

Matthew 7:24–29

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[0 : 00] Matthew 7 24 through 29 please stand for the reading of God's Word.

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like the 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.

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.

And when Jesus finished these sayings the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Well good morning.

[1 : 17] It's good to have those of you who are here in the loft with us in worship and my own special welcome to those of you who are joining us from different parts of the neighborhood.

Some of you just a few homes away from where we stand and yet others halfway across the globe. And together we come to really a mountain peak moment in our service week by week.

having sung our praises to God we now hear our word from God for the week. And in doing so we will close out our series on the Sermon on the Mount.

I have to confess I'm a little sad to be leaving the Sermon on the Mount. But Christmas beckons us and we will celebrate that Advent fully next Sunday.

The famed Brooklyn Bridge which provided a safe footpath for travelers from Brooklyn to Manhattan was completed in the spring of 1883.

[2 : 35] At the time it was the longest suspension bridge in the world leading people from one place to another.

And there are two breathtaking towers which you've probably seen on any movie that's ever been filmed with New York as a backdrop.

Rise from the waters of the East River. The vision for the Brooklyn Bridge really though entailed the placing of concrete filled caissons submerged under the water on what would be the bedrock that the structure would stand.

It took years to get them in place. If you were on the Brooklyn side I believe these football field size canisters were submerged at about 45 feet deep before they hit bedrock and therefore concrete so that we could see the towers.

On the Manhattan side the waters submerged this caisson of football field size some 78 feet into the waters.

[3 : 53] And then up over time the bridge came. It still stands to this day. It is the iconic man-made structure in this country.

For the past eight weeks I feel like I've been preaching below the waterline. My heart for Christ Church Chicago is that by the time we convene in Woodlawn for a 50-year ministry we would know who we are and what we are on about.

That we would have a vision. A vision for Christ Church. Not something that can be encapsulated in 140 characters or less.

Not something that would be reduced to five words or a single sentence. But the Lord has given my heart a willing and eager desire to expound to you those first lessons for Jesus' future followers as contained and brought together by Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount.

For here you have a vision for who are his people and what life ought to look like within that community.

[5 : 26] And today we come to the final structural movement of that sermon. And here we find wisdom.

The wisdom by which Christ Church will be measured. Long after you and I are in the ground, we pray that this family will still be in existence.

There will be others in our seats who will be known and identified as Christ Church Chicago. And as they look back upon those who were the origin story, what wisdom will they measure us by?

As Jesus concludes his teachings in this unit of Matthew's Gospel, you see a story told in verses 24 through 27.

He concludes with a story that is a wonderful, hallmark-like example of something people call wisdom literature.

[6 : 47] And in the story, we have all the markings of teachings that are consistent with that genre.

First of all, it's simple. It's the story of a wise man and a foolish man and the places upon which they built their house. As I was thinking about how simple it was, I was remembering sitting in Sunday school as a very young child, preschool.

And they were already forming our minds to receive the ministry of Jesus through song and the learning of that simple song with hand motions about the wise man built his house upon the rock.

And the rains came down and the floods came up and the house on the rock stood firm. And then the second verse, the foolish man built his house upon the sand and the rains came down and the floods came up and the house on the sand went smash.

All the simplicity of wisdom literature emerging from a story like this that a child could understand.

[8 : 13] But not only is simplicity the mark of wisdom literature, but also it's incredibly profound.

When one thinks about wisdom in distinction from simple knowledge, it's a passage like this from a learned teacher that consumes pages and dissertations on what a wise man would be.

In fact, the entire Greco-Roman world was filled with philosophers who contemplated what it would be to live a life of wisdom.

So it's simplicity for a six-year-old listening to me today. It's profundity for those who are in the midst of academic degrees and studying philosophy or theory.

But not only that, it's wisdom literature in that it gives you a simple choice. Have you ever read the book of Proverbs, which is wisdom literature, and it always is contrasting the wise person and the foolish person.

Wisdom literature has the hallmark capacity of placing things down in simple black and white. You do this, you'll be all right.

