

MATTHEW 7:21-23 "Self-deception" or "Don't count your chickens" by Liz Ward
w/c Sunday 16th August.

"Please hold, your call is important to us". Whenever I hear that I want to shout at the phone and say "If it was you would give me decent music to listen to while I am waiting" and "Well then why don't you employ more people to answer the phones".

Insincerity, the words or actions which don't mean anything.

In Matt 7 v 1 Jesus talks about not judging others and he warns about false prophets. That seems strange to put those two together. One could argue, if we don't judge, how do we recognise the false prophet? His warning is about not being judgemental, over critical (the log in your own eye) whilst being able to be discerning about what you hear and see when people claim to follow Jesus. Then in v 21 he gives this comment about not everyone who says they are followers really are. The Living Bible translates v 21 as this: *"Not all who sound religious are really godly people. They may refer to me as 'Lord,' but still won't get to heaven. For the decisive question is whether they obey my Father in heaven.*

I have heard Christians comment on their fellow Christians like this - "If they **really** believed then". "Some people here have a shallow faith". "People just haven't been filled with the Spirit". "If they fully understood the Gospel message then" "

In each comment there is a judgement of the faith of another and it seems to me that there is also a smugness which implies that "I've got **my** faith right". Sometimes I am not sure about the depth of my own faith, let alone have the right to comment on others.

V 22 is interesting *"At the Judgment^[d] many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we told others about you and used your name to cast out demons and to do many other great miracles.'"*

In 'church' terms these people have been successful, they have led fruitful outreach, preached, guided people through Bible Studies, what is the problem? But - yes there is so often a 'but' - their heart wasn't in it, they went through the motions, were probably boosted by their own 'success' and the plaudits of others, maybe their service had become routine, a ritual but it wasn't God led.

Where are you in this?

In the commentary on Matthew by Michael Green he says this: *"How evil are the fruits to be found in many professing Christians! - an arrogance that alienates; an externalism that does not touch the heart; a separation between religion and life; a faith that makes no demands, or that consists in legalism; a religion that takes refuge in charismatic jargon about prophecy or miraculous healings or the driving out of demons, but may not even really know Jesus, and does not do the will of the heavenly Father"*.

Are you in this? Are we as a church?

Discipleship has to be whole-hearted and all encompassing.

Are you ready to make that commitment? Are you ready to consider your own motives and attitudes? How will you respond to God's answer as you do?