

The Unknown

Matthew 7:21-23

One of the most solemn places that any American can ever visit is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. This unknown soldier of WWI is a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Victoria Cross, which is Great Britain's version of the CMH. On the west panel of that honored gravesite is this inscription, "HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD". The soldiers of the US Army who guard the Tomb wear no rank on their uniforms, thus to not 'out rank' those who are buried there. On the mats where they march and stand their watch, their routine is meticulous in detail as the dutiful soldier,

- Marches 21 steps south down the 63-foot-long black mat laid across the Tomb.
- Turns and faces east, toward the Tomb, for 21 seconds.
- Turns and faces north, changes weapon to outside shoulder, and waits 21 seconds.
- Marches 21 steps down the mat.
- Turns and faces east for 21 seconds.
- Turns and faces south, changes weapon to outside shoulder, and waits 21 seconds.
- Repeats the routine until the soldier is relieved of duty at the Changing of the Guard every 2 hours.

What I just read to you of this honored place is not what we see in Matthew 7:21-23. Profession of righteousness **MUST** be accompanied by concrete evidence until you and I are faithful to death. That soldier that was laid to rest was faithful to death 100 years ago. My hope and prayer are that what is inscribed on that western panel is true in more than just identification as a man, but also as a child of God. That is not what we will see this morning. This morning's sight is one of great sadness. In these three verses we will be reminded of the shallowness of hypocritical religion and those who follow it. These three verses remind us of service without honor. This is the plight of all who fail to know Christ as Savior, who fail to do a "walk around" of their faith. This is the destiny of "The Unknown".

I. WORDS WITHOUT FAITH

Vs. 21

(a) **Not Included**: Last week we looked at a false prophet and this week we will look at a false flock. This goes beyond a Pastor without a calling but a parishioner without a faith. They looked for and judged faith in others and lived a life without faith in themselves.

1. Jesus plainly says, “*Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven.*”

- They refused to be poor in spirit, meek on earth, merciful, pure in heart and hungry and thirsty for righteousness (5:3-10)
- They refused to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (5:13-16)
- Murder and adultery were allowed into their hearts and Jesus Christ was kept out (5:21-31)
- They wouldn’t love their enemies, go the second mile, or do things that were pleasing to the Lord (5:38-48, 6:1-4)
- Their prayers and their fasting was for attention and their treasures were earthly just as were their hearts (6:5-21)
- They judged hypocritically with cedar logs in their eyes (7:1-6)
- They desired a wide gate where their earthly treasures and temptations would all fit through and remain together, and their bad trees bore bad fruit (7:13-20)

a. Their words aren’t included (*says to me*) in the Kingdom of Heaven no more than they will be. The Bible tells us in Matthew 25 that when Jesus returns, He will separate the sheep from the goats; He knows the sheep, “...*but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.*”

b. He DOESN’T know the goats. They are “The Unknown”.

Puritan George Swinnock said, “There are many men like ponds, clear at the top, and mud at the bottom; fair **in their tongues**, but foul in their hearts.”

II. WORKS WITHOUT FAITH

Vs. 22

(a) **Many**: Remember that Jesus said that the way to destruction (waste) is wide, and there will be many that will find it? They found it and now we see them standing before the One who challenged them to go another route. They thought they would be sheep, but surprisingly they found themselves as goats.

1. “Jesus, buddy, I think you’ve got us in the wrong pile! I think You’re confused!”

Illustration: When I played football, at tryouts there were two guys whose last name was Pope. The younger one was big, strong and a far better athlete. The older one was fast as a rabbit, but not as big and not as athletic. The cut list was put out and then we had first practice. The coaches were looking for “Big” Pope when “Little” Pope showed up to practice. They cut the wrong guy! One of the coaches said, “Good thing we ain’t Catholic because we chose the wrong pope!”

a. “Lord, let us correct You because You have definitely made a mistake in our eyes.”

- We *prophesied* (foretell of divine events under inspiration) in *Your Name* (your authority)!
- We *cast out* (ejected) demons in *Your Name*!
- We accomplished many *wonders* (dunamis) in *Your Name*!

2. Let’s look back up for just a moment at the beginning of this verse where Jesus says, “In that day”.

Isaiah 2:11 *The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted **in that day**.* (ESV)

a. Everything that this false flock had accomplished was for their self-exaltation and not the Lord’s. Even their ‘salvation’ had false pretense after the will of the flesh and the will of man.

John 1:12-13 *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, **not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man**, but of God.*

III. WORDS BY FORCE

Vs. 23

(a) **It's My Turn**: In one final act of graciousness, Jesus has listened to their last words. He has listened to their self-validation. He has listened to their unneeded reminder. He has listened to one last sound of the patting of their own backs as they got it all wrong, "This is what WE did."

2 Peter 2:17-18 These people are springs without water, mists driven by a storm. The gloom of darkness has been reserved for them. ¹⁸ For by uttering boastful, empty words, they seduce, with fleshly desires and debauchery, people who have barely escaped from those who live in error. (CSB)

1. Look at what Jesus said, "I never knew you". That word 'you' there is key to the context of what He is saying. It is not a noun or pronoun...it's the subject of a verb! In the English language, verbs don't have 'a subject'. But in foreign languages they do. In short...

- There was never a time that I was the object of your attention or affection. Now, neither will you be an object of mine!
- Everything that you did was for you...and never me.
- You had to be seen and you never looked to Me
- You had to be heard and you never obeyed the Voice of the Gentle Shepherd
- You had to have others watching you (not letting the left hand know what the right had was doing) and forgot that I saw it all

a. You see, there was a reason that I chose the video of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during the shutdown phase of COVID-19. There is no one there except the dutiful soldier!

- Alone, he still marched 21 steps south, turned to **face east** and stood for 21 seconds, re-shouldered his weapon, and repeated the process towards the north. Every two hours the guard was changed, and the words were spoken to an empty set of steps just as they were when they had dozens watching.

Matthew 24:27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.