The Wise & Foolish Builders (vv24-27)

Just so it’s fresh in our minds, verses 24-27 say, “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.”

The difference between verses 21-23 and verses 24-27 is this: in first story, the disparity was between what the people said and what they did; in this story, the disparity is between what the people understood and what they did do. So the person who hears Jesus’ words and does them is sustained during the time of judgment. The person who hears Jesus’ words and does not do them is destroyed during the time of judgment. The person who hears Jesus’ words and does not do them is destroyed during the time of judgment.

Jesus illustrates this truth with the nearly famous story of the wise and foolish builders. I don’t know if kids sing the song any more, but if you’re like me, you grew up on the song about the wise and foolish builders. I don’t know if kids sing the song any more, but if you’re like me, you grew up on the song about the wise and foolish builders. I don’t know if kids sing the song any more, but if you’re like me, you grew up on the song about the wise and foolish builders. It’s not until a violent storm breaks that true faith changes us in such a way that we are not just a liar, and the truth is not in him. It’s not until a violent storm breaks that true faith changes us in such a way that we are not just a liar, and the truth is not in him. It’s not until a violent storm breaks that true faith changes us in such a way that we are not just a liar, and the truth is not in him. It’s not until a violent storm breaks that true faith changes us in such a way that we are not just a liar, and the truth is not in him.

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So what is the rock upon which Jesus encourages us to build our lives? The rock, or the foundation of our lives, is not that we hear the words of Jesus. It’s not that we understand the words of Jesus. It’s not that we have the words of Jesus memorized. Hearing and understanding the words of Jesus does not mean our lives are built on the rock. The only thing that distinguishes our foundation is whether we do what Jesus taught us to do, that is, whether we obey his teaching. To the extent that we obey his teaching, we build our lives upon the rock. To the extent that we don’t, the foundation of our lives is built on sand and will be revealed at the final judgment, if not before.

Before we draw this to a close, let me stress something: Jesus is not saying that we make it to heaven by perfect obedience to his teaching. Paul, among others, makes that very clear. In Ephesians 2:8-9, he says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9not by works, so that no one can boast.” So what was Jesus saying and what does this passage teach?

Jesus was saying that those who truly hear and accept his teaching will express it with their lives. In other words, true believers will express their faith by their works. Of course, even to say that brings the book of James to mind. In James 2:18, we over hear what some of the people were saying, “You have faith; I have deeds.” James counters by saying, “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” I’ll show you my faith, James says, by the way I live. John says it this way, “If we claim to have fellowship with God yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth (1John 1:6). Or 1John 2:4 says, “The man who says, “I know God,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” The point is that true faith changes us in such a way that we live differently. We can’t help but live differently. So how do we apply this?

Application

I want to share three very simple ways to apply this. One, let’s ask the Holy Spirit to show us any place in our lives where our understanding of God’s word goes beyond our obedience to it. What do we know that we don’t do? What could we explain to others that our lives don’t reflect? As God’s children, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, we can ask God to show us what we need to see and trust that he will do so.

Two, when God shows us where we fall short in terms of obedience, let’s ask the Holy Spirit to give us the gift of godly sorrow that would lead to true repentance. Paul says that godly sorrow “brings repentance [or a change of mind and behavior] that leads to salvation and leaves no regret (2Cor 7:10).” We can ask the Holy Spirit to change us on the inside in ways that will lead to changed behavior on the outside.

Three, as we go through the Sermon on the Mount, let’s ask the Holy Spirit to help us live differently and not just learn something new. If you think about the teaching contained in the Sermon on the Mount and then you think about what it would look like if we all started obeying it more fully, you realize that we’re embarking on a journey that could bring real change into our lives. And wouldn’t that be great? Wouldn’t it be great to live more like Jesus lived?
The Kingdom #1
May 31, 2020
Pastor Jared Stoner

Introduction to Matthew

Good morning. I’m really excited to begin our series going through the Sermon on the Mount this morning. Since this is the first Sunday of our series, I’d like to give you the briefest introduction to the book of Matthew and the Sermon on the Mount. So, first the Gospel of Matthew attempts to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament story of redemption. So, his genealogy links him to two of the most important figures in the Old Testament, Abraham and of David (Matthew 1:1).

