to me. And she suggests – ever so gently – that we stop and ask for directions. And in my infinite, 17 year-old wisdom, I said, “no.” I refused; because I knew how to get there. I knew it was just around the corner. So for the next two hours we wandered the wilderness of Santa Clara, looking for prom. We just kept circling this industrial park; looking in vain for the Promised Land...until finally, I gave in. I asked for directions. And we arrived at prom...3 hours late.

According to Scripture, there are people who think they're on the right path. But they're not. Proverbs says, *“There's a way that seems right to a person, but its end is death.”*¹ Now some of these people explicitly reject Christ. They don't claim to follow him. But others do. The Bible speaks of those who confess Jesus as Lord; and who sincerely believe that they're following him. And yet they're sincerely wrong. They don't know Jesus at all. I assumed I knew where I was going. But I didn't. So how can you tell? How can you tell if your faith is genuine; if you're truly walking the path of life? On prom night what I really needed was one of these. (Sadly, it hadn't been invented yet). If I'd just had Google maps I would've been able to see exactly where I'd gone off course (and, I wouldn't have even had to admit I was lost). In today's passage, Jesus helps us map out our faith. And he shows us where we can get off track.

We're currently in a series on Matthew's Gospel. And today, we're looking at the conclusion of Jesus' most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5-7, King Jesus defines what life under his rule will look like. He shows us the blessings of life under his reign. He shows us what it looks like to truly obey him. He speaks of the priority of pleasing God over pleasing people; and the priority of seeking God's kingdom over material possessions.

Then, he teaches us about discernment and discretion. And finally, Jesus reminds us that we can't do any of this on our own. So we must seek our heavenly Father like little children. We must come to God humbly, and plead for his help. And now, Jesus concludes his sermon with a call to respond; to take his teaching to heart.

In today's passage, Jesus speaks of two roads, two trees, two claims, and two foundations. And through each of these illustrations, Jesus is making the same point; that when you boil it down, there really are *only two* ways to live. I can follow Jesus as my King. Or, I can reject him. There's no neutrality. There's no middle ground. And there's no third party option. I accept. Or I reject. But rejection can take a variety of forms. And Jesus shows us four different ways people reject him and his teaching. Some people choose comfort over the cost of discipleship. Others pretend to follow Jesus, but are actually intent on exploiting people. Others think they're believers because they're successful in ministry; or, because they've had spiritual experiences. But, they're deceived. And still others think they're followers because they know Jesus' teaching, and understand it. But they don't really believe his words, because they don't put them into practice. So Jesus is contrasting the path of true faith with four alternative routes. And in a sense, Jesus is giving us warning signs along the road of life; signs of what unbelief actually looks like, and where it leads.

And this helps evaluate our own faith, to see whether or not it's genuine. As a pastor, one of my great burdens is to ensure that no one here assumes the gospel; that no one assumes they follow Jesus because they're sitting in this room, or because they recited a prayer. And if that's you – if you're going through the motions but haven't truly placed your faith in Jesus – the most loving thing I could do is reveal that to you and point you to true faith in Christ. And if you are a genuine believer, I think Jesus' warnings are helpful for you as well; because Jesus show us what unbelief looks like. And this helps us identify unbelief in our own lives, so we can turn from it.

So let's look more closely at each of these warnings. Jesus begins by speaking to those on the fence; those who haven't made up their minds about him. And he challenges them to leave the comfort of the crowd, and follow him.

1. Danger of Comfort: Let me ask you a question; is it easier to procrastinate on a big Project, and binge-watch Netflix; or, to set aside time and work on it? Is it easier to eat healthy, or to eat whatever you want? Is it easier to make a financial plan, and follow it; or to spend everything you make? Which is easier? Well, it all depends how you look at it. Some things are easy in the short term, but make life much harder in the long-term. Some things feel hard at first, but make life much easier. Jesus says that following him is hard. And yet, it's easy. It leads to life. Conversely, rejecting him seems easy; yet it makes life harder and harder; and ultimately, it leads to death. Jesus says, *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it."*¹⁴ *"For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."* (vv.13-

14). Jesus contrasts two roads. One is easy to travel. It's smooth and accommodating. But the other road is confining. It's challenging. And the gate to enter this narrow road is like a turnstile; you can't enter with everyone else.² In fact, it's only wide enough for one person to enter at a time. And Jesus says that's what following him is like. It requires us to make a decisive break with the masses and personally commit to him.

