

40-07-03.wpd—Attractive Distractions
 Golden rule, distractions, errors, insincerity
 Mat 7:12-23
 God's ways bring Kingdom living; man's ways distract us from it.

INTRODUCTION: (Text for Scripture reading)

–*Kingdom living* is the theme of the “Sermon on the Mount,” and the will of the King is the key to that lifestyle. Many voices claim to speak for God, and God gives us in **v.12** of this passage a way to test whether or not they are telling us the will of the King: “*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*”

This test, often called “The Golden Rule,” can be put into a question: “Is what they say *human-friendly*?”

–The passage before **v.12**, about how God answers prayer, is *human-friendly*, and **v.12** concludes that thought. But **v.12** also introduces the verses that follow it, which are the **text** of today's message (**title**). God's will for us is *human-friendly*: “*in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.*” That's profound! It makes our own humanity the standard of *Kingdom living*. That's what God teaches, but what wayward humans often do not teach. **HOM.idea**. The verses that follow this *Golden Rule of Kingdom living* describe these **Distractions:**

- I. **The Distraction of Popular Pathways** (v.13-14, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”)
 - A. God's pathway to life and Kingdom living is narrow because it's exclusive– **John 14:6**, Jesus said ... “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (But humans still chew on bad fruit in their diet from Eden's tree of moral independence. They invent multitudes of ways that seem “good” to them, making God's will and way seem narrow and hard to find.)
 - B. The **doctrine of reincarnation** is one example of this. It's a basic doctrine in *Hinduism*, but it is also extremely popular with those who follow *New Age* thinking. But is it *human-friendly*?
 1. It teaches that our personal identity as humans, our individuality, is an illusion [what Hindus call *maya*], because really we've lived hundreds or thousands of lives before with no memory of it.

When we die, we come back as another person or as an animal, but the life we've knew is forever gone. But one part of it is not forgotten: our *karma* [what we did right or wrong is carried over into the next life and determines our new life's status and quality].

2. These teachings are not *human-friendly*!
 - a. Individuality is part of our humanness. Human love is based on the identities of individuals and our relationships with them. Human grief comes when death separates us from friends and loved ones. [**expl.**: “I want to see my mom and dad again someday, to hug them and kiss them and talk with them. Resurrection gives me that hope; reincarnation eternally destroys that hope.”]
 - b. The idea of karma explains why a caste system developed in India [**expl.**: people in lower castes are there for their moral failures in other lives, so they deserve no better life or higher status than they have.] (But humans would be outraged if a court condemned them of crimes they never personally committed: “*Other personalities in your line of being committed those crimes, so you must be punished.*”) Everything that is human in us says NO to this!

TRANS: The idea of *maya*, that everything we see and know and learn is one big illusion, is not *human-friendly*. God presents us with *reality*, not with *delusions*. **God's ways bring Kingdom living; man's ways delude us and distract us from it.** Another distraction is...

- II. **The Distraction of Persuasive People** (v.15-20, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”)
 - A. *False prophets* have a human quality that can be used for good or for evil: *charisma* [**def.**, ability to inspire enthusiasm, interest, or affection in others by means of personal charm or influence] (*Charisma* attracts us, but it tells us nothing about a leader's moral character.)
 - B. [The false prophet Jim Jones had *charisma* as a Bible preacher, but eventually the Bible fell to the wayside and Jim Jones became primary. People became so distracted by his personal charisma that they follow him in suicide in 1978 in the Jonestown Massacre. Only 9-11 surpasses it in civilian loss of life.] Jesus

says to test prophets. Do they produce *human-friendly* fruit?

1. Do they preach the Word of God or their own ideas? (Humans are meant to live on “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”)
2. Do they try to become your conscience, so that if you go against them, you are going against God? (Our *conscience* belongs to God but it can be stolen from Him by a belief in false teachings.)
3. Do they encourage independent spiritual growth or dependence on the teachings of leadership within the group? (The Holy Spirit was given to every believer to help us either reform or leave any group that departs from sound doctrine— **John 14:26**, But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.)

TRANS: God became human by Incarnation. That’s *human-friendly*, but it doesn’t work the other way around. If popular leaders become like God to their followers, they are *false prophets* and their doctrine is as spiritually lethal as the cyanide-laced Kool-Aid was in Jonestown. There is one more distraction that is very close to home...

III. The Distraction of Personal Performance (v.21-23, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”)

- A. Our own good works for God can distract us from Kingdom living. We like to think well of ourselves, even though we *fall short of God’s standards*— **Rom 3:23-24**, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (this is true about us, but it’s not human-friendly to stop there...we must read on to see God’s will) and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.
- B. The *Golden Rule* is God’s own standard, and because we’re made in His image, it’s *human-friendly*. We’re happy that God blesses us! He expects us to bless others as we want to be blessed by Him.

CONCLUSION:

—Don’t be deluded by human unfriendly doctrines, or destroyed by false teachers, or distracted with your own achievements. **God’s ways bring Kingdom living; man’s ways distract us from it.**

Matthew 7:12-23 (NIV)

12So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

13“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

14But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

15“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

16By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

17Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

21“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’

23Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’