

Matthew 7:24–29

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Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 0 0] 7, verses 24 to 29. 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. 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. You may be seated. Well, good morning. I want to add my own welcome to you, especially those of you that are just finding your way in, not just to Christ Church Chicago, but to church more generally. You're finding yourself awakening in the morning and asking questions about God and your life and your future and wondering if perhaps the scriptures might be a place for your formation to take place. And we're so glad that you're here today. Just southeast of Cincinnati, nestled on the banks of the Ohio River, is a small country town with a fascinating name, Rabbit Hash. Rabbit Hash is situated right there in the middle of the country. And if you were to walk its streets and look west, you'd go across the Ohio River and into the state of Indiana. But this river has been known to swell over time. In fact, Rabbit Hash has been the subject of at least three massive floods, all of which required the rebuilding of the town, 1884, 1934, 1913, and 1937. The waters flowed and overflowed and washed the town away, all except for the general store.

The general store survived the 1937 flood, which was pervasive enough and swelling enough to be 79 feet of water over the normal line. In fact, the general store was entirely submerged in the waters.

But when the waters began to recede and all the other structures of the town had gone away, there was the general store. And from what I'm told, there's still mud from the bottom of the Ohio River in the attic of the general store.

What is it that makes one structure stand and others wash away? Well, the general store is fixed to its earth through a series of iron rods that tie it down from length to length. In other words, it's what the store was standing on that enabled it to weather the waters of life.

[3 : 5 9] Can I ask you a question this morning? What are you standing on? The storms are coming. We got to do this one next week. Can we do this one next week, Joe? The storm out over the ocean?

You know that one? There's a storm out over the ocean and it's moving and it's moving this old way.

If your soul's not coming. If your soul's not coming. Come on. You know that anchored in Jesus. What are you going to do? It will surely drift away.

Can I do it? Drift away, Lord. Drift away. Okay. I don't have it totally, but you know, that's just a white man giving it a run. Yeah, let me tell you the waters are coming.

And waters in your life. You might say, hey man, they already came. Yeah. My life's a mess. You might say this morning.

[5 : 11] It lies in ruins. Or you might say, wow, I'm just setting out and I've been thinking about foundations and what should I build my life upon?

You know, we build our lives upon a lot of things. If I can just get that degree, it will be the foundation upon which my career may rise.

If I could just have enough money with an emergency fund, then I'll be able to weather the waters of unexpected disaster.

If I can just connect socially with the right people, I'll have a foundation that will last me for a lifetime. We're building our lives on something, are we not?

Yeah. What are you building your life on? Jesus, in this simple little close to the Sermon on the Mount, tells a story.

[6 : 20] I hope you have it open and I hope you can see it. Verses 24 to 27, he tells a story that contrasts two different men.

But Matthew, who's writing this, and Matthew, who ensures that this is the concluding story in the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount, has his own interpretive words for you to consider as well.

So the story of Jesus contrasting two different men is followed by a statement of Matthew that contrasts two different kinds of ministers, Jesus and then the scribes.

Jesus and then looking at it, we will learn some things for our life. It's a wonderful story.

It's potent. Verse 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.

[7 : 27] 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.

It's interesting when you begin to consider what Jesus thinks you should build your life upon. It's almost self-referential to him.

He says, you want to know what to build your life upon? Well, everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them. In fact, so strong is the iteration or the reiteration of his notion where he calls the listener's attention to himself.

That the very next verse in 26 says, and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them would be like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand.

What Jesus is saying is simply this. Build your life on the word of Christ and come what may, you're going to be okay. That's a stunning claim.

[8 : 36] I've never met anyone who's told me that. Build my life on your word. And the storms and the waters, which are inevitable.

Will wash over me. And yet. I might even have some mud in the attic, but I'm still going to be standing. Quite a claim.

It's an audacious claim. So what are these words? Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them.

What words? Well, if you've been attending regularly, you'll realize that we skipped a few chapters here from last week's sermon.

