

Will You Survive The Storm? — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 7:24–28 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, July 26, 2026 · Two Ways

⚠ AUTO-GENERATED TRANSCRIPT — *verify against the audio before quoting publicly.* Produced from a Descript transcription of the Broadview Church sermon recording and lightly cleaned (filler words removed, obvious mis-hears of names and Scripture references corrected). No timestamps. This is not a publication-ready manuscript and it is not Wes's exact words for print. Check any line against the recording before it goes on a graphic, in an email, or in a book.

All right. Well, thanks to the team for leading us in worship. Thank you guys for singing so well, like you believe it.

If you have your Bible, you can open it to the book of Matthew, chapter seven. If you don't have a Bible, there should be one on the chair in the seat in front of you. It's the black book, not the blue book. The blue book is the hymnal, if you don't know what those are. You can look at those if you want a keepsake from back in the day.

Matthew chapter seven is the conclusion of a sermon that Jesus preached. We know it as the Sermon on the Mount — his most famous sermon by far, probably one of the best sermons ever preached. And every good sermon has a good conclusion, and we've been looking at his conclusion over the last three weeks.

I would be lying if I didn't say there's a little bit of grief in my heart today as we say goodbye to the Sermon on the Mount. Been a lot of sad goodbyes around here lately. But all good things do come to an end, and the Sermon on the Mount has been such a gift and a blessing in my own life. I hope it's been such for you. And Jesus ends with a banger. He ends with a wonderful story that I think will be helpful for putting everything together.

The Sand Palace

In 2018, a hurricane hit the Florida coastline called Hurricane Michael. There were a hundred and sixty mile an hour winds. It was easily a category five hurricane. And it made a direct hit in a little town called Mexico City.¹ And the homes that were on the beach line were just utterly destroyed, reduced to nothing more than splinters. The damage was pretty overwhelming.

And they noticed — one reporter did, as he was flying over the damage — that there was one three-story house that had been left standing among the wreckage, all three stories still intact, barely with even a scratch. And so the reporter tracked down the owners of the home.

Come to find out the name of the house was The Sand Palace. I've got a picture of it here if you'll go to the next slide. As you can see, everything around it is just utterly torn to shreds, and yet there stands The Sand Palace because it was built like a rock.

And when they investigated, come to find out from the owners that they had lost a house previously, and so when they rebuilt this one, they wanted to build a house that would be strong enough to last what they called *the big one*. And sure enough, the big one came in Hurricane Michael, and it stood strong because of the differences in how it was built. Where their neighbors used regular wood for beams, they poured reinforced concrete. Where their neighbors would put down pilings, these pilings went down forty feet into the dirt — founding something super solid, something with a firm foundation.

And at the time, the neighbors to their left and to their right thought it was ridiculous. They were going overboard, spending extra time and money on things that really nobody could see from the surface. From the surface, this house looked like all the others: same paint, same kind of windows, same amount of living area. And yet when the storm came, there was one fundamental difference, and that fundamental difference made all the difference — because it was different at that foundational level.

And Jesus talks about this same dynamic in the Sermon on the Mount. He's going to give one final picture about two builders who build two homes. And what's true of hurricanes is also true of life. All of us one day are going to face a final storm. And when we face that final storm, how you built your life will matter.

Some of us are building our lives like everybody else, and there are others who build their life with something different at that foundational layer. And according to Jesus, it's hard to determine who's doing what from the surface. People can look very similar in terms of what you can see. But those who build on a firm foundation that sits beneath the surface — when the storm of life comes, the big one, we might say — then they are found still standing.

And so every one of us is going to face a storm in life. Whether you survive depends on where you stand.

Where we've been

Now, if you've not been with us in the Sermon on the Mount, it's a pretty long sermon. It goes from Matthew 5 all the way to the end of Matthew 7, and we've been, in this series, looking at the conclusion of the sermon. And in the conclusion, Jesus gives three different

pictures. Each picture, Jesus is trying to paint a contrast between what he calls a life of flourishing and a life of ruin — a person who wastes their life, when they get to the end of it's just, you know, it was all for nothing; or the person who, in building their life, finds *this is the life I was meant to live*. The good life, we might call it. And Jesus says, "You can do either one, and which life you end up with is a matter of your decision."