[9 : 32] You do this, you're headed in a wrong direction. And it gives you that choice, that contrastive nature between what it is to be wise and what it is to be foolish.

And so as you begin to look at the story that Jesus told in verses 24 to 27, there's a couple of things that you should know about the wisdom by which we will be measured.

And here it is. Getting from here to heaven, from Brooklyn to Manhattan. Walking a road that will have your arrival and safely into the kingdom of heaven depends entirely on what you and I do with the words of Jesus.

That's the way the story goes. Jesus brings himself into the story. Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them.

Again, in verse 26, Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them. What are we doing with the word, the words of Christ?

[10 : 55] Let's look into this for a moment since this is the wisdom by which we will be measured. It says, These words.

And it must refer to more than simply the story that he is going to tell. It's the words that he's been in the midst of speaking.

In fact, if you look at verse 28, you'll see the parallel phrasing. These words. But in verse 28, when he had finished, These sayings.

Plural. These words, these sayings, go all the way back to chapter 5 and verse 2 where it says, And he opened his mouth and taught them saying.

So the sayings of Jesus in the fullness of the Sermon on the Mount, as collected and arranged by Matthew, will provide the wisdom by which we will be measured.

[12 : 00] The words of Christ are the very rock upon which you build your spiritual house. And they ought to be the rock upon which the house we are renovating governs everything we do in life.

So let's conclude eight weeks of listening by rehearsing these words and what it means to do them. Well, what are these words? The Beatitudes. Chapter 5, verses 3 through 12. They are the words that described those to whom the kingdom belongs.

It was now eight weeks ago where Pastor Nee opened up this text, and we saw that these words are rooted in the prophecies of Isaiah, which indicate that those who are poor in spirit or who mourn and are comforted are those who know what it is to feel in their soul an impoverished position before God, who actually are men and women and are the people who mourn their sin, who look to Jesus on the cross for that substitution which would bring them to the Savior.

They are men and women who have a hunger and a thirst for righteousness. They are merciful for they have received the mercies of Christ at Calvary, and they will receive mercy on that final day of judgment.

[13:51] They are peacemakers and the blessed ones who are persecuted for the name of Christ. So this is the wisdom by which we will be measured.

And as you take stock today of the Sermon on the Mount, there is no other entrance into heaven but through the gateway of the Beatitudes and the substitutionary atonement of Christ wherein we mourn our sin and we look to Jesus as our Savior.

We hunger for thirst and righteousness. Those to whom the kingdom belongs. These are the sayings or the words of Christ.

But remember, the Sermon on the Mount moved from this internal work that's required of us and therefore our dependence on Christ as a substitution for us that gave way to the work that he had given to us.

Do you remember verses 13 through 15 in chapter 5? The work we are given and this church is given to do for the next 50 years. It was placed forward in two metaphors, salt and light.

[15:14] Let me see if I can just remind you of that. Salt and light are indications that the earth in which we live, it is spiritually dead.

Salt is always preserving dead things. Now God can bring to life things that are dead, but if the church itself loses the distinctiveness of the life in Christ, we are nothing but the world.

The world is spiritually dead. The world is in spiritual darkness. It cannot punch its way out of a paper bag. And our work is to bring the enlightenment of the gospel to the spiritually darkened, deadened world in which we live.

And if we become like the earth and of the world, we are entirely useless to the work that he has given us to do. And so as you close and you read these words, those who hear my words and do them will be wise.

Are you laboring to retain the distinctiveness of Christianity in your own heart?

[16:36] And are you a light by which others who are in the dark have reflected in you the very light of Christ?

Whoever hears these words and does them is the wise man. Those to whom the kingdom belongs, the work we have been given, gives way in the Sermon on the Mount to its largest unit.

Verses 19, excuse me, verses 17 in chapter 5, all the way through his explication, those six sermon-like movements of the law that take you through the entirety of chapter 5.

