

King and His Kingdom Part 31: The Final Plea

Matthew 7:24-27 October 21-22, 2017

Introduction

- This is the 31st sermon in our Sermon on the Mount series where we've studied the quintessential teachings of Jesus Christ on what it means to be His disciple, seeking after Him to be like Him in every way as our master rabbi.
- Today, we look at His final teaching from the mount, which happens to be His final warning and a continuation of what He's been cautioning His hearers against for the last several parts of this sermon.
- Let me say at the outset that this is not a light sermon, nor is this an overly encouraging, make-you-feel-good-at-the-end sermon. Throughout the entire sermon on the mount Christ has shared the hope that we can have by trusting in Him, showing us what it means to be His disciple as we hunger and thirst after Him and His righteous.
- But now, these final words of Christ are an earnest, solemn warning to His hearers of how easy it is to be deceived into thinking you're on safe spiritual footing when in fact you're on your way to hell. And He ends the sermon on a solemn note that is meant to cause His hearers to reflect on their own walk and hopefully seek after the grace and mercy of Christ even more strongly.
- So I would urge you, as Christ urged His hearers with these final words, to focus and listen intently because there are no breaks in this sermon; it's pretty intense from beginning to end. Take Christ's warning to heart as you evaluate your own walk with God. Repent of whatever is necessary and remember that no matter whether we are the wise man or the foolish man, we still have time to place our hope in Christ. Ok, that's our pep talk. Now, let's buckle up and dive in.
- Please open with me to **Matthew 7:24-27** as we finish off the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. As you're turning there, I'm going to pray.
- Pray.
- **Matthew 7:24-27 PP** "24 Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."
- Jesus closes out His master sermon with a final exhortation to His hearers. He begins by referring back to the pleas He has just given. **PP** If I were you I'd circle the word "then" in **verse 24** and draw an arrow back to **verse 21**, as this word clearly connects this final

illustration with the preceding verses – especially **verse 21** – and concludes a line of teaching that He began back in **verse 13** with the narrow and broad gate.

- In that illustration, He made clear that there are two paths that have two destination gates. The easy road and broad gate lead to destruction, while the hard road and narrow gate lead to life.
- Next, He warns His hearers of false teachers who will emerge to deceive them; that we all must be mindful of the fruit that is produced from those who are teaching – and by implication, evaluating the fruit in our own lives. In **verse 19** Jesus says the trees that produces bad fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
- The third emphasis is a warning against those who profess to be followers of Christ and who outwardly do good works in His name, but who have no real relationship with Christ and are actually disobedient workers of evil when their lives are scrutinized closely. In **verse 23** Christ makes clear that these pseudo-followers will be rejected by Him when they stand before His judgment throne.
- Christ now picks up directly on this warning against those who are self-deceived and presents a parable trying to get them to understand the paramount significance of obediently following Him and how easy it is to be deceived into thinking you're in right standing with the Lord when you're not.

Interpretive Points

- But before we jump into this imperative parable, **PP** I want to give us a couple of interpretive points to really get the force of what Jesus is saying here.
 - Interpretive Point #1, **PP** Jesus talks twice as much about hell in the gospels as He does about heaven, and we see that illustrated here in **verses 13 through 27**.
 - We've got to recognize the gravity of the words of our Master here. He isn't flippantly speaking to them here. He's solemnly speaking truth directly to their hearts and minds pleading with them to take seriously the words He's been speaking.
 - This is far more dangerous than life or death, these consequences are eternal. You're either with Him forever as His disciple or you're against Him forever as His enemy. So see the seriousness of this message.
 - Interpretive Point #2, **PP** Jesus is making clear that He is speaking to them with the same authority as God the Father. Jesus and the Father are one. Look at the phrase "these words of mine" in **v24** and **v26**. In the Greek, the word for "words" is *logos* – meaning the whole or entirety of the words being spoken. You don't just pick and choose what you like.
 - But note also that the Greek word for "mine" is emphatic, meaning that the emphasis is on Christ alone, these are the words of Christ Himself – they are

originating with Him alone and He alone has been given the authority to speak them. But more than that, **PP** Jesus is equating His words in **verses 24** and **26** with the will of God the Father in **verse 21**. Do you see the similar structure here? Jesus says whoever hears these words of mine and does them will ultimately be saved just as **verse 21** says that the one who does the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven.