And he's given us these three pictures to get us to answer three fundamental questions.

The first question was a picture of two roads — a broad road and a narrow road. The broad road had a broad gate. The narrow road had a narrow gate. And the broad road led to destruction; the narrow gate and the narrow road led to what he calls life. And the question he was asking is: *Which life do you want?* And essentially, if you want a flourishing life, you got to know the way in is narrow. You've got to set aside everything you've been carrying in order to fit into the narrow gate.

Then last week, we saw Jesus give another picture. It was a picture of two trees, and that picture was a warning about false religion. And he says, essentially, there is a counterfeit version of flourishing. This counterfeit vision is led by counterfeit prophets and preachers. And so he says, "Beware of false teachers who are trying to exploit you and take from you. They're preaching that they're the way to life, but they're actually leading you to death." And that question was essentially: *Who's going to lead the way?* If this is the life that you want, a life of flourishing, then who is going to lead you there?

And in both cases, I've tried to encourage what Jesus seems to encourage — which is to choose the narrow gate and to follow the true teacher, which, of course, would be Jesus Christ himself.

When we get to this last picture, it's a picture of two different builders. Two builders build two different houses, and they both face the same exact storm. And in this question, Jesus isn't asking which life do you want. He's not asking who's going to lead the way. Jesus is asking: when the storm comes, is the house that you built going to survive? And whether your house survives, again, is not determined by the things that you can see at a surface level, but it's instead something that sits beneath the surface. And Jesus is going to define what that bedrock is.

The text — Matthew 7:24–27

So Jesus says, "Therefore" — in other words, I'm going to wrap it all together —

"Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew, and it pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of

mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash." — Matthew 7:24–27 (CSB)

I love the way it ends — just like the sound of broken glass on the floor. Except it wasn't broken glass. It was someone's life. Which is very sad.

In other words: two builders, both are building a house. Both builders hear the same sermon, the sermon that Jesus is preaching. Both builders face the same storm, described exactly the same way. Except one builder has a house that crashes, whereas the other builder has a house that stands.

And the one difference between the two builders is wrapped up in this little bitty two-letter word. We translate it *do*. It's used eight times in this little section. Eight times in just this conclusion, the word *do* is used again and again and again.

And the contrast, especially last week, was people pointing to the religious activity that they were doing. They were saying, "Jesus, Lord, Lord, didn't we cast out demons? Didn't we do many miracles? Didn't we prophesy and preach in your name?" And Jesus responds, "Yes, indeed, you did. But there's one thing you did not do, and the one thing that you did not do was the will of your heavenly Father." And so Jesus is creating this contrast between lots of fervent religious activity and this one action that the Father in heaven actually wants.

And last week, the contrast was between what a person *says* and what they do not do. This week, the contrast is between what a person *hears* and does not do. And in both cases, Jesus is essentially saying, "It doesn't really matter what you say. You can say the right words. You can confess Jesus as Lord. But if those words you're professing are not accompanied by this one thing, then the words are irrelevant, and God doesn't really care."

And now he's saying, "You can hear all the right sermons you want to listen to. You can show up to church every single Sunday and take notes and nod in agreement. But the Father really does not care how many sermons you listen to. He doesn't even really care if you gain all the knowledge that you're supposed to know." If you do not do this one thing that the Father wills, then your words and your hearing is totally irrelevant.

And so the one difference is that the wise man puts into practice what he hears. And so the contrast really is not between some church person and a non-church person. This is important for us, because it's easy to point the finger. **Jesus is essentially comparing two pew sitters.** You might think of two people right here in this room listening to the same exact sermon, understanding it at the same exact level, and even nodding in agreement. But the difference between a wise man and a foolish man — the difference

between surviving the storm and not — boils down to whether or not you put to practice what you hear.

And so we're going to talk about the difference between the wise and the foolish man. We're going to talk about the storm. And then the one difference that makes a difference.