We started with the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 5, 1 to 12. And now we're suddenly looking at the close of the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 7.

[9 : 37] And there's some serious words. These words of Jesus in between. Well, Pastor, why are we not doing the very next text in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount?

Isn't that the way we operate around here? Well, generally it is. But I've skipped all of the middle portions. Because when COVID hit a couple of years ago, we look at each unit week by week by week.

You know, you can still find them online, ChristChurchChicago.org. You want the whole Sermon on the Mount? We've got about seven messages for you. But this time through, I want you to see the whole in one movement.

What are the words of Christ that we are to hear and do? If you like to mark down your Bible and mark it up and kind of know how the parts relate to the whole, I'm going to give you chapter 5 through 7 right now.

You ready? These are the words of Christ. First of all, the Beatitudes, which we saw last week. Chapter 5, 1 through 12. Pastor Pace, let us know that these words indicate those to whom the kingdom belongs.

[10:54] Those are the words. Those to whom the kingdom belongs. Who gets the kingdom? Those who mourn their sin, who truly mourn their sin. Those who have an impoverishment of spirit.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and what is right. Those who are merciful and pure in heart. These characteristics of those who inherit the kingdom.

All the way to the point of those who actually share in the sufferings of Christ. And when persecuted, nevertheless, are glad and rejoice. These are the words of Christ.

If you're looking to build a foundation that you can rest your life on. You want iron rods underneath you from length to length.

Then you've got to be a family member in his kingdom. You've got to just say, I'm aware I'm a sinner.

[11:57] I'm aware I'm not as meek as I ought to be. But Lord, come. Change my life. Give me your characteristics. Let's start this walk.

But notice in 13 to 16 in chapter 5. Those to whom the kingdom belongs is now moving with another lesson. It's the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Simply put, this is the work we do. The work we do. What is a Christian to do? There to be salt and light. Whatever vocation you want.

This is what we do. We are salt and light. We are distinct from the world. And yet we, in a sense, furnish the world with the goodness of God.

Lest the darkness completely overtake her. Those to whom it belongs. The work they do. And then you have that long middle section in chapter 5.

[13:02] Just put your eyes on it. It's fascinating. It opens in verse 17. Do not think that I've come to abolish the law of the prophets. I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. And then Jesus begins to actually preach from the Old Testament.

Verse 21. On anger. You've heard that it was said you shall not murder. But I say to you, anyone who's angry is already in trouble. Verse 27. You have heard it said you shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you, these words of mine, he says, that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent is already committed with adultery in her heart. He goes through divorce. He goes through oaths.

He goes through retaliation. He goes through the loving of enemies. All of chapter 5 is simply this. These are the words we follow. We follow the word of Christ.

We follow him as the final arbiter. The final interpreter of what the scriptures actually mean. His voice is singular over any other person who says something about the Bible.