- Jesus has the authority of God to speak – and Pastor Austin is going to dive into that authority next week – and Jesus is reminding us of His authority when He says “these words *of mine*” to emphasize that we better listen to *Him* alone...not what some Pharisee or scribe says, not what some pastor with a microphone says, or what some stranger who has a word from the Lord says, and especially not what the deceiver says through all the different avenues he uses in this world.
- We are to hear Jesus first and foremost so that we can discern the talk from everyone else and ultimately know Jesus, follow Jesus, submit to Jesus, and be transformed by Jesus through the Holy Spirit.
- Interpretive Point #3, **PP** this is all about wise application of and obedience to the words of Jesus Christ. I want to say this early in case the devil is successful in distracting anyone listening to this so that you stop paying attention or fall asleep: Jesus concludes His sermon by very strongly telling His hearers that it does you absolutely no good to hear truth and know truth and yet not submit to truth and allow it to control your life.
 - These final warnings are all about pleading with His hearers to be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving themselves (**James 1:22**).
 - The Greek word for **PP** “Hears” (akouō) in **v24** and **26** is in the present continuous tense meaning, one who has heard and who keeps on hearing. Jesus is saying, look if you sit in the seats of the church every week and hear truth, but you never submit to it and put it into practice through the power of the Holy Spirit, then you’re going to hell.
 - **John MacArthur PP** said “The only validation we can ever have of salvation is a life of obedience. That is the only proof Scripture mentions of our being under the lordship of Jesus Christ.”
 - True salvation does the will of the Lord out of trusting devotion to Him. We recognize how much Jesus loves us and we respond to His love with a faith-filled devotion to Him.

- And to be clear, Jesus isn't teaching that all you need to do is robotically obey all that he said and you'll be fine. Christ isn't talking about earning your way to heaven through good works.
 - If you just go back through the sermon on the mount you'll clearly see this. We can't make ourselves "poor in spirit" or "be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect" or always "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness". Every one of us will routinely fail at many of the things Christ calls us to do throughout His sermon.
 - Jesus isn't demanding our perfect obedience for the sake of some sort of works based righteousness – that's a task that is doomed to failure from the outset. No, this sermon and these warnings are Jesus outlining why *He* alone and *His* words alone are the rock upon which we must obediently build.
 - Jesus is exhorting His hearers to see Him for who He is: the Son of God who came to die in our place, to take our punishment so that we could be set free from the bondage of sin; transformed to serve Him by spreading the message of forgiveness, truth, light, justice, and love wherever He sends us.
 - The gospel is a message of hope, and Jesus **PP** loves us too much not to plead with us to choose to submit to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and obey all the words of the Master Teacher.
 - You may think that Jesus ends here with fear-mongering and anger, but it's precisely the opposite: Jesus's love is shining forth and His grace and mercy are on full display here as He delivers a hard warning that isn't designed to tickle His hearers' ears as He implores them over and over to take His words to heart, submit to them, and obediently live them out as they get to know Him more intimately.
- But Jesus knows not everyone is going to be moved by a warning – or even three warnings. So he breaks it down into a parable that everyone can visualize and understand. **PP**

Imperative Parable

- And he gives us the image of two men building two houses going through a storm. One man is a fool and one man is wise. One man has a house when the storm subsides because he built it upon the bedrock and one man has nothing because he built upon the sand. So let's break this parable down and see what Jesus is driving at.
- Jesus begins by talking about the wise man. If you've read the bible at all you know that wisdom – along with love and humility – is one of the chief qualities used to describe genuine children of God.