The fool and the wise man

Jesus uses the word *fool*. Well, he uses the word *moron*, which is translated fool. It's the Greek word *moros*. It's where we get our English word moron.

I don't know what you think of when you think of a moron, but I think of a generally stupid person. That's not really what the Greek word Jesus uses conveys. He actually uses the same word earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus talks about salt and light. He says, "You're the salt and light." He's essentially saying, "What good is salt that has lost its flavor?" When he says "lost its flavor," it's the same word *moros*. In other words, you're supposed to represent and do a certain thing, but you're not doing what you were made to do. And that's the basic idea behind this word.

A foolish person knows what's true, but he just doesn't take it serious. That's why in the Scriptures, there's a real clean distinction, especially in the book of Proverbs, between the wise man, the foolish man, the simple man, and the ignorant. You may think they're all foolish, but in the Old Testament, the fool is something very specific. The ignorant man can say, "Hey, I did not know." The simple man could say, "I'm not even able to know." **The fool says, "No, I know the truth, but even though I know the truth, I'm still not going to do what's needed."**

That's what makes a fool a fool. It's because he knows what's right. **The fool knows the truth, but he fails to take it serious.** And that's what Jesus describes right here in the Sermon on the Mount. The foolish man hears the sermon, comprehends it intellectually, probably knows it leads to flourishing, but says, "Eh, I don't really care. I'm going to live life the way I want to, because that's just what I want to do."

And Jesus contrasts that fool with what he calls a wise man. And again, the word translated wise is not the typical word for wise. It's a word that Aristotle uses a lot in his ethics. The word that Jesus uses conveys the idea of — I'm going to call it — practical knowledge. You might think of it as the difference between street smarts and book smarts. Someone can be really book smart, but not know how to fix their car, because they just don't have any common sense. Common sense — that's what this word is. This word is essentially more than knowing the facts. It's knowing how to bring the facts to bear in a practical situation.

You've maybe heard the definition: wisdom is not just knowing what to do, it's knowing how to do it, when to do it, and the way to make the truth look beautiful. That's the wise man Jesus is talking about. He is street smart. He practically knows not just what is God's design, but — given that God designed things this way — how now should I live? And then he takes the truth of God's design and he puts it into practice in such a way, with such great skill, that his life generally flourishes.

And Matthew loves this word, because he uses it again and again. (Jesus spoke Aramaic, so I'm not sure *he* used the word.) But it's used in the book of Matthew in a couple of different places, and in each case, it's applied to people who are able to see things in advance. It's used of the five bridesmaids who know that the groom is on the way, and so they oil their lamps so that they'll be able to have the light when the party begins. Or it's used of the servant who's put over his master's house, and he knows that his master's going to return, and so he stewards well his master's property. It's used of the disciples in Matthew chapter ten when Jesus says, "I'm sending you out into the world, and I want you to be wise as serpents, but innocent as doves."

The idea of being wise is this word right here, meaning: you need to know what's coming your way. And in your ability to see in advance what's probably coming down the pike, I want you to do something now so that you're prepared when that day comes. And that applies to this storm, because the idea is that the storm is coming. I know the storm is coming, and I don't know when it's going to get here, so I'm going to do things right now so that I'll be prepared.

That's the difference between the wise man and the foolish man. They both know the truth, but it's only the wise man who shows it through skillful application.

And so if you think about that contrast, you immediately can resonate. The foolish man may go to church. He may hear all the sermons. Maybe he's been in church his whole life. But there's an area of his life where he says — or she says — "Even though I know I shouldn't do this, I'm going to do it anyway just because this is what I want to do." And that's a textbook fool. Whereas a wise man, through his learning and listening to the teachings of Jesus, says, "Man, this is how the world works. Jesus was absolutely right, and so I'm going to change what I'm doing here and here so that I'm prepared when the difficult days come."

"These words of mine"

Now, what sermon do they hear? Jesus says they hear "these words of mine," which on its face is a radical claim if you don't really appreciate it.

