# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“I Never Knew You”**

**Matthew 7:21-23**

 **May 14, 2023**

When Lauri and I were engaged to be married we met regularly with a Christian couple for pre-marital counseling. One of the things I remember them telling us is that marriage is not a 50-50 proposition, with each person committing half-way to the other while holding back half of their commitment for themselves. For our marriage to work each of us had to be willing to commit 100% to the relationship – we had to give all of ourselves to it.

This morning Jesus is going to tell us through his teaching that if we want to have an eternal relationship with him, we have to give 100% to that relationship – we have to give all of ourselves to it. Jesus gave his life in order to have a relationship with us – he is all in. His question for us is whether we are all in.

We have been talking about Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount these past several months, and this morning’s passage from the Sermon contains one of the most haunting things he ever said: “I never knew you.” I invite you to turn with me to Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’”

“I never knew you.” Are there any more frightening words in the Bible that we can imagine Jesus saying to us? Jesus is not saying that he doesn’t know about us. After all, he is God and he knows everything there is to know about who we are and what we do. What Jesus is saying is that he does not have a relationship with us because while we may know some of the correct religious words and even participate in appropriate religious activities, we have held back our hearts from him. We’re not all in and have therefore not entered into a saving relationship with him. It is in this sense that he doesn’t know us.

Before Lauri and I were married, we had begun dating. While marriage needs two people who are 100% committed to each other, dating is more of a 50-50 proposition. Dating Lauri, especially at first, there were things about myself that I held back. I wanted her to see what was best about me because I liked her and wanted her to like me. But as things progressed and it became apparent that our relationship was moving toward a permanent relationship, both of us had to begin to be more fully committed to each other. As our love grew for each other, the desire to do what was best for the other person also grew. We came to understand that if our marriage was going to be real, not just outwardly but in our hearts, it had to be based on both of us being all in.

If you or I want to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven, it is not enough just to date Jesus, so to speak. It is not enough to just say and do good things that we think will impress him, while holding back areas of our life for ourselves. The will of the Father in heaven is for us to be 100% committed to Jesus. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” Jesus gave all. For us to be in relationship with him, for us to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven and for him to know us, we need to give it our all, as well.

When do I love Lauri the best? When does my love for her shine the brightest? When do I love her with all my heart? When I make it my highest priority to show her that I am 100% committed to her. One of the ways I can do this is by knowing what pleases her and then doing it. So, this morning I gave her a nice card for Mother’s Day, praising her for being a wonderful mother and an amazing grandmother. Because I love her, I am grateful for her, and I am committed to her. If this is how I seek to live fully committed to Lauri in our marriage, should I not want to live the same way in my relationship with God?

Should I not want to know what pleases my Lord and then seek to put it into practice? He has told us in his Word what pleases him, but if I don’t care to know what it says, or if I know but don’t follow through on it, how can I say that I love him? And, if I don’t love him completely, if my heart is not fully given to him but is, at least in part, following after other gods, then I am not in a committed relationship with him, and I run the risk of Jesus saying about me on the day of judgment, “I never knew you.”

But, that day is not yet here. Today, you have the opportunity to consider if you’re all in with Jesus, and if not, he invites you to get there. He invites you to make a 100% commitment to him. To trust him with all your life, holding nothing back.

And, if you trust him in this way, giving all of yourself to a relationship with him, as he has given all of himself to a relationship with you, then trust him that you will hear on judgment day not the terrible words of this passage but those from another teaching of Jesus: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” For he will certainly know you.