- [14 : 10] And he says, well, you've heard it said this, but I'm telling you that the force of the word goes all the way to the heart of the individual. We are those who follow the word of Christ because we want to from the inside out.
- This is the word we follow. And so we're always asking, Lord, what does your word say? What does Jesus have to say on this?
- And not just help me to do behavior modification, but give me your spirit that I might actually embody this in my heart. Take me, Lord.
- Take all of me. Change my wants. Alter my loves. Help me to love the things I ought to love rather than the lesser loves.
- Help me to love you above all else with my heart. Jesus says, you know, if you begin to do that, you're a wise person.
- [15 : 17] You'll be able to shelter yourself in times of trouble. So look at how the Sermon on the Mount is moving. Those to whom it belongs. The work we do.
- The word we follow. And then look at chapter six. This is the kind of worship we bring. The Sermon on the Mount gives you the practicing of righteousness. It gives you almsgiving.
- It gives you prayer. It gives you fasting in chapter six, verses one through 18. These acts of worship. And what he says is your acts of worship need to be more righteous than simply going through the motions.
- You know, the Pharisees, they gave because they thought it would make them look good before God. They prayed because they wanted to be seen by others in prayer.
- They fasted because they thought that if they just followed these regulations and rules, God was going to be good with them. And what Jesus says is, no, your worship has to be heartfelt, too. Do you see how the Sermon on the Mount is working?
- [16 : 20] It's changing you from the inside out, not the outside in. The worship we bring. And then all the way to chapter six, verse 19.
- Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. And even into chapter seven on judge not that you may be judged. You get all of a sudden these wants. Your wants and your words are now all under the word of Christ.
- What do you want in life? What do you want out of life? He says, seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you. What are your words like?
- All of a sudden our words begin to change. We begin to speak differently. The wants and words of the family of God. Chapter six, 19, all the way down there through this prayer, ask and it will be given to you.
- Even your words to him begin to now relate to him as a father. Which really leads you then all the way to the golden rule over there.
- [17 : 26] Chapter seven, verse 12. And then the tree with its fruit. And then this disastrous word that some will arrive at the gate of heaven and he'll say, I don't know you depart from me.
- The sermon on the mount ends with three warnings. That's what they are. So if you're wanting to know the words of Christ is that there is a judgment coming and you better enter by the narrow way.
- Those who are teaching the Bible need to be doubly warned lest they're a tree that doesn't bear good fruit. And then finally, all people need to know that when you stand at heaven's gate, not everybody's getting in on the other side.
- There will be self-deception. So these warnings come. These are the words. Jesus says, the wise man will build his house upon my word. He won't only hear it, he'll do it.
- He will be the ones to whom the kingdom belongs. He will do my work of salt and light. He will follow my word, which cuts to his very heart.

- [18 : 33] He will bring worship that is voluntary. He will have wants that begin to shift and change. She will bring words that are good and healthy and ask God for all good things.
- You will consider warnings along the way. And all of these things, they just act like steel rods. And get you ready for the waters.
- And then he closes with this story. It's almost like a test. It's one of my friends told me once.
- It's a. You can measure yourself. How you doing? How are you doing? Are you hearing these words?
- Are you doing these words? The wise man here will. The wise woman here will.
- [19 : 38] Will the wise son or daughter student in our youth ministry will. The person in sixth grade will.
- To what they can understand. All of us. Need to give ourselves to the word of Christ. What did I say at the outset? Build your life on the word of Christ.
- And come what may. You're going to be okay. And believe me. What's coming is not always good. I guess this whole first half of the story is the sense of just be wise.
- Because look at verse 26. 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. The rain fell and the floods came. The winds blew and beat against that house.
- And it fell down and great was the fall of it. There's a storm out over the ocean. And it's moving my way. If my soul's not anchored in Jesus.
- [20 : 47] It will surely drift away. That's a scary thought when you consider.
- I think the text here refers to more than merely the difficulties of life. I think Jesus is referring actually to the foolishness of someone at the final judgment.
- That won't have anything to stand on because they didn't stand on Christ. They built a foundation of something else.
- When you get ready to walk into the kingdom of heaven. All those things suddenly don't count. He doesn't care how much money you got. Or don't got it. He doesn't care how healthy you are.
- Or not. He's not going to say that you charted out your career path. And put yourself in the right lane. He's only going to say this.
- [21 : 55] What did you think of what I had to say? And what did you do with it? Build your life on the word of Christ. And come what may.
- You are going to be okay. And for those who do not. Jesus says. This is an audacious claim. He says. Your end is going to be ruinous. Ah.
- Jesus is done. And Matthew picks up. Verse 28. The story of Jesus gives way to the statement by Matthew.
- It's just like a writer. Right? To always want to have the last word. I guess even Matthew wanted to say a couple things when Jesus got done. The contrast between the two men.
- Is now brought to us. In the words of Matthew. So that we can see the contrast. Between two kinds of ministers. Namely. Jesus. And the scribes.
- [23 : 00] And then he puts you. The reader. Right in there. To go make a decision. It's almost like the first half. The story is. Be wise. And the second half. Matthew is saying. Choose well.
- So let me read it to you. These are Matthew's words. When Jesus had finished these sayings. The crowds were astonished at his teaching. For he was teaching them. As one who had authority. And not as the scribes.

