Live Strong

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?

This question is one that lands with a punch. It’s a hard-hitting question that leaves an impact.

Jesus is implying here that people knew him, who he was, but did not reflect him in their actions—acknowledging him as Lord was not sufficient. This was a question for those who claimed to follow Christ, yet their actions showed differently. In short, Jesus is saying, “believe in me and do what I tell you too.”

Today, I want to talk about the notion that belief without commitment and hard-work renders our faith powerless, vulnerable, and dissatisfied. Calling on Jesus without following through with what he has asked for and from us will render our lives to very little. And, you do not want a little life, a little faith, do you? We want a strong, fortified, wise, courageous, and reliable faith that permeates everything in us and around us and leads us to that good and abundant life Jesus talks about.

Let’s look again at this question from Luke 6:46,

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?

It is significant that Jesus repeated the word “Lord” two times, he said: “Lord, Lord.” There is a reason for this within the context of the whole Bible. When the Bible repeats a person’s name is to imply a sort of intimacy. This both a cultural and Hebrew language dynamic.

Here are some examples.

When God speaks to Abraham at Mount Moriah as he is about to plunge a knife into the breast of Isaac, God says, “Abraham, Abraham.” Or when God encourages Jacob in his old age to take the trip to Egypt, God says, “Jacob, Jacob.” Compare the call of Moses from the burning bush: “Moses, Moses.” Or the call of Samuel in the night “Samuel, Samuel.” What about David’s cry of agony when he lost his son, “Absalom, Absalom.” We also have Jesus’ cry of desperation from the cross, “My God, my God.” And when Jesus confronted Martha, when he warned Peter, and when he wept over Jerusalem. In each case, the names are repeated for intimacy’s sake, strongly implying: “I know you; you are in my heart.”

So, when Jesus asks the question, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?” it seems like maybe he was trying to say, “Why do you act like we are close, why do you pretend to have this deep relationship with me and then do not do what I say.” As I said before, this was a question for those who claimed to follow Christ, yet their actions showed differently. But maybe it was also for that person in the crowd who did believe in Jesus, yet they had not fully surrendered. Or for the person that prays, “God, if you do this for me, I will do whatever you want… like for real this time.”

Is this speaking to us? I think we all struggle with doing what Jesus asks us to do. Not necessarily because we reject Jesus’ teachings, but because there is a battle within us that struggles to forgive, be compassionate and kind, speak truth, and respect others. I mean, Jesus is so mean that he asks us to do all these horrible things that would make our lives and the lives of those around so much better. How dare you, Jesus, inviting us to be kind, forgiving, and compassionate? How dare you asking us to seek peace, mercy, and justice? What kind of monster are you?

For this reason, the significance of Jesus choosing the name “Lord” to refer to himself is a profound one. The word “Lord” needs to be more than a word on our tongue because calling him Lord doesn’t make it so. Any dictionary you pick defines the term “lord” as someone who dominates, controls and influences others. For someone to call Jesus Lord implies that Jesus has dominion, control and influence over your life; that you have surrendered yourself to him.

This is one of the most critical and consequential learnings for our faith. The most important one is confessing one as Lord and Savior, but then this confession is followed by doing what Jesus says. His lordship is not only for confessing what is right but for living right. Jesus is basically saying: “You got me right, I am ‘Lord, Lord.’ You believe and confess right. But, come on guys, now you have to live it up!”

I believe by reading passages like this in the Bible that we don’t receive by confessing; **we reap by following**. It is not a trick; it is cause and effect. The power is not on our “really wanting it,” but on really following. The confessing is for our salvation; the following is for our transformation. There is a reason for this: Jesus wants what is best for us, for our families, our children, our parents, our friends, at our jobs, schools, even our churches.

As much as Jesus wants what’s best for us and has provided everything we need so we can get his blessings, it is a hard practice to follow Jesus; there are many things against us: feelings of inadequacy, fears of all sorts, nasty people, wild passions, and all kinds of impulses to do what we know is wrong: to cheat, lie, steal, gossip, and hurt.

Everything Jesus has said is not to build up a religious system but a new life within us. Everything Jesus taught was to make us compassionate, honest, truthful, and strong to nurture our hearts, our relationships, our families, and all people around us.

It is hard, very hard work indeed. Let’s look at the second and last part of the text that I haven’t read yet. Here it is, verses 47-49,

I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.

You probably have heard this text before. Jesus says if you want to build a strong and lasting life, you need to be careful where you are standing. Because when the storms in life come at you (and they, to all of us every now and then), you either will overcome them or become a victim of them.

Here is the basic analogy: building a house on the rock will keep the house safe; building the house on the ground will cause the house to be brought down. With this, Jesus is telling us: if you confess me but don’t follow me, you are on a dangerous path to calamity; but if you do follow me, you will be standing after the storm.

It is a plain and simple cause and effect kind of deal: when you live your life with God’s Word as your foundation for everything you do, then no matter what comes your way, you will be able to withstand it.

Why does he use the analogy of the two houses to explain his concern? What is he teaching? Jesus’ concern is about our well-being; he wants us to be safe and tells us that his teachings are the strong foundation for a strong life. We are not in control of the rivers -all of us face hardship- but we control our choices, how we want to live our lives, and Jesus is saying my teachings, my wisdom will make you strong and lasting.

Following Jesus is about laying a foundation for our lives. This does not only concern our private faith, but everything we are, we have, and we love. Your house is your family, job, career, health, mind, and whole being. Jesus’ teachings are not about building up religion but our lives, everything we are and hold dear.

My friends, this is serious, we are talking about the foundation for our marriages, our relationship with our children, our contributions to society, our legacy as Christians. The majority of our pains in this life are because we get beaten down by the rivers because our foundation is weak or nonexistent. We break our marriage vows, we are bad workers in our jobs, we don’t teach our children good character, we don’t study hard in school and then we pray for a good grade (really?). And so on.

So, here is our challenge: we dream, we pray, we hope for a good life, yet we are unwilling to lay the foundation of Jesus’ teachings in our lives. We call Jesus by the right names but deny him with our actions. Jesus is not a mean to whatever we want; he is our Lord, our teacher. Jesus saves us so he can teach us. And when we welcome his teachings by acting on them, the blessings pour out like a fierce, abundant rain from heaven to the point that we get flooded with goodness.

Knowing Jesus’ teachings and commands is not a sufficient answer for what we need. Without doing what he says, we are shallow, expose, weak, easy to be cheated on, and misguided.

I finish with this. The rivers, the storms in life come to all, no matter who you are: how smart, wise, spiritual, kind, or a good guy or gal, we all get hit. But if we do what Jesus says, we will make it through, and we will be well.

My friends, let’s be well. Let’s confess our Lord, and let’s do what he says. Let’s live a strong, lasting life.