

Matthew 7:24-27

Building the Kingdom

Introduction: If you're joining us for the first time - Welcome. We're currently teaching through Jesus' most famous teaching known as the Sermon on the mount.

Contrary to what some may think the Sermon on the Mount is not teaching us how to get into the kingdom of God- the Bible makes it clear that entrance to God's kingdom is only through grace - by the sacrificial work of Jesus.

The sermon is also not teaching us how we stay in the kingdom. Rather it is a description of the character and conduct of those who already belong to God's kingdom.

The Sermon is not a call to repentance, though that may be involved at times, it is a description of the expression and evidences of true repentance.

As we've been saying throughout these teachings - Jesus' sermon is not so much about doing as it is about being. Jesus is transforming his people into a people who do righteousness, and the right thing, because that's the kind of people they are, or have become.

This sermon of Jesus has been used for centuries to shape and form God's people into the way of Jesus and we are believing that this is what God will do with us as well.

We've coming into the last section of Jesus' sermon, and I love what Matthew does here - the teachings of the sermon are finished but Matthew includes exhortations from Jesus - It's a moment to stop and really think through, at a heart level, all that Jesus has said and taught about what it means to be his follower, about what it means to be kingdom of heaven people. And that's what we've been trying to do these last few weeks - reflect upon our own lives in light of Jesus' teaching - are we his true followers? Are we those that take Jesus seriously, that hear his word and put it in to practice?

Jesus closes this great sermon with a parable about two kinds of people, two kind of builders: A wise person or wise builder, and a foolish person or foolish builder. This is typical wisdom teaching - two paths, two ways, one

of darkness, one of light; one of wisdom, one of foolishness; one of discipline, one of negligence. But the idea more than anything else is that it is filter for every single person - In Jesus' estimation you are either a wise person, or you are a fool. Only two categories. So who are we?

1. The Wise One

1. “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 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.”

1. What are the words that Jesus is referring to? Jesus doesn't say, "My teaching" as a whole, but specifically, "these words". "These words of mine" then are a reference specifically to the whole Sermon on the Mount - it seems to me that this is Jesus' final call to build a kingdom of heaven culture where ever this sermon is heard, whoever we are, wherever we are. It is a summons to put into practice, in every day life, the upside down, merciful, righteous, just, gracious, and forgiving characteristics of the kingdom of God. Or as Eugene Peterson says, "*To be a colony of heaven in a country of death.*" It is a call once again to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is the call to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness... It is the call not just to hear and agree, but to do and practice what Jesus has taught.
2. Jesus refers to the one who hears and does his word as a wise person. The Greek word is Phronimos, and is a very important word in greek virtue tradition. "*The Phronimos one has learned through practice to live prudently, with discernment, and ‘who not only knows the truth but acts upon it.’*" - Donald Hagner
2. Jesus says, whoever practices this sermon is like a wise builder who built his house on the rock... so when the storm, and flood came it did not fall - because it was founded on the rock.
 1. Everyone is building their life, or a house, to use Jesus' metaphor, on something - A career, a family, a vision, a teaching, some foundation of sorts; something you believe to be true and stable. Jesus is calling everyone of us to examine that foundation. What are we building our lives on? Who's vision has shaped our lives?

1. Jesus says that he, his words, his kingdom vision is the only stable and true foundation against the storms and final storm of life. What are you building your life on?
2. With Jesus' parable of a house withstanding the storm because of a strong foundation my mind goes to Psalm 1 where we read about the flourishing or blessed person (Jesus main theme in this sermon) being the one who meditates on Yahweh's Law day and night - he or she shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water, that yields fruit in it's season, who's leaf does not whither and whatever they do prospers.. This person is unaffected by the droughts and hard times of life because they are rooted by rivers of water. Jesus employs this same picture here telling us - If we build our lives on HIS words taught in this great sermon, we will experience a human flourishing that can withstand the storms of this life - even the greatest storm of the final judgment.
3. With Jesus closing parable you can see how this whole sermon is a summon to live in light of the kingdom of God, the judgment, and the restoration of all things.
 1. Jesus is employing very familiar biblical pictures to his audience - "***There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world.***" 1
Samuel 2:8
 4. For too long the shrewd and powerful have ruled with cruelty over God's earth with unrighteousness, injustice with force and on pain of death and one day the true King will return to rule and

reign in righteousness and justice. He will restore, and redeem. He will make all things new.

