MAPPING FBC DNA:
LIFE-CHANGING FAITH
Matthew 7:12-27
Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri
January 27, 2019
WATCH/LISTEN: https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/mapping-fbc-dna-life-changing-faith/

Do the words of Jesus ever make you uncomfortable? If not, why not? Read vv. 12-13. Strangely, the words and teachings of Jesus are often neglected by his followers. In vv. 15-20, Jesus asserts that it's consistency between inner and outer life that counts. Jesus uses the fruit tree analogy. The root and fruit of a fig tree will agree. In the same way, when you go to a coffee shop and the cup is marked "latte," you don't expect Gatorade. Isn't this what we call character and integrity? An integrating of inner and outer. A genuine follower of Jesus refuses to compartmentalize life, as if this is God's and the rest is my own business. It's all God's business!

In vv. 21-23, Jesus moves us beyond religious creeds and words to obedience; beyond religious activity and church busyness to obedience. Intellectual assent (those who repeat, "lord, lord") and religious busyness (preaching/prophesying, casting out demons, etc.)—this is how Christ's church has been sidetracked. One of the unique DNA markers here at FBC JC is right here. We seek to be relationship-based not rule-based. Ought-to's, should and guilt do not motivate fruitful Christian living. Does that mean anything goes? Of course not. But our obedience is a relation-shaped obedience. Not legalism or fundamentalism. Not rote memorization of rules. When I consider ways to be a more considerate, more loving husband, I don't take out our marriage certificate or pour over the words of our vows. I respond to our relationship of love and commitment. And guess what. Commitment based on love is always more exacting and demanding than one based on rules. Our commitment is about leading people into life-giving relationships.

In vv. 21-26, Jesus caps all of this by declaring that doing his word is the foundation of all of life—for individuals, family, churches and nations. Between vv. 12 and 27, the word "do" or "doing" appears ten times in the Greek, in one form or another. What is the foundation for life? Not making lots of money, being famous or playing defense for the Kansas City Chiefs (though they could use you). But doing Jesus' words.

In the wake of Hurricane Michael last fall, one house in Mexico Beach was left standing. All the others around were demolished; this one stood. The owners documented that they had driven 40-foot pilings down to something solid. And so our lives. In Jesus' story, both houses experience storms. Being a follower of Jesus does not exempt us from pain. But it's the foundation we build that makes the difference.

A few months ago, I attended the band concert of our sixth-grade grandson. They were beginners. The first selection they played emphasized whole notes. The next one, quarter notes. After that, they highlighted the importance of rests. Then repeat signs. Isn't this how we learn to follow Jesus? We learn his way. First, we deal with temptation and disappointment. Then, we begin to curb bad habits. After that, we learn to pray, confess our sins, learn to love and forgive and to share our faith. Foundation building blocks. Dallas Willard once wrote that our behavior

does not just show up. We have been trained for it all our lives. It grows out of a particular soil; we all use particular building blocks for our foundation.

Now if that seems antithetical to you, to talk about how we are not to fall into legalism and rule keeping, while insisting on persevering obedience, consider this. In Philippians 2:12-13, the Apostle Paul instructs us, "…work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to do his good pleasure." We can't do God's part and God won't do ours. It is to be from the inside out. This Jesus, who works deeply in our hearts and minds, as we suddenly realize, "this works; it makes sense," and we begin to be transformed, from the inside out.