Now, I'm not sure Jesus is saying that in the entire course of human history only a small minority of people will be saved. Rather, I think he's speaking, first and foremost, of his own generation. Most of Jesus' contemporaries *did* reject him. Only a few followed him. But that's a cautionary tale for us; we can't assume that majority opinion will lead us to Jesus. Often it doesn't. If you're not a believer and you're considering Jesus, Jesus is speaking directly to you. And he's saying that you're not going to drift towards him in the crowd. At some point, *you* have to say, "yes." And you must come to Jesus on his terms, rather than yours; which means Jesus cannot be just another counselor or life-coach. He must be your king.

People in our culture often speak of Jesus as a wise moral teacher. I often hear people say things like, *"I don't like the church, but I love the teachings of Jesus."* But I think they're reading selectively. Think about how much of Jesus' teaching is self-referential. Jesus spends a lot of time talking about Jesus; about *his* greatness and supremacy and authority. But if he isn't who he says he is – if he isn't the king of the universe – then he's delusional, or manipulative, or both. That's why Tim Keller says, *"you can't like Jesus."* Either Jesus is the Lord and the Savior of humanity, or he's not a good person. But you can't just *"like"* that kind of person. You either reject him, or you bow to him.

Following Jesus is not appropriating some of his moral principles. It's trusting him, and letting him speak into every area of your life. The narrow road isn't doing more religious stuff. It's trusting in Christ. And that's crucial for us to grasp. Sometimes, people have this picture of the *"broad road"* and the *"narrow road."* And the *"broad road"* is filled with drunks, and perverts, and people who miss church occasionally; while the *"narrow road"* is filled with very prudish people who don't own TVs, or interact with the world, and seem generally displeased with the state of things. But, they're really holy, because they follow rules. But that's a caricature of what Jesus is saying. Think about Jesus' audience. These are *religious* people. What path are they tempted to follow? It's the path of the Pharisees. That's the *"broad road"* in this context. In Jesus' day, the Pharisees were the popular ones. Conventional wisdom said, *"be like them."* And they were known for rigid, external conformity to God's law. But their hearts were far from him. And Jesus is saying, *"don't emulate them. Don't settle for external conformance."* Jesus says we don't need more rules. We need to become new people. We need a radical change of heart. That's what he's been talking about throughout this sermon. We must become people who mourn over sin, and thirst for righteousness, and love our enemies, and identify with Jesus, even when it's unpopular. And we can't live that way unless we trust in Christ. This sermon drives us to faith. We need Jesus' help.

And living this way is uncomfortable, because it's not controllable. It's not manageable. Think about it. Suppose a challenging person comes into your life. They have lots of needs. They're difficult. How do you respond? Maybe I say, *"I'll do the bare minimum."* Or, *"I'll help that person until..."* But if I follow Jesus, he says, *"Love evil, ungrateful people like my Heavenly Father loves you."*³ And I say, *"Ok Jesus, could you flesh that out a little bit? Could we put some parameters around that?"* Because that's not manageable. That's hard. And now, I need to pray about the best way to love them and speak truth to them. I'll need to seek Jesus and his wisdom. And I'm going to need his mercy, because I'm going to fail a lot. And in the process, I'm going to realize how selfish and unlike God I am. And I can't opt out of it, because Jesus is so gracious that he's just going to keep forgiving me, and say, *"try again."* And he's going to keep giving me opportunities to love difficult people.