All right. Who are the scribes? The best rendition of the scribes. Would have been someone in the ancient. Israelite world.

Somebody like by the name of Ezra. If you haven't heard of Ezra. He was a scribe. He wrote down. The law. Scribe.

He studied the law. It says. He did the law. Now what happens in Israel's history though. Is if you were the prophet. You were the big man on campus.

[23 : 58] If you were a priest. You were a big man on campus. But if you were a scribe. Well you know. You were just in the back room. Putting the stuff together. But when Israel loses her land.

And when she's thrown into exile. Into Assyria. And later the two tribes off into Babylon. There's no priesthood anymore. There's no temple.

There's no sacrificial system. There's actually in the intertestamental time. No prophetic word for 400 years. And so in that time.

Scribes take on a greater movement. Meeting in the synagogues. And discussing the law. Is where it happens. And all of a sudden. The scribes become an authority. By the time Jesus comes onto the scene.

They're bigger. Than almost any other office. Going in the land. By the second century. Says one writer. Quote. The scribes had become an influential.

[24 : 57] Respected group. Independent of the priests. Through copying the law. Scribes had become thoroughly familiar with it. And in time. Because of their knowledge. They were recognized as experts.

They were looked to for information. About what the law said. And later for help in understanding. What it meant and required. The scribes fill the gap. Left by the priest.

They became the zealous guardians of the law. The real teachers. And the directors of spiritual. Life. And what Matthew is saying is. Jesus teachings are now.

As a minister. Being weighed on the scale. Of the most important teachers of the day. And they are found wanting. And he seems to have authority. You know.

Who are the scribes today? The scribes today. Are simply the people. Who are highly interested. In the study of the scripture. Believing or not. They are the ones.

[25 : 52] Who know the word of God. They are the ones. Who interpret the word of God. They are the ones. Who write about the word of God. And similar to the scribal tradition. They actually lay out.

What everybody is thinking. About the word of God. So if you go to. Radfai Zedek this week. Or you go up to. KAM Isaiah Israel Temple. You go to anywhere. In religious circles.

Where Judaism and Christianity. Are in dialogue. You're going to find people say. Well this guy thinks this. About the Bible. And this person. Writes this about the Bible. And we also have this view. Over here on the Bible.

And it's very informative. Fascinating. For some of you. The rest of you. Will just watch the Super Bowl. This afternoon. But at any rate. For some people. This is really.

The deal. But there wasn't any scribes. Saying. You have heard it said this. But I say to you that. You didn't have any scribes.

[26 : 49] Saying. You take care of my words. And you're going to be all right. Now this wasn't. Multiple choice. And make your way through life.

Jesus basically is saying. My word. Above. Any. Other. Interpreter. And this is why.

Jacob Newsner. Writes this wonderful book. Conversation with Rabbi. What's the word? The title of his book. A rabbi talks with Jesus. And he. He envisions.

Attending the sermon on the mount. And he's listening to Jesus. And he's fascinated with it. But at the end of the day. He departs from him. And he rejects the ministry of Jesus. On this very.

Notion. Do I think. That if I build my life. On the word of Christ. Come what may. I'll be okay. Am I willing to submit my life.

[27 : 45] To the word of Christ. My best understanding of it. Before any other interpretation. That's quite something.

And you can see the reactions. Here they are. And I hope you're in one of these groups. Verse 28. When he finished these sayings. The crowds were astonished. That's the word. At his teaching.

For his teaching them. As one who had authority. Notice those two words. Now you and I normally think of astonished. In this sense. As necessarily being.

Wowed. Amazed. And. In awe of. In ways that are positive. And. Such that I would embrace it. Matthew uses this word.

Two other times. Interestingly. Both times. Astonished. Is the term. He places. Upon people. Who are listening.