And it's the word we will follow. Whoever hears the word of Christ and does it will be like a wise person. This is the word you are to follow. You are to follow the word of Christ.

He is the fulfillment of the scriptures. The scriptures have ongoing effect in our lives. Nothing will be subjected to being cut off before the end of the age.

[17:49] It is still in play. He is the ultimate arbiter of the word. And our righteousness has to actually exceed all external conformity to the law.

It must be of the heart. For you have heard it, it was said, don't be angry. But I say, if you're angry in your heart, you've already done it. You have heard it said, don't commit adultery.

But if you look on a woman with lust in your eyes, you've already done it. The fullness of the word by which we are measured is do you allow the word of God to penetrate to the very core of your being?

Does it reach your heart? If it doesn't reach your heart, but only reaches the external conformity of your behavior, you are yet on sand and not on rock.

Those to whom the kingdom belongs, the work we have been given, the word we follow gave way in chapter 6. Again, we're just rehearsing what were these words?

[18 : 53] The worship we are to bring. Do you remember the threefold acts of individual piety and personal worship? Almsgiving to the poor.

Prayers to the Father. Fasting that you would hear from Him. And the underlying thread that held them all together is the worship you are bringing privately done out of a heart that would receive your reward from God or is it motivated by how other people will actually view you?

Whoever hears these words and does them, our worship has to actually arrive and be motivated by a willingness to be heard from the Father. Those to whom it belongs.

The work to which we are given. The word we are to follow. The worship we are to bring. And then the work that is required.

How many of us could forget that the work of the Sermon on the Mount is to reorder our wants.

Those wonderful statements that He gave about not being anxious about what you're going to eat or drink or your body.

[20 : 21] What are you seeking? What are we seeking? 50 years from now, they will look upon us and they will know that which we sought.

And there's a complete reordering of our wants to a seeking of the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness knowing that He will provide the things that we need.

Not only the work of our wants but the work of our words. Our words, judge not that you may not be judged, are indicative of the statement of our heart and our understanding of the mercy that we've received.

And if we are to judge one another wrongly in community of faith, we endanger ourselves when we stand before the very Father at the final day of finding a likewise judgment placed upon us.

Whoever hears these words of mine and does them is the one who's like the wise man. Those to whom the kingdom belongs, the work to whom which we have been given, the word that we follow, the worship that we bring, the work that's required.

[21 : 33] And then last week, the warnings that we must remember. There are two paths, there are two kinds of preachers, there are two kinds of people who will arrive at heaven's gate.

And the Christian community ought to keep these warnings in our ears lest we be self-deceived and find ourselves on the outside on that day of judgment unless our fall, like the building in his story, be flat and great, great in the sense of devastating.

All of these things are what we are to do. If you're going to sit home and go, what does Jesus want me to do?

What are the works I'm to do? Mourn your sin and look to him as your Savior. Distinguish yourself from the world.

Follow his word to the best of your understanding. May your worship be motivated by an internal heart that would receive something from God. May your wants be reordered, your words be restricted, his warnings be heard.

[22 : 53] And if you do all these things, you will be like a person who built their house on a rock. And the rains came down.

And the floods came up. But the house on the rock stood firm.

That is my, that is from the depth of my heart as your pastor. Some of you will be alive in 50 years. Many of us won't be.

Some of you, Lord willing, if he doesn't return, will be present at the 50th anniversary of Christ Church Chicago.

And Lord willing, it will take place in a building that you financed and renovated. and some of you at the 50-year mark will stand and with your lips bear testimony to the wisdom by which we will be measured.

[24 : 08] You know, when I, when I think about this series, I wish it could just be emblazoned into our minds by way of memory.

But the word of Christ is the bedrock for our salvation. what the caissons were to the soaring beauty of the Brooklyn Bridge, so to the word of Christ to the ministry and the house that we will build.

There's a transition in the text though. I mean, there's a story told 24 through 27, but then there's a summary given.

Did you notice the change there? If the story contrasts two kinds of men, the summary contrasts two kinds of ministries.