That's the *harder* way to live. And yet, it's the easier way to live. Jesus is making me like him. He helps me. He frees me from self-absorption, and anxiety, and the fear of people. The road is narrow. Yet, just a few chapters later Jesus will say, *"...my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*⁴ Jesus just invites me to live with him, and learn from him. And he gives the grace and the power. Faith in Jesus has a narrow entry point. He's the only way. And yet, as we submit to him as King, we see just how expansive Jesus' way is. He frees us from our enslavement to lust, and fear, and people-pleasing. Conversely, the broad way feels free. We just go with the flow. We swim with the tide. And yet, as we travel, this road becomes more and more confining. We realize that we're enslaved to our desires. But our desires are insatiable. And ultimately, life begins to feel very constricted, and small.⁵

So the choice is comfort, or the cost of discipleship. One leads to life; the other, to death. And if *you're* on the fence about Jesus, know that comfort can keep you out of the Kingdom. Following Jesus will cost you something. There will be a social cost to identifying with him. Not everyone will be happy you're a follower of Christ. And there will be a personal cost. Jesus will make demands. And yet, he gives what he commands. He's a gracious king, intent on making you whole, and free. If you're already a follower of Christ, ask yourself, *"Where am I seeking comfort over the cost of discipleship?"* Where am I keeping silent about Jesus? Where am I refusing to lean in, and love someone? Where am I not seeking reconciliation? Where am I just going with the flow? Where am I taking the path of least resistance? Comfort can be a warning sign that we've strayed from faith in Christ.

2. Hypocrisy: Comfort is one warning sign. The second is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is pretending to be one thing, when – in reality – you're another. I'm fairly confident that no one here wants to act hypocritically. In our culture, one of the worst things you can be called is a, *"hypocrite."* And yet, according to Scripture, there are subtle ways I can fall prey to hypocrisy. Jesus says, *"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."*¹⁶ *You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?*¹⁷ *So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad*

fruit. ¹⁸ *A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.* ¹⁹ *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* ²⁰ *So then, you will know them by their fruits*” (vv. 15-20). Jesus moves from addressing those on the fence to addressing threats inside his community of followers. He says there are outsiders who pose as insiders. These people appear to be genuine, but they’re counterfeits. Jesus calls them wolves in sheep’s clothing. It’s tempting to assume that if it walks like a sheep, and it talks like a sheep, then it’s probably a sheep. But Jesus says, *“not so fast.”* The New Testament is clear. There are people who pose as Christian leaders, but who exploit their authority for their selfish ends. Sometimes, they use power to lead people away from historic Christianity into a cult or some religious sect. Other times, they use godliness as a means of financial gain. They use their position to fleece the flock. Other times, they use a position of power to pressure people into adulterous relationships or some other terrible thing.

And Jesus says, *“Be on the lookout for these kinds of people.”* Now, I don’t think Jesus is calling us to hold every person guilty until proven innocent; or to constantly put each other’s motives under a microscope. That would go against what he just said in Matthew 7 about judging presumptuously. Jesus isn’t saying, *“judge every motive.”* He’s saying *“look at the fruit.”* What is the person’s life actually producing? What can you see? And here, *“fruit”* entails both what a person teaches, and how a person lives. If someone claims to speak on God’s behalf, ask, *“does their teaching line up with Scripture? Do their lives line up with Scripture?”* From a distance, the fruit of thorn bushes look like grapes. From a distance, thistles look like figs. You need to get up close to see the difference.⁶ So look closely at what people teach, and how they live. Don’t listen to someone just because they’re charismatic, or dynamic, or because your friend recommends their blog, or because they have a large platform. Test what they say. Test what *I* say. Don’t assume, *“well, Jeff has a Bible degree or something...so I guess what he says is right.”* No! Weigh words against Scripture.

Now, hopefully, none of us are wolves in sheep’s clothing. I hope that no one is here under false pretenses with intent to harm the flock. But notice the underlying sin. It’s hypocrisy. It’s pretending to be something you’re not. There are many subtle ways we can put up a front; that we can protect our image to cover weaknesses and faults. And I think the more admiration we receive; the more accolades; the influence we have; the greater temptation there is to cover up; to hide. I’ve known guys in ministry who have such a hard time admitting to sin and weakness and doubt because they feel such pressure; such pressure to bat 1000% spiritually.