[28 : 41] But who. Reject. The teaching. This is. Something you probably need to at least put your eyes on. Because you won't believe it.

Just if I. If I tell it to you. But there are two places. In Matthew. Where he speaks of. Astonishment. In this way. Matthew 13.

Just look it over. Just a couple of things. I don't normally have you turn to other places in the Bible. Lest I lose your attention. But this ought to grab your attention. That astonishment. Might move with those who are rejecting him.

Rather than receiving him. Matthew 13. 53. And following. When Jesus had finished these parables. He went away from there. And coming to his hometown. He taught them in their synagogue.

So that they were astonished. But notice. Where did the man get the wisdom. In these mighty works. Is this not the carpenter's son? Is this not. His mother Mary.

[29 : 37] Don't I know this guy's brother? Aren't his sisters with us? I mean he went to my schools. How can he be so great? And they took it says. Verse 57.

Offense. At him. To be astonished. Does not always mean to be receptive. The same thing happens. You can look it up this afternoon. In chapter 19. In verse 25.

Disbelief. They were so astonished. But they disbelieved. If that's you today. Then you are walking out of here saying. I am determining today. I've heard the audacious claim of Jesus.

I am astonished. That he would claim. Build your life on my words. And my words alone. And you'll be ready to meet the Lord. On that day. But the other.

Responses there too. In that little word. For he was teaching them. As one who had authority. I think this is what Matthew is driving at. He opens up his book.

[30 : 37] Matthew 1. On the authority of Jesus. As the son of Abraham. The son of David. He's going to be king. He's going to shut down Matthew 28. On all authority has been given to me.

He's demonstrating authority here in his teaching. And it's up to you to do with him what you will. What Matthew wants you to do. What I want you to do. Is to move from astonishment.

From astonishment. To an indication of his authority. To allegiance. That's what the Sermon on the Mount is meant to do.

And so there's the question. What will you do with his word? You know, 1883. They dedicated. And I'm almost done.

And in my seat. They dedicated. Not dedicated. They probably. I don't know. They celebrated. The building of the Brooklyn Bridge. Have you ever seen the Brooklyn Bridge? I mean, just watch.

[31 : 34] If you're recent to this country. Just watch a few of our movies. It won't take long before the Brooklyn Bridge shows up. But at any rate. When I was 50. I had always had it on my bucket list. I want to walk the Brooklyn Bridge.

And so Lisa and I got on a plane. She goes. All right. You're 50 now. We're going to do it. We're going to go to New York. You're going to walk the Brooklyn Bridge. At the time that it was put up. It was the largest suspension bridge.

Over any body of water. It connected Brooklyn to Manhattan. And you can walk it to this day. But what's fascinating to me. Is the structure underneath the water line.

It's kind of interesting. I mean, on one side. I can't remember if it's Brooklyn or not. They had to build these caissons. Which are like football field size. Metal boxes. That they flipped upside down.

And put all the way down on bedrock. And then they filled them with concrete. So that you would have something on bedrock. On the other side. They had to go down to like 78 feet below the water line.

[32 : 32] And these two caissons sit on the Brooklyn and Manhattan side. And from there. The substructure is built. And as you and I see all the glory above. It's resting on a foundation that is bedrock.

It's not some little flimsy thing. To me, it's one of the great. Humanly made.

Things. In a whole country. Well. It's because it's built on bedrock.

What are you built on? Bedrock. Bedrock. Be wise. Choose well. Our Heavenly Father.

We thank you for these words today from Jesus. And these words from Matthew. And I pray that we would all of us be learning how to move from an astonishment at the Bible's message that would cause us to reject it.

[33 : 46] To one that would actually cause us to consider it. Indeed, to give or pledge our allegiance to Jesus. And so as the storms come.

As jobs are lost. As relationships. Founder. As careers. Are submerged.

As plans. Are laid waste. As we consider arriving at heaven's gate. And giving account to you.

For entrance. May we. Love the words of Jesus. And do them.

Amen. In Christ's name, amen.