Almost two kinds of ministers. It contrasts Jesus, verse 29, with with that of the scribes.

[25 : 33] In other words, the text moves from a metaphor that brings construction workers to a site to a metaphor where there are school teachers under whom we are tutored.

Jesus or the scribes. It moves from the making of an edifice that will stand on the final day of judgment to a consideration of the kind of educator under whom you will be mentored. word. In one sense, then, we have to ask ourselves, who are these scribes? You can see them there.

Final word of Matthew's summary. In contrast to Jesus, there were the scribes. Well, when you think of scribes, I think of the childhood word scribble.

Scribes were those who scribbled. They were copyists. They were those who wrote the scrolls that people in various areas might have the Torah before the printing press ever came along.

[27 : 04] In the Old Testament, the scribes then would have been largely contained within the priesthood because they would have been the ones proliferating the word among the people.

But by the time of Jesus, who are the scribes? For that, if you're not a student of the scriptures, you need to know that there's a group of things that happened in what people call the intertestamental times, the times that sit between the Old Testament and the New Testament, about a 400 to 500 year run.

After Israel's temple had been destroyed and the role of the priesthood in offering sacrifices had been diminished and the people had been dispersed, scribes took on an enlarged place within the life of Israel.

They were the ones who not only copied the law, but they were the ones that people began to turn to to say, well, where is this in the law?

They moved from copyists to experts and from experts to the interpreters. One of my old professors recently passed in the last year or so, Dr.

[28 : 33] Julius Scott Jr. writes, by the second century BC, the scribes had become an influential respective group independent of the priests.

Through copying the law, scribes had become familiar with it. In time, they became recognized as experts. They were looked to for information about what the law actually said and later for help in understanding what it meant and required.

The scribes filled the gap left by the priests. They became the zealous guardians of the law, the real teachers and directors of spiritual life.

Those are the scribes. Now, in regard to their method, they would accumulate what various schools or teachers of the law thought about scriptural texts.

So they would put forward, this school of Hillel believes this. And I could also tell you what an individual here writes concerning this text. And then they could lay down a third option on what the word of God said.

[29 : 43] And then they would leave it to you for discussion. This indeed is the way Jewish synagogues operate today. That you go to a reading of the law and to a discussion on the law through the various interpretations that people have thought of and written on concerning the law.

Jesus didn't teach that way. He said, well, you've heard it said, but I say unto you. I mean, let me see if I can just get this as clean as I can for you.

The distinction between Jesus and the scribes by way of method. It's a distinction of the authority. He taught with authority, not as the scribes.

Their authority, the scribes authority, derived from their awareness of the law, not their declaration on the law.

It contained options, but not the oughtness. Let me see if I can put it to you by way of contemporary effect.

[31 : 00] They would teach in such a way as to present exegetical options, views, but it would have the effect of casting doubt on everything, which then left the listener to never too much being required of us concerning anything.

Today, this is so rampant. It's almost like the teaching by way of evangelical consensus. All kinds of people will tell you that, well, this text, first of all, you need to know that the Bible is very hard to understand.

Then you need to know that there's a multitude of thoughts about what people think it means, which has the effect of the listener of throwing up their hands and saying, well, if it's difficult to understand and there's a variety of views, then there's automatically the most lax and most permissive

understanding which ought to be given.

Jesus doesn't teach that way. His teaching had an edge and you and I are to follow the word of Christ.

In the end, the kind of teaching that is taking place today by way of simple scribal-ness had a forerunner in the Old Testament that would find its way at the end under the floodgates of God's judgment.

[32 : 43] Let me just show you these two texts, precursors to our own story. Isaiah 28, there is a word of judgment beginning at verse 14 where God is now speaking against those who are ruling the people through their own word.

And in verse 17, God says that hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, waters will overwhelm the shelter.

Verse 19, as often as it passes through, it will take you for morning by morning it will pass through by day and by night and it will be a sheer tear.

This overwhelming water-like deluge upon the teachers who take themselves away from the fullness of God's word. Ezekiel had the same kind of thing.

