

Following The Way Of The Kingdom: Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

**First Methodist Church of Tulsa
Fall 2025**

Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

*Session 9: Obedience (Matt. 7:24-29)
November 12, 2025*

MATTHEW 7:24

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

1. What is the stress point in your life between hearing and doing? Do you find it easy or difficult. If there's some degree of difficulty, then think about what it is that's causing that difficulty and commit it to prayer.

2. List the things that you find to be foundational to your life and your way of thinking. Are there any departures from the way of Jesus? Or even if they are in line with Jesus' teaching, how might you become more aware of them during the day.

3. What are you building your life upon? Write it down on a piece of paper or a notecard and look at it every day: “What am I building my life upon today?”

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As we wrap up the Sermon on the Mount, we come to the concluding statements of chapter 7 and Jesus' summation of the sermon itself. Let's go back and think about the four questions that Dallas Willard posed to us at the beginning of the semester. He said there are four great questions.

- 1) what is reality?
- 2) what is the blessed life?
- 3) what is righteousness?
- 4) how do I become righteous?

The first two parts of this class on the Sermon on the Mount dealt with the nature of reality and what a blessed life looks like. From that point on, we began to look at what righteousness is in terms of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of the heavens. From Matthew 5:17 onward, we have been looking at what righteousness is through the lens of the reality that God has presented us through the kingdom of the heavens. It's not the reality that we perceived based on our culture and our world, but the real reality as God sees it. And so our understanding of righteousness is always filtered through that reality.

That reality is that at the core of what it means to be righteous is the necessity of a transformed heart. None of us is able to fulfill the demands of the law and the perceived additional burden of Jesus' interpretation of the law apart from having our hearts changed. And if you remember, we talked about the ways that people experience transformation through James Bryan Smith's book, *The Good and Beautiful Life*, wherein he says we have to change the narrative, which

is to say that we have to change our understanding of reality and understand the story that God is telling through the scriptures. We also have to change our practices or the way that we live in the world, and we have to change the people we spend the most time with.

All three of these are major challenges, for we are faced with an onslaught every single day challenging the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. We face a challenge in changing our practices because our habits are so ingrained. We find it easier to pick up our phones than we do to pick up the scriptures. We find it easier to binge on large amounts of food rather than fast. We find it easier to text and email our friends and colleagues than we do spending time in the presence of God talking to him.

And lastly, it is a difficult thing to not only find a different group of people to spend time with, but it takes time in order to exhibit the kind of vulnerability that results in the kind of symbiotic relationship required to allow people, as Wesley said, to watch over one another in love. The thing is, though these might be challenges, they are worth pursuing. Nothing worth having in life is easy. And if what we want is a life lived fully in the kingdom of God, participating in life through the grace of God, then there are some acts that we have to perform in order to appropriate and live out that grace that God gives us. And that is how one becomes righteous.

So as we turn to the last paragraph of the Sermon on the Mount, we find Jesus wrapping up his teaching. And he begins in Matthew 7:24, saying, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise person who built his house on the rock." What Jesus is doing here is building up to a metaphor of what a house built on the rock looks like. But it shouldn't escape our notice that the way he begins this is saying that "everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them." **And so the call that he has placed on all of us is to hear his words and to do them.**

Are we hearing his words based on the reality of the kingdom? Are we convinced that God's way ultimately leads to a blessed life, no matter what the ads we see in our magazines and phones and computers tell us? And are we willing to be changed and transformed by his words in such a way that we live them out?

It is not enough to hear the words that the scriptures say or the words that a preacher or teacher shares. We actually have to do them. And we find a teaching on this in James chapter 1, starting with verse 22: "But be doers of the

word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." There is a deception in hearing and not doing. There is a deception in thinking that we can hear the words and feel good about it and not do what Jesus says.

This is part of the Protestant problem, with the doctrine of justification by faith,

- Aristotle and the golden mean - what Andrew's been teaching us about Aristotle's ethics.
- Salvation has been pulled into two directions, what's called Pelagianism which is that we have to earn our salvation and Antinomianism which means there is nothing we can do that affects our status in salvation.
- The reality is that it is only God who saves, we cannot save ourselves, but if we merely believe the truth of the gospel and it has no effect on our affections, on our hearts, and the way we live life, then it's merely a belief. James 2:19 "You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear" (NET).
- We have a role to play!

So, James says that if anyone hears God's words and does not act them out, they're like an idiot who can look at their face in the mirror and forget what he looks like. But if we look into the perfect law of God, a law that is freedom, he says, and perseveres, He will be blessed in his doing.

- Perseverance

So let's return to Jesus' metaphor about the person who builds their house upon the rock. It's fairly simple. The reason we have foundations in our homes is because sometimes the soil will shift and move, and we need something strong and permanent underneath us to keep the house from falling apart. And Jesus says as much here that a person who hears the word and does it is able to withstand the storms, the rain, the floods, the wind, and not fall because it had been founded on something permanent and solid.

- Foundations
- Piper – "The problem with the metaphor of "foundation" is that foundations are unsightly structures, out of sight and forgotten, while they hold up all the rooms where we do what we like to do: the kitchen where we like to eat, and the den where we like to watch television, and the bedroom where we like sex, and the living room where we like to meet with friends. They all depend on the foundation. But who ever thinks about the foundation?

We ought to be thinking about the foundation! Every single day. **What am I building my life upon today?**

In contrast, he says that everyone who hears the word and does not do them is like a foolish person who builds his house on the sand. When the rain and the floods and the wind come, that house falls, and great was the fall of it.

Again, We ought to be thinking about the foundation! Every single day. **What am I building my life upon today?** Church leaders and ministries have collapsed in ignominy because this simple question was not thought of nor answered in a way that Jesus is calling us to answer it. Countless lives, marriages, relationships have fallen in on themselves because the answer was “me” rather than Jesus.

The postscript:

“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹ for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”

Why were they astonished? The first word of v. 29 tells us. “For.” Because he was teaching them with authority in contrast to the scribes.

St. John Chrysostom – “For when he said these things, he did not refer to another, as even the prophet Moses did, but everywhere he showed that he himself was the One who had the authority to decide. For even when he was establishing laws Jesus continually added, “But I say to you.” And when he was reminding them of the final day of judgment, he showed that he himself is the One who will bring justice, both through the punishments and through the honors. This is what made such a commotion among them.”