3. What Jesus is saying is - Now that I am here, that's all happening.. God's new world, his kingdom is coming into being. (It's like C.S. Lewis's 'Aslan is on the move') Once you realize that, you'll see that Jesus is calling us to the habits of heart which anticipate the new world here and now.. These qualities - purity of heart, mercy, meekness, forgiveness, love and so on, are not, things that you have to do to earn a reward, or a payment to God. Nor are they merely the rules of conduct now that you've become a Christian... They are themselves signs of life, the language of life, the life of the kingdom of the new creation, the life of the new covenant, the life which Jesus came to bring..
 1. *"What Jesus teaches in the sayings collected in the Sermon on the Mount is not a complete regulation of the life of the disciples, and it is not intended to be; rather, what is taught here is symptoms, signs, examples of what it means when the kingdom of God breaks into the world which is still under sin, death, and the devil. You yourselves should be signs of the coming kingdom of God, signs that something has already happened."* -Joachim Jeremias

2. The Foolish One

1. **"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. 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."**
2. Remember this section of the sermon and possibly the sermon as a whole is not comparing and contrasting Christians with non-Christians or pagans, but Christians and Christians. The house that crashes is not the house of pagans that didn't or haven't heard Jesus' words. The house that crashes is the house of Christians who find Jesus words important enough to hear, but not realistic enough to live. For such Christians the Sermon on the Mount is not practical enough for the demands of modern life, for this cultural or political climate - too naive for contemporary cut throat life, too spiritual for modern causes, or just plain and simple too hard.

1. Again - What kind of people will we be? Who do we want to be? Those who hear and give mental assent, or those who hear and practice?
3. Not to do Jesus' words, Jesus warns, is tantamount to doing a great deal - It is to build one's life on the sand of a perishable philosophy of life. The decision to not do Jesus' words is a decision to live by someone else's words...
 1. The last word of this incredible sermon is 'great'. *"It would seem that Jesus' whole sermon is a critique on what humans see as true greatness - the quest for greatness rather than true righteousness, for the sensational rather than the simple, for doing the charismatic rather than the moral, for speaking prophetically rather than compassionately, for being up to date at all cost rather than faithful to Jesus in all cases - this is a quest that will end only in a different kind of great - a great crash."* - Fredrick Dale Bruner, Matthew, The Christ Book
 2. Everyone is building their life on something - Jesus says that he, his words, his kingdom vision is the only stable and true foundation against the storms and final storm of life. Will you believe him; will you obey him?
 3. I know that this last part of Jesus sermon may sound harsh to some. Maybe for some of you it feels like typical moral teaching - "do the right thing, live the right way, so you can go to the good place when you die". Can I just say that this is nothing like that - The Bible teaches that Jesus isn't just a moral teacher telling you how to get to heaven, but the Creator of all things -who stepped down into humanity to redeem you, to make you into what God intended for humanity from the beginning - Human Flourishing.
 1. (The Gospel)
 4. True human wholeness, Human flourishing; true happiness and obedience to Jesus are not mutually exclusive: they are an indissoluble whole.

Conclusion: True flourishing is a life that is lived in light of the eternal kingdom of God, the kingdom that Jesus claims is here now, and at work through him.

Who is there in the world that does not want the blessed life? That doesn't want joy, who doesn't want a fulfilling life, who is there the doesn't want human flourishing and wholeness that can withstand the the hardness and

cruelty of life on this planet? - It is offered to you here, today, in receiving the kingdom offer and in practicing the way of Jesus. You'll never do it perfectly, but he did. He is simply calling you to follow him.

The commands of the NT are not so much telling us to do something but are inviting us to become something through the true King -Through his life death and resurrection and by the giving of his Spirit in us - We are to become fully human beings who reflect the image of our Father in heaven, who is gracious to all, who causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. To be those who love their enemies, who bless those who curse us, who go the second mile, who tell the truth, who are faithful in all their commitments because.... that's just the kind of people they are or rather the people they have become through the Spirit of God and practice of the way of Jesus.

Close with Our Father