

## MESSAGES FROM THE MOUNT – *Putting it into Practice*

Open your Bibles to **Matthew 7:24-29**. Pay close attention as the LORD JESUS addresses the crowd. <sup>24</sup> **"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and PUTS THEM INTO PRACTICE is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.** <sup>25</sup> **The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.** <sup>26</sup> **But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.** <sup>27</sup> **The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."** <sup>28</sup> **When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching,** <sup>29</sup> **because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.**

This is **Kid's Worship 101**. We're talking basic Sunday school material here. Many of you can sing the song without prompts. *"The wise man built his house upon the rock. The wise man built his house upon the rock. The wise man built his house upon the rock and the rains come tumbling down. The rains came down and the flood came up. The rains came down and the flood came up. The rains came down and the flood came up – and the wise man's house stood firm."* We won't sing the rest of it, but I bet you remember what happened to **the foolish man's house**. It went splat! The conclusion? *"So, build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Though, I cannot emphasize enough the need to believe in Jesus, we also need to believe Jesus. We need to hear His words and put them into practice. According to Jesus, it's what **Kingdom seekers** do. They **practice what Jesus preached**. You may think that's a reach, but consider His teaching over the past few weeks – all of which we are to hear and put into practice. **"Seek first the Kingdom."** As we saw a couple weeks ago, it may be **"a narrow path"** - but it's the right one to take, for only it **"leads to life."** So what do such people look like? How are they recognized?

They don't necessarily dress differently or hold to special diets. Remember Jesus says God's kids **"don't worry"** about such stuff. You've heard it said *"practice makes perfect."* Though perfection is what the Law requires and what God desires, we've already concluded that though we're to strive for it, we'll always be in need of the grace and mercy found only in Jesus. To **"be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect"** we must accept a divine grant – not one we've earned or that we promise to pay back – but one we must admit we desperately need and could never earn or pay back.

Speaking of Abraham, the father of our faith, Paul writes, **"The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."** (Romans 4:23-24) But, listen, Jesus is being pretty clear and we need to *"give Him credit"* for doing so.

We are to put into practice His teachings, which naturally equates to a visible demonstration of faith. As James would say in his letter, **“Don’t merely be hearers of the word, but doers also”** and **“You say you have faith...show me.”** (James 1:22; 2:19) **“Unless we practice what Jesus preaches, and then put into practice what we have practiced, it will never be practical.”** It is not wise to let His teaching go in one ear and out the other. In fact, if we ignore what He says, it will be catastrophic.

Those Jesus describes as wise, therefore are those who...

- **Keep the commandments.** All of them.
- **Respect the sanctity of life.** They don’t murder – nor do they assassinate other people’s character.
- **Remain faithful and trustworthy.** They keep their commitments. That’s true in marriage and every other relationship. You can count on them to keep their word.
- **Consistently keep forgiving and loving.** Not just when it suits them or feels like the right thing to do...but all the time.
- **Have the reputation of being “do-gooders.”** Their lives bring praise to their heavenly Father. They excel in good deeds.

Those who heard and believed the forecasts for Hurricane Irma made preparation. Though their homes may have been destroyed, their lives were saved. And that’s the image of the houses in Jesus’ parable. They represent our lives. So stick with me here. If you hear and believe Jesus, you will, too. That does not mean that your physical property will survive every storm, but it does mean that your eternal soul will be spared. Peppered throughout the Sermon on the Mount we find the warning of impending judgment for those who refuse Jesus and His teaching. In spite of what you may hear, our Lord speaks about *“hell-fire and judgment”* more than any other Bible character.

The warning that cuts me most to the heart is found in **Matthew 7:21-14**, where Jesus says: **Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I NEVER KNEW YOU. AWAY FROM ME YOU EVIL DOERS!'** I missed this for years, but what seems clear to me now is that Jesus will not tolerate those who *“appeal to their own works”* as reason to be granted residence in His eternal kingdom. So what is *“the Father’s will”* that we must do? Listen to Jesus in **John 6:38-40**: <sup>38</sup> **For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me.** <sup>39</sup> **And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day.** <sup>40</sup> **For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.** Stay with me now.

It's not that the house we build is necessarily better constructed – though the materials and blueprints Jesus provides are of far superior quality. What makes the house stand isn't "*what we build*" so much as the foundation that we build upon. And that, my friends, is "*having our faith in Jesus*" as our Savior and LORD. Nothing we do will amount to a hill of beans if not motivated by sincere faith in Him.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:11 Paul writes, **<sup>11</sup> No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.** <sup>12</sup> **If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,** <sup>13</sup> **their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.** <sup>14</sup> **If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.** <sup>15</sup> **If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss, but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.**

So, my house is built on the firm foundation of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus – to save me from my sins and for His glory. **My hope is built on nothing less** than Jesus blood and righteousness. How about yours?