Jesus was thought of as a rabbi by many people, and most rabbis would teach and preach sermons. But usually what a rabbi would do to claim a ground of authority is that he would

point outside of himself to establish the authority of his word. He would say things like, "Isaiah says," or, "As Moses said in the book of Genesis." Jesus does not do that. Nor does he do what they would also do, which is to point to other rabbis that were real well respected in the community.

Jesus doesn't say, "You've heard it said." Jesus says, "I say to you." Jesus doesn't say, "In the words of Moses," he says, "My words" — which is crazy, because it suggests that Jesus believed his words to be of equal weight with Scripture and of equal weight with the Father. So those who think of Jesus as just a good moral teacher really don't understand the nature of his ministry. He was not saying, "I'm just a prophet like everybody else." He knew that he was different, and he knew that he was sent from God, and he knew that his authority was of equal weight with the Father, and that God had sent him to reveal the Father's will.

And so he says, "These words of mine." What words is he talking about? Again, when you're reading the Bible, you want to let context determine the meaning of a word. "These words" probably refers to the Sermon on the Mount. It refers to every word that Jesus has been speaking on this mountain.

And it's been challenging for us, because we've been going so slow through the Sermon on the Mount that you kind of miss the forest for the trees. And so I want you to think about the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, because really Jesus is doing one thing. There's one central thesis. And whether or not you're putting into practice the thing that Jesus says makes your life on the firm foundation really does depend on if you know what these words actually point to.

The forest, not the trees

And so I have a chart that I think will help you see the forest for the trees. And I'm a nerd, so I love stuff like this. Some of you could not care less.

But think of the sermon as essentially a sermon with an intro and a conclusion.

The intro to the Sermon on the Mount is what we call the Beatitudes, and it's where Jesus says, "This is the life God blesses." It's kind of like a forecast of where Jesus is going to be going. You want a life of flourishing, you want the good life — here's who it is. Here's the person that God blesses.

It's very important not to misunderstand. Jesus isn't saying, "Do these things and God will bless you." He's saying, "*People like this* are blessed by God." In other words, it's not the healthy and the wealthy and the wise and the powerful. Jesus says it's the poor in spirit, it's the helpless, the heartbroken, the humble. It's those who hunger and thirst for righteousness outside themselves — in other words, they know that I can't save myself, and they know this

world isn't home. They are pure in heart in that they're fully surrendered, and there's no hypocrisy in them. They are peacemakers, and they persevere against opposition that comes their way. These are the people that God blesses. These are the salt and the light.

And then Jesus gets to the central thesis of his sermon in chapter five, verses seventeen to twenty. And this is what I think is the point of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, "I didn't come to abolish the Law and the Prophets." Now, when you hear the Scripture say *Law and the Prophets*, what you need to equate that with is the Old Testament. Jesus was being accused of twisting and perverting the Old Testament, and Jesus says, "No, I'm not coming to do any of that. I'm not trying to put away the Old Testament. I'm trying to show you what it was all about. Don't think I came to abolish the Law and Prophets; I came to fulfill it."

And when he says *fulfill* it, what he really means is, "I'm here to show you what God always meant in the Old Testament, what the Old Testament was supposed to reveal, where it was supposed to lead you towards." And he essentially points to himself as its true fulfillment.

And then he says in verse twenty — and this really leads to the rest of the sermon — "If your righteousness does not surpass the scribes and Pharisees, then you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Now, again, you got to know the context. The scribes and the Pharisees were the religious establishment. They were the ones telling Jesus, "You're a fraud, you're a phony." And Jesus essentially says, "No, *you* are the fraud and the phony. You're leading people astray, because you're presenting your version of spirituality as the way to a flourishing life, and I'm here to tell you that's incorrect. You've misread and misapplied the law. **You use the law as a ladder to climb your way to heaven. You use the law as a hammer to beat people down. Whereas the law was really meant as a mirror** — to show you God's love and mercy, to show you God's covenant relationship and how it works and how it will work in the future. It was to show you that he has chosen his people and saved his people by grace. It's all about mercy, and therefore, what God desires is not your self-righteousness."

You can never be good enough to save yourself. That's the point of the law. It was to drive you to your need for grace, because of your great sin at the level of the heart.

And then having made that basic thesis, he unpacks it for the rest of the sermon.