When you have a reputation; there’s more to lose. Being honest may mean losing approval or admiration. I want to speak to younger people for a moment. And I want to talk about a specific kind of hypocrisy; one that I fell prey to when I was your age. When you grow up in the church, and you’re successful academically, or athletically, or socially, you can become the *“good Christian kid.”* And you’re praised for your commitment to Jesus; and your success. And perhaps, you start feeling pressure to live up to that. But I think many teenagers are just

beginning to follow Jesus. They're just coming to faith, even if they've grown up in the church. Or, their faith is embryonic; which means it's immature. It hasn't been tested. And many teenagers are dealing with major sins, and doubts, and perhaps even objections to following Christ. But if you feel pressure to perform, you might be tempted to put up a façade; and refuse to deal honestly with the fact that you're just learning how to follow Jesus. That's where I was in High School. I was the Bible answer-man. But I had major internal battles. And I didn't feel like I could deal with them openly. And I put that pressure to perform on myself. And I've seen many kids who seem committed to Christ in High School. But then they get to college, and they're gone. They're done with Christ, and his people. And here's my encouragement to you. It's ok to admit that you haven't arrived. It's okay if you're struggling. It's normal to grapple with sins, and doubts and objections. So do that openly. I hope we provide a context to do that. But don't wait to address those things. I think it's totally natural for kids who grow up in the church to go through a transition from inherited faith to personal faith. I remember when I was 14, and realized; *"wait a minute, my parents are Christians and I'm a Christian. If my parents were atheists, I'd probably be an atheist."* And I had to grapple with personally committing to Jesus. That's not a bad process. It's a good and necessary process. So let us walk through that process with you. Don't pretend.

3. Danger of "Success": Comfort is the first danger. The second is hypocrisy. The third danger Jesus warns of is *"success."* And I've put that word in quotation marks; because I'm talking about *"success"* as we perceive it; not necessarily as God does.

A few days ago, I was on social media, looking at (er...stalking) my pastor-friends' page. And I looked at all the people he knew, and the speaking engagements he had, and the things he got to experience, and his platform, and his influence. And as I did, I let out a little *"sigh."* (And that's sin, by the way; when you're discouraged by other people's success; that's envy and comparison and pride). And I thought, *"God, why aren't you using me that way?"* And I thought, *"you know if God used me like He used him, I'd have stronger faith."* It's tempting to think that success will automatically strengthen our faith; that if God blesses us in certain ways, or uses us in certain ways, that we'll have a deeper faith in him. But according to Jesus, *"success"* isn't necessarily an asset. In fact, it can be a liability.

He says, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."*²² *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"*²³ *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS'"* (vv. 21-23). Jesus just talked about outsiders who pretend to be insiders. And now, he addresses people who sincerely think they're insiders – but really – they're outsiders. So he goes from speaking of those who willfully deceive others, to those who deceive themselves. These people call Jesus by the right name; *"Lord."* And they seem to have ministry success; and dynamic experiences of Jesus' power. They

prophesy. They perform miracles and exorcisms. And yet, on the Day of Judgment, they're cast out of Jesus' presence. Jesus doesn't know them. And thus *they* never knew Jesus. And they demonstrate they don't know Jesus through their disobedience to his commands. Jesus says they're workers of *"no law."* They don't care about Jesus' commands, which demonstrates that they don't know Jesus as *King*.

And this is incredibly sobering. I'd assume that witnessing miracles would strengthen my faith. Don't you want to see miracles? Don't you think that would deepen your trust in God? I even think seeing an exorcism would strengthen my faith. My dad performed an exorcism once. I remember talking to him about it. And I said, *"I wish I could've been there!"* And he said, *"trust me, you want no part of that!"* We can receive blessings from God; we can have dynamic spiritual experiences; we can even be used by God to accomplish his purposes; yet never have a genuine relationship with Christ.