In Ezekiel chapter 13, you can see the header over the chapter 13, false prophets are condemned and when you get down to verse 10, you see this metaphor of waters undoing the house that they built.

[34 : 05] Verse 10, precisely because they have misled my people saying peace when there is no peace and because when the people build a wall these prophets smear it with whitewash say to those who smear it with whitewash that it shall fall there will be a deluge of rain and you oh great hailstones will fall and a stormy wind break it and when the wall falls will it not be said of you where glazing over it and he says in verse 13 there will be a deluge of rain in my anger and great hailstones and wrath to make a full end I will break down the wall that you smear with whitewash I will bring it to the ground so that the foundation will be laid bare and when it falls you shall perish of it you shall know that I am the Lord well they taught with a different kind of authority what was their method to simply tell the people all the things it might be what was their effect well if there's all the things it might be it must not mean much to me on anything what is their end a deluge of flood so then who are we what are we to do there's a hint in the text but it doesn't go far enough verse 28 when

Jesus had finished these sayings the crowds were astonished I want you to be astonished by Jesus teaching but I want you to be more than astonished this word of astonishment is neutral it can lead to something positive or negative in chapter 13 you'll see this word appear again and it occurs in the sense of they were astonished at his teaching but it says they took offense at him in chapter 19 it will occur again with the disciples who are astonished by who can get into the heaven but they won't take offense at Jesus they will take up on the offer of following Jesus astonishment moving in two directions it can lead to finding

Jesus teaching offensive or it can lead to following him on the offer of what he has taken up let me put it as clearly as I can the summary statement moves from astonishment to his authority as distinct to what Matthew would have you do namely give your allegiance to him being opened up the service today from the beginning of Matthew with kings who came to visit the Christ child and what did they say where is he who is born king of the Jews and their allegiance to him was manifest on falling on their knees and offering him gifts Matthew gospel Matthew himself will say from the lips of Jesus all authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth and you are to go forward to the ends of the earth baptizing them making followers in my name and teaching them to observe all that

I have commanded the entire book of Matthew is bookended by whether or not the reader will give their allegiance to his authority may we may we may you may the person who stands at the 50-year reunion of entrance into a new building say that those who founded Christ Church Chicago were wise men and women and they were known for falling on their knees in allegiance to all all that they could understand Jesus words to be and then may they be also indicating 50 years from now that that church which was on its knees in worship was a church that rose to its feet and carried his word to the ends of the earth that's the vision it's the wisdom by which we will be measured you can build your life on the word of

Christ the word of Christ must be the life of the church we build and the building that we renovate must house a life that in a sense is a home for the proclamation of that word if that happens

happens we will have safely navigated the perilous journey between earth and heaven we're on a sure footpath that could take us from Brooklyn to Manhattan from here to there oh may we be known as a congregation of this sermon our heavenly father we have to leave now the sermon on the mount and

[40 : 36] I just pray that we're ready to build upon it Lord help us to mourn our sin to seek the atoning blood of Christ for our salvation help us to never forfeit the distinctiveness of your aroma which will be life to some and death to others help us to forego all other words but the word of Christ as found in the word of scriptures in ways that penetrate to our very heart help us to be after a worship that is rightly rewarded not adolescently motivated help us to do the work that seeks the right things and use words that refrain from the wrong things help us to make use of these simple warnings about walking in a narrow way about listening to good doctrine about not being self deceived as we allow ourselves to be shepherded in community and Lord when it's all said and done may we be wise people not foolish may we stand on the day of final judgment may we be more than astonished by the things we've learned more than intrigued by the authority

Jesus possesses but may our lives one and all from the youngest to the oldest be willing to fall on our knees and complete allegiance and to rise until the end of the earth knows the glories of our Christ come Lord Jesus and change us come and abide with us come and dwell with us come and live within us come and sweep out all the ungodliness within us Lord we give you every corner of our being that we would find safe harbor in your heaven to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords we pray Amen