

**“Good Warnings”
Matthew 7:24 - 27**

What’s the best advice you’ve ever received?
It could be profound or just run of the mill.

You have read it online or in a book or from friend or family member.

Tell the person next to you.

Anyone want to offer up their advice?

“You can’t control other people’s actions, but you can control your reaction to them”

“Marry someone who will be your best friend”

“Don't ever stop learning and growing as a person”

“Question your doubts as much as your faith”

“When you see a ball on the road, make a full stop. There’s usually a kid running right behind it.”

“Always wear clean underwear”

“Don’t eat yellow snow”☺

Does the Bible give advice?

Advice is, you know, something you weigh up whether you follow it; it’s take it or leave it.

Well, are lots of modes in which the Bible communicates.

There is advice.

For example, Paul’s advice on whether to marry in 1 Corinthians chapter 7.

Who’s read it? If you’re single, don’t marry. But if you do marry, that’s okay too.

Paul has a stance and gives reasons for holding to that, but he's not absolute. Many Proverbs in the Book of Proverbs are advice. (Proverbs, by the way, aren't promises).

There are commands. Commands are directive. We've talked about this a lot. To be a Christian is to receive His pardon and bring out whole lives under the Kingship of King Jesus. And as King Jesus gives commands.

There is encouragement. To give courage to go forward, to keep going. And there are many, many encouragements in the Bible. Naturally, we gravitate toward encouraging people.

There is other modes but there is one more I want to focus on this morning and one we don't often given much thought to. And that is that Jesus gives *warnings*. Advice is take it or leave it. Commands are directive. Encouragement is uplifting.

Warnings say "Look out! There is danger ahead!"

All through life we are given warnings. And I don't know about you but we do have this propensity to... push the limits on the warnings we've been given.

During my primary school years my family would spend some of the summer holidays with friends in Hamilton. Now with all due respect to those over the hill, Hamilton isn't exactly your normal summer destination. But our friends had one great redeeming asset in their back yard: they had.... a swimming pool!!! I love the water and I love swimming. So I always looked forward to the few days spent there in the height of summer. Now being 7 or 8, not everyone wanted to swim when I did, so there was one caveat when swimming in the pool by myself – given by my mother – don't go in the deep end. And of course, what happens when you tell an 8 year old boy not to go in the deep end??? I went into the deep end.

That was fine until I ventured into the deep end. And I soon discovered that I wasn't as good a swimmer as I thought. For all my confidence and bravado, I soon found myself in trouble. I had tired

myself out and I was barely holding on to the edge of the pool but unable to pull myself up.

I needed rescuing.

The only thing I could think of doing was yelling out, at the top of my voice, "Help!"

So I did.

And it worked a treat. Everyone came running. The neighbour came out onto his deck. And my parents and their friends appeared.

And hand reached in and I was pulled out of the pool to safety.

St Paul's, in the same way we have a God who warns.

And he does so for our good - they are good warnings.

They are warnings that we need to hear from a God who absolutely desires our good.

I mean, it's like this (and I've used this illustration before): Imagine you go to doctor for a check-up.

The doctor says to the you, "You are in amazing shape. Your fitness is outstanding. You could run a marathon tomorrow, no problem at all."

The next day you go down like a ton of bricks.

And when you're in the hospital the medical staff say to you, "Didn't your doctor alert you to how bad things are? Didn't he say that the lifestyle you were living was a taking you down a dangerous path? You had all the indicators that a massive health issue was coming your way. You were a ticking time bomb!"

So when you recover you go back to the doctor and says to him (or her), "Why didn't you warn me??? Why didn't you tell me how bad my situation was? When it comes to my health, I want to know!"

And the doctor says, "I didn't want to upset you and cause offence. I didn't want to scare you."

And you would responds, when it's that serious, I need to know!

What applies to our health also applies to the whole of our lives.

Wouldn't we want warnings so we can take remedial action?

And this there is a God who seeks our highest good through good warnings.

From time to time these warnings come in exceptional ways.

Our friend when she was in her teens was skiing in the Swiss Alps. (Anyone here ever skied in the Swiss Alps?)

She was out by herself on an unfamiliar trail... when she heard a voice.

The voice said, "You need to stop. If you don't stop now you will die."

So she did. And she backtracked and carefully negotiated her down.

And where she was heading there was just this sheer drop, hidden from her sight that would have killed her.

When she tell this story she often does so with tears in her eyes.

Again another friend was called to pastor a church in Australia and the night before he flew out he had a vivid dream. He was speaking to the church and small fires began to break out all around the walls of the building. These weren't fires of revival or renewal but fiery criticism.

As the fires ignited the he heard a voice urging him to keep speaking the truth. Next morning he shook off the dream and headed for the airport.

Sure enough for the next months he found himself battling all sorts of issues and criticisms. Yet he kept speaking the truth out of faithfulness to God and the dream he has been given.

God had forewarned him.

There many stories like that where the Spirit will speak and they are exceptional means of warning.

(And He can do that for you).

A more common means are those found in Scripture.

For example, in 1 Corinthian chapter 10 Paul writes how Israel became idol worshippers and committed sexual immorality and suffered for it. Paul says they are warning to us.¹

Later Paul says in Galatians, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious... I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."²

So there are warnings in Scripture and as disciples of the Master I think there is one we all need to hear because Jesus spoke it directly to those who would follow him.

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:1 – 13.

² Galatians 5:19 – 21.

So in your Bibles turn to Matthew chapter 7 verse 24:

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

One December 26th, 2004 the tide receded on Phuket Island revealing a vast sandy expanse, with fish flopping helplessly about. People were saying it was something to do with the full moon and so children started shoving fish into sacks.

Then on the horizon a massive wall of water, littered with fishing boats, began approaching at tremendous speed. It travelled faster than people’s legs could carry them – only those who managed to reach higher ground were safe. Thousands will killed. Just a horrifying was the screams as people were washed out to sea as the water reversed and sucked them off the land.

The thing is, there had been warnings. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre dispatched a bulletin to countries around the Pacific Rim, including Indonesia and Thailand. The office in Indonesia received the warning on the morning of December 26th but failed to see it until the following day...

Jesus first warning is this: the storms will come!

It may come in the form of lost employment. It may be conflict.

It may be strong disagreements. It may a health scare. It may be strained or broken relationships.

These storms will come and they will bash and batter against your life – and there is no escaping them – and I wish it was otherwise.

You cannot, as much as you try, insulate yourself against these storms.

One day these storms will cease when Jesus says, “Be still!”

Yet that day is still to come.

And so the second is warning is about what kind of person you’re going to be in these storms and to come through the storm intact.

Jesus said, there are two types of people in the storms of life.
There are those who weather the storms.
The second warning is that there are those who do not.

The difference, Jesus says, is what are you doing with these words of mine?
What words?

Well, in context Jesus had just finished his Sermon on the Mount and this is the conclusion.

So what words is Jesus specifically referring to?
Again have chat to the person next to you.
And by the way, it's an open book question – Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7.

What do find?

- Love you enemies.
- Nurture your prayer life and closeness with
- Forgive.
- Do not worry.

Of course the only words because we have the Word of God.

Here's the thing: Jesus isn't being a moralist.
He gives the stern warnings of a deeply concerned elder brother who knows our weaknesses and died for our sins.

The people who weather the storms are those who hear his words and puts them into action.
The people who go pieces in the storms are those who hear his words but doesn't follow through.

These are good warnings.

For some of you your homework this week is reading the Sermon on the Mount.

My question I will finish with is this: have you had a warning from the Lord recently that you need to heed?