And one question I think we need to ask ourselves is, *"am I pursuing a relationship with Jesus? Or is Jesus just a means to an end? Am I really pursuing something else, and Jesus is just the convenient way of getting it?"* I have to ask myself, *"if I wasn't in ministry; if I wasn't able to get up here and speak to you; if I didn't have this position and this job (which I really enjoy), would I follow Jesus less closely than I am now?"* Because if the answer is, *"Yes,"* then ministry is ultimate, and Jesus is secondary. I'm following Jesus for the sake of ministry, rather than doing ministry for the sake of Jesus.

There's no guarantee that blessings, or success, or spiritual experiences will make our faith stronger. Oftentimes, the opposite occurs. When things are going well, people are often prone to forget about God, rather than praise him. You see this throughout the Old Testament. Look at Judges. When the people are safe from their enemies, they stray from God. When King David is at the height of his power, he falls from grace. When Solomon eclipses David, he turns from God to idols. When things are going really well; things can start going really bad for people spiritually; because humans have a tendency to worship the blessings rather than the Blessor; the creation rather than the Creator. And sometimes, when people get what they wanted from God, they're tempted to think, *"well I know longer need God."* So ask yourself, *"why am I seeking Jesus? Is it simply for what he can give me? Or do I want to know him?"* Ask yourself, *"what could cause me to stop following Jesus? What could I lose that would cause me to stop following Jesus?"* Because whatever that thing is, that's your real Lord and Savior; that's your idol; your ultimate. Success is no guarantee of a close relationship with Jesus.

4. Danger of Knowledge: Jesus warns of comfort, of hypocrisy, of success; and finally, of Knowledge; and specifically, of unapplied knowledge. Jeff Vanderstelt is a pastor up in Washington State. One day, Jeff was approached by a man in his congregation. This man was frustrated that his church didn't provide more in-depth Bible studies. So Jeff asked him, *"ok, well what book of the Bible have you studied most recently?"* And he said, *"well, I've been studying James."* So Jeff said, *"That's great! James talks about caring for widows and orphans,*

and helping the poor, and caring for the wounded. So I'm sure you're doing all of those things now." In response, the man said, *"well, not really."* And Jeff said, *"But wait a minute, I thought you were studying James?"*⁷ One of my temptations is think that knowledge equals spiritual maturity. If I just study more; if I just learn more; I'll grow in my faith. I've made this mistake many times. Years ago, a young man came to me and asked me to teach him how to pray. And so, we got together. And we read a book about prayer. And it was pretty good. And you know what we didn't do? PRAY! It's easy to substitute knowledge for genuine faith. And knowledge is necessary. It's *vitally* necessary. But it's not sufficient. God doesn't give us Scripture simply to inform us; but to transform us. God's word isn't simply to be learned; but believed and obeyed. And the reality is that I can know a lot about Jesus; without actually knowing Jesus. Jesus says, *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock."*²⁵ *And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."*²⁶ *Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand."*²⁷ *The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell-- and great was its fall"* (vv. 24-27). Jesus just addressed people who thought they were insiders because they had spiritual experiences. Now, he addresses people who think they're insiders because they hear his sermon; who assume they know Jesus because they hear and understand what he's saying. But Jesus warns them that this is insufficient. Those who really trust Jesus don't just know his words. They put them into practice. They make their knowledge functional. There's a difference between people who know about Jesus and those who know him. Now, at face value these people look the same. Jesus compares each kind of person to a house. The houses seem identical. However, the storms – the trials of life – reveal the difference between these houses. These people have built their lives on different foundations. People with a theoretical knowledge of Jesus have built their lives on sand. And they fall away in times of testing. They can't withstand persecution, or loss, or suffering; because they haven't really come close to Jesus through obedient faith. Their lives aren't really founded on him. But people who really know Jesus and live by him hold strong in the storm. They're lives are really founded on the rock. In fact, when the going gets tough, they're foundation gets ever stronger. They cling more tightly to Jesus in the storm.