- Jesus says that the one who hears His words and does them is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock.
 - Now, in most places in the NT the Greek word for “wise” that is used is *Sophos* which refers to rightly applying what you know. **PP** But here the Greek word for wise is *phronimos* and this word refers to being prudent, sensible, or shrewd. It refers to someone who thoughtfully considers something and then insightfully acts upon it. It’s the same word used in **Matthew 10:16** when Jesus says “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be *wise/shrewd* as serpents and innocent as doves.”
 - The key emphasis here is that this sort of wisdom thoughtfully considers what it hears and sees and then rightly acts upon it. It’s not quick to action, doesn’t act without thinking, and rightly responds to the truth it has submitted to.
 - This prudent and sensible man takes his time to build his house on the rock. These aren’t just stones that are near the surface, this is the unmovable bedrock upon which all the sand, dirt, and other sediment rests.
 - The wise man **PP** is willing to do the hard, dirty, sometimes very dull and repetitive work of digging down to the bedrock and building his house upon that foundation because he’s thought through what he’s doing and realized that this bedrock is the only way that his house will remain standing when the storms come.
- And in Christ’s parable that bedrock equates not to Jesus Himself – though elsewhere in scripture we know that He is the rock of our salvation – but it equates to the words of Christ and digging deep to obediently follow all the words of Jesus as Lord and Master. And that process is going to be hard, and dirty, and sometimes dull and repetitive. But that’s the only way to have a relationship with Christ as we walk in submission to Him and get to know who He is and how He would have us serve Him.
 - No other foundation will withstand the ravages of the storms of this life and, ultimately, the storm of judgment to come
- But here’s the trick, sometimes it’s really hard to know the difference between rock and sand. **PP** When I was over in Israel, one of the interesting things I learned was that sometimes the sand, especially in the dry season, looked a whole lot like solid rock. And so, if you weren’t careful, it was easy to mistake shifting sand that had been compacted in the dry season for solid stone. On top of that, because of the high salt content of the dead sea and some of the surrounding areas, in the dry season when the water receded, hardened sand mixed with salt could very easily cover over a sinkhole that was just waiting to collapse as soon as the sand around it was softened or too much weight was

built upon it. In fact, if you go to the dead sea there are warning signs everywhere telling you to stay away from the sand because you'll probably get sucked into a sinkhole and die if you go exploring away from the areas that are confirmed to be resting on bedrock.

- Now, a prudent, wise person would not make this mistake. But a fool on the other hand, they were in trouble. And Jesus contrasts the wise man who surveys the land, works hard and digs deep to lay a foundation on the bedrock with the foolish man who builds his house on the sand.
 - Foolish (GK *mōros*) – **PP** from which we get moron, is someone who acts impetuously and without thought to what he's doing.
 - This isn't about a lack of intelligence, it's about a hurried lack of thoughtful effort. It's someone who is seeking instant gratification and will take the easy way out to get it.
 - Just as building on the rock symbolizes the devoted work of obediently following Christ, building on the sand symbolizes the superficial pursuit of making yourself feel good and the deception that one falls into in the pursuit of self-satisfaction.
- But here's the real heart of what Jesus is driving at here. **PP** Often times, it's really hard to differentiate between the houses that are built by the wise man and foolish man.
 - In fact, looking at the houses you would see that they were nearly identical outwardly: they were built in the same locale, subject to the same storms, and they were designed and constructed very similarly. In fact, the only difference that's noted – the foundation upon which they're built – isn't even visible from the outside.
 - The point that Jesus is making is that these two builders looked nearly identical and could be found in pretty much the same place, a place that today we call the church. Jesus is showing us that the difference between the true Christian and the deceived pseudo-Christian is a very subtle one.
 - These two people have the same desires – to be forgiven; to find peace and comfort; to experience joy; to be a good husband, wife, mother, father, daughter, son, sister, brother, employee, employer, etc.; they both desire to draw closer to God; to receive spiritual guidance and direction; they want to generally live a good life before God and others; and they certainly want to go to heaven and be with God forever – each believing in heaven and hell and agreeing that Jesus is the savior of the world who died for their sins.
 - Jesus isn't addressing people who are outwardly denying Truth...He's dealing with those who are orthodox in their beliefs but who aren't obediently living out devoted submission to Christ.

- **Proverbs 30:12 PP** “There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.”
 - We can know all the right answers and yet be a fool who isn’t submitted to truth
 - Jesus is letting us know that it’s not enough to believe Truth, we must be submitted to the Truth. And the evidence of submission to the truth is if we’re willing to dig deep down in our pursuit of Christ.
- Listen to the parallel passage of this teaching in **Luke 6:46-49** and you’ll begin to see this more clearly.
 - **Luke 6:46-49 PP** “46 Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”
 - The difference between the wise and the foolish is that one will dig deep in their faith to obediently follow Christ, while the other will stay on the surface and remain happy playing the part of a Christ follower
 - So if you’re like me, you’re asking yourself the question why? Why would the foolish person not dig into their faith? How can I avoid being the fool? Well, I’ll give you 4 qualities of the fool, so that by the grace of God we can remove them from our lives:
 - 1) **PP** fools are always in a hurry, willing to take shortcuts, act impatiently and responding in a panic when things don’t go their way. Dig deep until you find the bedrock? Pssh, no time for that! I just want my instant spiritual gratification.
 - **Isaiah 28:16 PP** “...thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’”
 - 2) Closely related to the first, **PP** fools don’t think things through, they act impetuously, typically driven by their emotions and desires, and make decisions without reminding themselves of truth and spending

