



Sermon Text: Matthew 7:24-29

Sermon Date: March 22, 2020

On Sunday, we finished our extended study on The Sermon on the Mount. Jesus ends with one final contrast between a wise and foolish builder. The story is simple to understand, and yet also easy to misunderstand. Often we imagine that Jesus presents a clear, obvious difference between the two builders, but a closer inspection reveals a much subtler distinction.

MANY SIMILARITIES

It is easy to assume that Jesus is comparing the wise, church-going, Bible-reading Christian to the foolish, church-skipping, Bible-ignoring non-Christian. But Jesus emphasizes that both builders hear his words. Both are church-going and Bible-reading. At first glance, both appear identical.

- **Same House:** Both builders build the same type of house. We could imagine it like a typical box home that fills neighborhoods across America.
- **Same Neighborhood.** In addition, both houses are in the same neighborhood. They are next to each other. They share a similar location.
- **Same Storm.** Finally, both houses experience the same storm. The same rain, flood, and wind rage against both buildings.

Jesus intentionally frames the illustration so that we see the many similarities. Both houses appear identical . . . when the sun is shining and the weather is nice. But when the storm comes, a foundational difference between the two buildings is exposed.

ONE DIFFERENCE

The one critical difference between the two homes is the foundation. The wise builder dug deep and built his house on the underlying bedrock. The foolish builder simply built his house on the sun-baked, sandy topsoil of ancient Israel. Initially, the foolish man would have seemed wise and the wise man foolish. The short-cut of skimping on the foundation would have seemed like a fast-track to success. In the sunshine of today, foolishness often appears as wisdom. It is only by living aware of the certainty of the storm—the storm of God's eschatological judgment is what Jesus is ultimately alluding to—that we discover the importance of rock-solid foundations.

So how do we build our lives on the bedrock? What is the critical difference between the two builders? It is *obedience* to Christ's words. Not just hearing, not just admiring, but applying Christ's teaching.

DEVASTATING OUTCOME

In spite of their numerous similarities, their singular difference is all that matters in the end. One house remains standing. The other collapses in total ruin. The stakes couldn't be higher.

And with that, Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount. Immediately afterward, Matthew reports that the crowds marveled at Christ's teaching. Such authority! Never had they listened to a preacher quite like him! Their amazement was understandable, but also wholly inadequate. Do they obey Christ's words or are they merely astounded by them? We are never told. What about you? What is your response to Christ's sermon? Your answer to that question makes all the difference in the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from Sunday?
2. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And a critical part of fearing the Lord is living in light of the certainty of God's judgment (2 Cor. 5:10-11a); that is, living in light of the storm. How does the storm shape your understanding of wisdom & folly?
3. As you think back on our series on the Sermon on the Mount, how has it shaped the way you live your life (not just the way you think)? What is a critical takeaway for you from our extended study?