But even more, Matthew attempts to show that Jesus is the new Moses that Moses himself prophesied about in Deuteronomy. 18:15, or to use the language of the New Testament, Jesus is the one greater than Moses (Hebrews 3:6). So, for instance, Matthew shows that Jesus came out of Egypt (Matt 2:15), that he passed through the waters of the Jordan at his baptism (Matt 3:13ff), he spent 40 days in the wilderness, corresponding to the 40 years the Israelites had spent there (Matt 4:1ff), and then Jesus went up on the mountain when he taught the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), calling to mind Moses who also went up the mountain to receive the Law from God, which he taught to the people.

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

After the introduction, Matthew’s Gospel can be divided into five sections, which again parallels the first five books of the Bible written by Moses. Each of these five sections has both a narrative describing what Jesus did, but also a significant block of Jesus’ teaching. The first section is found in Matthew 4-7. In Matthew four, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness and was tempted by the Devil. Unlike the Israelites who rebelled against God in the wilderness, Jesus remained faithful to him, after which time it says Jesus began to preach. What was his message? “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17.)

Jesus began calling disciples and, Matthew says, went “throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people (Matthew 4:23).” Matthew’s summary of Jesus’ ministry is then followed by the introduction to the first large block of Jesus’ teaching, which says, “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him (Matt 5:1).” That block of teaching is called the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount, then, is a collection of Jesus’ teaching in which he describes what life is like in the Kingdom of Heaven, as he calls it. And it’s shocking. It’s unlike any kingdom the world has ever seen before. In fact, unless it was a kingdom established and empowered by God, you could never build a kingdom on its principles. Before we begin looking at specific passages, I’d like to give you a couple of statements we’ve been sup- posed to respond to it. So rather than get to the end and say here’s what you should do, or should have done, with all of this teaching, we’re going to consider how to respond before we walk through it together.

In Matthew 7:15-20, the passage immediately preceding this one, Jesus warns his listeners about the dangers of false prophets who lead others astray. In verses 21-27, then, Jesus warns the people about the dangers of leading themselves astray. The false prophets led people astray through false teaching. The people led themselves astray through self-deception. That self-deception took at least two different forms. First, the people could deceive themselves by thinking that they could simply say the right thing (vv 21-23). Second, the people could deceive themselves by thinking that they could simply understand the truth (vv 24-27). In both cases, the self-deception was predicated on the belief that something other than obedience would suffice, whether their vera-

Passage Introduction

You might wonder why we’re beginning with the end and here’s the reason: Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount by telling us what we’re supposed to do with it, that is, how we’re sup- posed to respond to it. So rather than get to the end and say here’s what you should do, or should have done, with all of this teaching, we’re going to consider how to respond before we walk through it together.

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Matthew 7:21-27

22 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?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

24Therefore every one who hears these words of mine and does them will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

25The 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 rock. 26 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 the sand. 27 When the floods came and the waters rushed in, they overtopped it and swept it away. But the house built on rock remained fast the house. 27, then, Jesus warns the people that they had done, which if true, are impressive—prophesy, exorcisms, and miracles. You might remember what Jesus told his disciples in John 14:12. It says, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). But you might also remember Matthew 24:24, in which Jesus says, “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.” It’s not that performing miracles was a bad thing. What was bad was that these people attribute the miracles they performed to Jesus’ name. In all of this, nothing that they say gives us any reason whatsoever to think they won’t fair well in judgment. Yet Jesus turns to them and tells them plainly, “I never knew you.”

Why? Jesus had already explained the reason for dismissing these miracle workers—because they did not do the very things Jesus taught. Luke’s version of this story is even more poignant. In Luke 6:46, Jesus says, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” The reason these people are turned away is not because of their words or even on the surface, their deeds, but because they did not do what Jesus commanded. They usurped Jesus’ name for their own purposes and lived their lives according to their own standards. That leads us into the next part of this passage.