From Matthew chapter five, verse twenty to verse forty-eight, he makes one claim. And his one claim is established through six different topics, and the claim is: the righteousness that God really wants is a righteousness that **starts in the heart**. The religious establishment had basically said what God cares about is your behavior. So long as you don't murder, so long as you don't commit adultery, so long as you don't swear an oath the wrong way — then

the inner sins that happen in the heart, God is really not too concerned about. And Jesus says, "No, you fools, you've missed the entire point." The law did forbid those external violations because it was trying to govern and heal something in the heart. It was trying to restrain an idolatry that starts in the heart, and that's what needs to be healed and addressed. And so Jesus says, "Unless your righteousness starts there, then it's not what God really wants." So you got to uproot the anger, you got to uproot the lust, uproot the duplicity and resentment.

And he ends by saying, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." And again, he's not saying it's got to be sinless perfection where you never do anything wrong, but it's this idea of sincerity and wholeness — being fully devoted to God, heart, soul, mind, strength — not doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. Which is exactly where he goes in chapter six.

It's again, all one cohesive whole. Chapter six is about a heart having been rightly oriented, **seeking the Father first**. And what Jesus does is he compares true believers from the hypocrites. And the hypocrites are people who have a divergence between what they do and why they do it. In other words, for Jesus, hypocrisy is not saying one thing and doing another. It's saying and doing the right thing, but doing it for the wrong reason. And these people Jesus is confronting were doing religious actions. They were giving, praying, fasting, et cetera — but they were doing it to be seen by other people. It was in service of their social reputation, because for them, they established their righteousness in how they were thought about and known outside. And Jesus says that's not what God wants. Who cares what other people think? You should be primarily concerned with the will of your Father in heaven.

And so don't pray in public to be heard by people. Go to your Father in secret. Shut the door. Pray right there where nobody else can see. Give in secret. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand's doing. Fast in secret. Don't tell anybody what's going on.

And so a true righteousness — not only does it begin in the heart, it also seeks the Father first. And it seeks the Father first instead of the opinions of other people, or even what you feel about yourself, because of what it **sees** about the Father. It doesn't see God as some cosmic bully who's just looking to crush you at any moment. True faith rightly sees God as a loving Father full of mercy and compassion.

And so Jesus uses the example of money and anxiety of various different kinds, and he uses the analogy of an eye, saying, "When the eye's healthy, the body's full of light, but when the eye is unhealthy, the whole body's full of darkness." Likewise, people who see God clearly are going to be able to develop and obtain true righteousness. But those who are not able to see God truly are going to be full of darkness, even if they're doing religious activity.

And so true righteousness — not only does it seek the Father first, it **sees the Father's care**. And Jesus specifically says, "If God cares for the lilies of the field and the flowers and

things like that, how much more so will he care for you? Don't worry about your life, what you're going to eat, what you're going to drink, et cetera. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added unto you."

And so true righteousness starts in the heart. It seeks first the Father. It sees the Father's care. And then finally, it **shows the Father's love**. And Jesus uses a couple different examples. One is about judging. "Judge not, lest ye be judged" — because the manner in which you judge is measured back to you. He doesn't say never judge people. He says, "Before you judge anybody, deal with the sin, the plank in your own eye, so that you can see clearly to help your brother." In other words, I want you to love people and see people as God loves them, and if your eye is full of sin, you're not going to be able to see with God's eyes. So you got to see with God's eyes so that you can show God's true love.

And that's where the sermon ends: with the Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you." "This is," Jesus says, "the Law and the Prophets" — which is a way of kind of summarizing the thesis with the conclusion.

So the point of the Sermon on the Mount is that your righteousness has to be more than the religious establishment and what they're pushing, because it isn't what God wants. What God wants is a righteousness that sits below the surface. **It's above the average, and it's below the surface** — because it's more than just your behavior; it's about seeking the Father first. And who cares what other people think? What you care about first is the Lord.