time discerning the wise way forward. Emotions and feelings are always out in front of truth for the fool.

- Are you hanging onto the words of Christ as your truth? Are they providing strength in the storm, are you taking time to consider them and apply them by the power of the Holy Spirit or are you forgetting them as soon as you head home to watch the game, or visit friends and family, or maybe get some work done around the house?
- **James 1:22-24 PP** says “22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”
- 3) Fools selfishly **PP** pursue their own desires and goals, only seeking to please themselves – the fool’s life revolves around themselves. He knows there are “blessings” in Christianity and desires them for himself, but only if they come easy, and, therefore, the fool isn’t really interested in the full counsel of God or truly submitting to the whole gospel – picking and choosing what he wants to follow. The fool wants the blessings of God, but doesn’t really want God Himself – the fool isn’t interested in righteousness or holiness, just the comfortability of heavenly blessing and making sure they’re a “good person” by their own standards and estimation.
- 4) Fools are full of pride, **PP** not submitting to the warnings or instructions given them. They just build a house how they think is best, regardless of what the wisdom of others and legal codes say. How do you feel about this Sermon on the Mount? Are you offended by the words of Christ? Do you find yourself resenting it...disagreeing with it, ignoring it, or rejecting any part of it? Well, that’s the same thing the fool does.
- So why does the wise man dig?
 - He digs because he isn’t deceived by the sands. He wants a durable, long-lasting home and so he investigates, he learns, he humbly receives input from others, and does the hard, time consuming work of digging deep and building upon the bedrock.

- Feelings, emotions, and enthusiasm don't drive him to act rashly, but instead drive him to dig deeply and build thoroughly because he hasn't lost sight of the real goal, which is to build a home that will last.
- **D. Martin Lloyd-Jones PP** "He is a man who desires and prays for holiness and who strives after it. He does his utmost to be holy, because his supreme desire is to know Christ. Not only to be forgiven, not only to go to heaven, but to know Christ now, to have Christ as Brother, to have Christ as his Companion, to be walking with Christ in the light now, to enjoy a foretaste of heaven here in this world of time – that is the man who builds upon the rock. He is a man who loves God for God's sake, and whose supreme desire and concern is that God's name and God's glory may be magnified and spread abroad."
- These are the differences between the wise and foolish person. But remember it's difficult to discern. The differences can be extremely subtle and often times the sand looks a lot like the rock.
- But this is why the Lord has ordained storms **PP** and the rain, floods, and winds that come with those storms. Christ very intentionally chose this imagery because the rain symbolizes the sinful desires of our flesh, the floods symbolize the constant pressures of this world, and the wind symbolizes the intentional attacks of the enemy.
 - We will face many storms of rain, floods, and wind throughout our lives. And instead of seeing this as a negative thing, we should see it as an opportunity to show the reality of your spiritual state. Because one day, we'll go through the final storm and we'll be caught in the collapsing house and then stand before the Lord in judgment. By then, it's too late. But before then, these storms are a gift of God's grace.
- Because these storms reveal the strength of your foundation. Is it upon Christ and His words? Or does the storm reveal that you've built upon crumbling sand? Storms will reveal that truth and, therefore, are a mercy of God when they do because that means that you have the opportunity to rebuild if something crumbled. And this time you can build on the solid bedrock of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit learn to submit to His words. We can't be deceived by the false pretenses the world presents. **PP**
- The Lord wants us to recognize the deception we may have fallen into so that we can stop living on the surface, stop walking in deception, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, begin to take the first shovel full of sand and toss it aside as we begin to dig deeply to the bedrock by obediently submitting to all the words of Christ. Amen. Amen.