There's a difference between theoretical knowledge, and functional knowledge. Theoretical knowledge is simple what I'm aware of. Functional knowledge is what I live by; what I put into practice. And I need to ask myself, *"how much of my theology do I live by? How much of my preaching do I practice?"* See I can articulate the doctrine of justification by faith. And I can talk about the glories of God's free acceptance in Christ; and how we have a righteous standing before God through Christ; and how we don't need to prove ourselves. But what happens when I'm criticized? Do I react harshly? Do I rush to defend myself or prove myself or *justify* myself? If so, do I really believe that God has already justified me? That I'm already

righteous? I can get up here and explain God's sovereignty; and how he works all things for good. But do I freak out when I'm five minutes late for an appointment? Do I try to take over for God as general manager of the universe? If so, do I really believe in God's sovereignty? According to Jesus, unapplied knowledge is unbelief. What we believe, we live by. And for some of you, the next step in following Jesus isn't going out and learning something. It's going back and asking, *"what have I learned that I'm not putting into practice?"* It's not what we know. It's how we respond to it.

Matthew ends this section with his own editorial on Jesus' teaching. *"When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes"* (vv. 28-29). Jesus' didn't talk like anyone these people had ever heard. The scribes – the religious teachers of Jesus' day – didn't talk like Jesus. Their authority was derivative. They relied on others for their authority. When they taught, they said, *"well rabbi so and so said this, and rabbi such and such said that."* But Jesus comes on the scene, and just starts talking. And he says, *"Here's how to understand God's will. This is how God will judge you."* And then he says, *"I'm the one who judges you. I determine whether you enter the kingdom. I determine who's in and who's out."* Jesus speaks with unprecedented authority. That's what floored the crowds. That's what should floor us. Jesus is speaking as the judge of the universe. And he's exposing the deepest thoughts and intentions of our hearts. Do you see the progression in this passage? How Jesus keeps digging into deeper issues? Jesus starts by addressing outsiders who are thinking about becoming insiders. Then he warns about outsiders who pretend to be insiders. Then he talks about outsiders who think they're insiders because they do ministry. Then he talks about outsiders who think they're insiders because they know a lot about him. Jesus says there are many ways to miss him, but only one way to find him. We must trust him as King. And if we trust him as King, we'll treat him like a King, and we'll obey his commands.

When I preach, I don't want to crush wounded people. I don't want to weigh people down who are already burdened. I want to comfort the afflicted. But I believe that Scripture afflicts the comfortable. And I would hate to leave any of you comfortable in your unbelief; *especially* if you *think* you actually believe. You are not a Christian because you do ministry. You're not a Christian because you've studied theology. You're only a Christian if you trust Jesus as Your King. And listen, trusting him is not performing more religious duties. It's seeking him. It's coming to him and saying, *"Lord, I don't know how to follow you. Teach me!"* As Greg said last week, seeking is believing. So do you come to him? Do you come to him and say, *"Lord, I can't do it apart from you. So walk with me. Help me. Teach me!"* That's faith in Jesus as King; or to put it simply faith in Jesus. And if you've never done that, don't leave here without doing so. Come to Jesus and say, *"I believe you died for my sins. I believe I'm hopelessly lost without you. I want to follow you as King. I believe you rose to conquer sin and death. Help me!"* And what you'll find is that Jesus is the best kind of king imaginable. He forgives you more than

forgive yourself. He loves you more than you love yourself. He's wiser. He's better. He's kinder; his way is easier. He'll do a better job running your life than you will. And if you come to him, he will in no way cast you out. Never ever ever. Let's pray.

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¹ Proverbs 14:12.

² Illustration adapted from <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-325/the-only-road-to-heaven>.

³ See Matthew 5:45-48.

⁴ Matthew 11:30.

⁵ Ideas and imagery adapted and modified from D.A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: An Exposition of Matthew 5-10* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999); 126-27.

⁶ Point taken from *ibid.*, 136.

⁷ Story adapted from <http://www.vergenetwork.org/2011/02/08/how-is-a-missional-community-different-from-a-printable/>.