Then he goes to the conclusion, which is what we've been doing the last three weeks. He talks about the two roads, the two trees, and the two builders. And the point in every case is tying you right back up to the Beatitudes. You want a life that God blesses? Then be righteous as the Father demands. Do the will of the Father. This is the Father's will. It's a righteousness that's not rooted in you, but rooted in this vision of flourishing. And ultimately, we're going to see that vision is rooted in Jesus himself.

So when Jesus says, "These words of mine," this is what he has in mind.

A concert full of love songs

And what's so crazy to me is that both builders hear the sermon. They both even maybe agree with the sermon, but one of them says, "Yeah, but I'm not going to change. I refuse to live my life in alignment with this truth that is plain to me."

It is very similar to the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament, who talks about Israel doing the exact same thing. If you go to the next slide, there's this verse in Ezekiel chapter thirty-three that says:

"My people come to you in crowds, and they sit in front of you and hear your words, but they don't obey them. To them, you're like a singer of passionate love songs, who has a beautiful voice and plays skillfully on an instrument. They hear your words, but they don't obey them." — Ezekiel 33:31-32

And this is the nature of so many church-going people. Man, I love going to church, and I love listening to the band. I love listening to the sermon. Jesus is so wise. But when push comes to shove, you leave this place and your life is utterly unchanged. You know what you should do, but for some reason you don't do it. **You're treating it like it's a concert full of love songs.** And Jesus says you're a fool, and your life will not survive the storm — and that storm is coming, so you better change how you build.

The storm

So what is the storm? If that's the sermon — the storm, again, it's the same thing. Jesus uses the same exact language to describe the storm for both sets of builders. If you look in verse twenty-five and again in verse twenty-seven, the Greek words used, the English words used are identical in both cases.

Jesus says that the rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew, and then pounded that house. The word translated *pounded* is actually the word *fell* — so the word *fell* is used again and again. It's kind of like a wordplay.

So when Jesus uses the word *rain*, he's not talking about light drizzle. This is the same language that was used of the Nile River when it would overflow. And so I want you to imagine a flash flooding environment, which is what Jesus is trying to convey.

Now, you may think this is the Middle East, or in the middle of the desert — who believes that there's going to be flash flooding in the desert? And if that's what you think, you obviously haven't been around Abilene very long, because Abilene is also a desert, and yet it floods like nobody's business. And the reason that it floods is the same reason that it floods in the Middle East. It's because of the dry, parched ground not absorbing the water when it comes. And so when the rain does come, it's got nowhere to really go down, and so it just goes out. And that's what this picture implies.

This is the bottom of what is called a desert *wadi*. Has anyone ever heard the word wadi before? It sounds like a spit wad you'd put in your straw. It's really not. It's the bottom layer of a channel that is at the bottom of a canyon or something similar to that, and they're all over the place, even in West Texas.

And usually when people would decide to camp out, they would pick the ground in the wadi, because it was flatter and softer and easier to lay your head down on at night. But if it was

during the dry season, that's one thing — maybe you don't get any rain. But if it was during the rainy season, you were taking your life into your hands. Because when the rain fell, because it had nowhere else to go, the river waters would begin to rise, and so you have water coming from both directions. And then Jesus also says you have wind blowing north, south, east, and west. So the idea is that you've got action coming from every single direction and this incredible force pushing forward, and it's going to utterly demolish what's laying at that sandy foundation.

And so the storm looks the same for everyone. And the storm is symbolic of something. It's symbolic of what I'm going to call **the great day**.

Maybe you've had a bad week. Some of you say, "I had a bad year. I had a bad decade." You've had some really bad things going on, and that is maybe what you think Jesus describes. That is not what Jesus is talking about. He's talking about something different. If anything, those bad days and bad suffering in your life are pointing to the big one — and the big one is God's judgment on the final day.

It's sometimes called the Day of the Lord, the Great Day of the Lord. It's this day on which Jesus judges the world for sin. Jesus separates the wheat from the chaff. He separates the goats from the sheep. He determines who is a true follower versus a fake follower. And no one survives that judgment, because they are just not good enough.

In other words, it's not like the church-going people get a lighter dose on the day of judgment because, "Hey, well, we went to church and listened to the sermon." On that day, it doesn't matter, because both church-going sinners and non-church-going sinners have one thing in common — which is that they are sinners. And the day of judgment judges sin, whether it's of a religious sort or irreligious sort.

And Jesus is trying to say: your outside activity is not what's going to save you. What's going to save you on that day, the day of judgment, is the foundation on which you've built. **It's the thing that nobody else can see that determines whether you're going to survive.**

And Jesus talked about this day more than anybody else. There's a whole chapter in the book of Matthew — two chapters — devoted to this day of judgment. And I think he talked so much about it because he knew with certainty it was coming. He knew that he would be the judge who would execute God's wrath on that day, and he would save you and I from the experience of hell — which essentially is so hellish because it is the absence of God's mercy and grace.

You may think things are bad right now, and to a degree they really are. But when you go to a place like hell, it's all of God's mercy and grace removed. Right now, there's an element of common grace where God is restraining evil to a degree. But when he removes that restraint,

hellish people compound their evil. You've probably seen someone who's just kind of given themselves over to evil, and you know how quickly it can devolve and how absolutely horrific it can get. And you look and you go, "Man, I can't believe that they're doing that. I can't believe they talk like that." Well, hell is basically that process played out into infinity. And so they become horrific people, horrific systems and society. **And so what makes hell so hellish is not just the flames and the fire and brimstone. It's that absence of God's mercy and grace.**

And Jesus is essentially saying, "I would save you that. But if you're going to escape that judgment, you've got to change the way that you live." But you've got to change it at a foundational level, not at the level of what's on the surface. The difference between those who survive and those who don't is that one builds upon the rock.

And so what matters on the day of judgment is the foundation on which you built. What matters is the strength of that foundation.

The one difference that makes a difference

So I want to talk about this difference, and then we're going to be done.

Again, Jesus is contrasting two ways of relating to God, and these two ways still exist today. It's present in any kind of religion and denomination.

What made the scribes and Pharisees so false is that they were building a life upon themselves. Basically, they were using God's law as a ladder and a hammer. I've said that before, but it's so helpful for me to think about *why* they read the Bible. They read the Bible to learn the rules and the rituals so that they could justify themselves before God. "And so I'm going to sacrifice the right way, I'm going to sing the right way, I'm going to go to church the right amount of times, and I'm going to feel good about it because my life is going to look better than these other people."

And again, Jesus comes on the scene, and he says, "No, you've missed the point. The point of the Old Testament was not to show you the rules and rituals. It was to reveal the Christ to whom they pointed. It was to reveal the promised Messiah, the Savior who would crush the head of the serpent — and you've gotten so distracted by the rules and regulations that you've missed what God intended."

And so they were righteous, but they defined it differently. They defined righteousness by their external conformity of behavior, and they measured righteousness based on looking better than other people. And Jesus is essentially in the Sermon on the Mount saying, "That's not what God intended." The standard by which you should measure is the perfection that God demands. Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.

The law was never meant to give you hope that maybe you could achieve it someday. The law was meant to drive you to your need for grace. Because you can't do what the law demands — especially not at the level of the heart. The heart is deceitful, desperately sick; who can understand it? And the measurement has never been, can you be better than this one or that one? The demand of God was meant to lead you to a place of pleading for mercy — that you would throw yourself on the mercy of God and say, "God, would you be gracious? Would you show me forgiveness?"

Which was the whole point of the sacrificial system. In the Old Testament, they would have the Day of Atonement, where the blood of the lamb would be shed so that the sins of the people could be forgiven.

And Jesus knows all of this. This is so fascinating to me — that even at thirty-three years old, he understood his purpose in life: "My purpose is to resurface what God's law always was about, and I have been sent by God to be that atoning sacrifice, so that when people wonder, 'How can I experience forgiveness and grace?' they'll recognize it's through my death and my atoning sacrifice that they are saved."

And so the Sermon on the Mount is pointing people not just to Jesus' words. They're pointing to the person of Jesus Christ himself — and not only his teaching and preaching and miracles and things like that. It's really pointing to his atoning work through his death and his resurrection.

And so if I had to simplify it, this is what I'd say: **Sand is building a life upon yourself. The rock is building your life upon the Savior.**

And you'll know which foundation you're building upon, because you can use religion to build a life that's about yourself. "God, I'm going to be good so that you'll give me this." And the way you really know you're not building on the Savior is where Jesus wants you to do something, and you say, "No, thanks." You're basically saying, "I agree with you here, but I'm really building life on myself, so any time we disagree, you take the road, and I get my way."

Those who build life on the Savior are essentially taking Jesus for what he said — all of what he said — because their hope isn't in themselves. That's why Jesus says, "If you want to save your life, you got to lose it. Anyone who would seek to save his life is going to lose it, but if you want to save your life, you're going to lose it for my sake."

So Jesus is saying, "You got to build your life on me." And again, this is rooted in the vision of the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah talked about a firm foundation, or a cornerstone.

The Rock

When Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, because he was teaching them like one who had authority and not like their scribes.

They know what Jesus is claiming here. Jesus is not just saying, "This is what God meant in the Old Testament." Jesus is pointing to himself as the one who fulfills what God demands. He's saying, "God demands this kind of righteousness, and you know you're never going to have it, and so what you need is someone like me who can stand in your place for your sins."

And so Jesus took on God's wrath that you and I deserved, so that we could hide ourselves in his righteousness on the day of judgment. That's what is prophesied about in the Old Testament:

"I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. The one who believes will be unshakable." — Isaiah 28:16

In other words, it's not just faith in the *ethic* of Jesus. It's not like you're trying to capture the wisdom of this moral philosophy. This moral philosophy points to the person in whom it's found, and that person is the Christ. It's Jesus who fulfilled the demands on the cross.

So when Jesus died on the cross, he was forsaken. **He was forsaken so that you and I could hear, "No condemnation."** We know that we're guilty before God and cannot have that guilt atoned by our own doing, and so Jesus stands in our place so that he can pay that penalty. And Jesus knows this is how it works, because God is a holy God — a holy God who is just must punish sin for what it deserves. But in order to save those who were guilty and be just in his judgments, he had to absorb the just penalty for sin in himself. And that's what Jesus accomplishes. He becomes just and justifier of those who believe.

And so when Jesus says, "Build your life on the rock," he's saying, **"Build it on me. I'm the rock. I'm the Sermon on the Mount. These words — I am these words. These words are my life."**

And so you want to ask yourself the question: is my life safe from the storm? And the only way to know that your life is safe is that you're building it on the rock. And what the rock represents is not just the words of the sermon. It's the righteousness to which the sermon points — and that righteousness is found in Jesus Christ, in Christ alone.

We sing about it sometimes:

My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness. On Christ the solid rock I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.

All other ground is sinking sand. Amen.

Invitation

And so it really isn't, as we leave today, about mastering the moral philosophy of the Sermon on the Mount, but humbling yourself and repenting of a life that's seeking self-salvation. And you know you're doing it because of how judgmental you are, or because of how anxious you are about what other people think, and you haven't learned contentment and steadiness — because your identity is rooted in Jesus Christ.

He is the solid rock on which you must rebuild your life. And it's really in losing your life that that life is built and established.

And so people build on sand because of what it costs to build on the rock. It costs you literally everything. You must die to yourself. But if you will die to yourself, repent of your sin, and put your faith in Jesus, you will be ready when the big one comes.

And if you've never done that, this morning there's an invitation for you to do so. We're actually going to do an altar call, so if Roland or someone wants to come up and play, there'll be an opportunity for you right there where you're seated to respond to the Lord.

Some people say, "How do you become a Christian? How do you get saved?" It's really — anyone who calls on the name of the Lord, they will be saved. And calling on the name of the Lord is really believing in this gospel message. It's realizing that I cannot save myself, but Jesus died to set me free. Jesus died to be my Savior and Lord. And so: "Jesus, I confess, repent of my sins, and I put my trust in you."

And so would you bow your heads with me...

¹ Wes says "Mexico City"; the town Hurricane Michael struck is Mexico Beach, Florida. Left as spoken.

Recording ends here — the closing prayer and altar call are not in the posted sermon audio.