

Week 3

The Parable of the Builders, Matthew 7:21-29

A Parable, Video, Scripture & Lesson

Opening Discussion Questions:

- When storms arise, what are the first things you begin to look at for rescue?
 - Bank accounts
 - Physical strength/health
 - Intellect/education
 - Life experience/street smarts
 - Fire power: any source of weaponry or advantage
 - Escapism: run and avoid accountability (fight or flight)
 - Other?

- What is it that you hope for (most) when you find yourself in trouble? _____

The Parable: Matthew 7:21-29, NIV

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² 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 in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

²⁴ "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. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

VIDEO: The Parable of the Builders (10 Minutes)

<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/385273>

- Who are the characters in this story?

- Builder on the solid rock
- Builder on the sand
- Everyone who hears and obeys/accepts God's truth
- Everyone who heard and disobeys/dismisses God's truth
- Jesus: the teacher who amazed his audience "as one who had authority"
- The crowd who was listening to Jesus' teaching

Set the Scene:

- **Main Idea:** The wise person hears and does what Jesus says while foolish people hear what he says and do not obey.
- **Head Change:** To understand that truly knowing Jesus means belonging to him relationally.
- **Heart Change:** To feel released from the shame of our past failures... in order to walk with confidence into the future.
- **Life Change:** To work with diligence at building our lives on the foundation of God's Word.
- **What's the worst weather-related storm you've ever been through?**
 - Maybe it was a hurricane, a tornado, or a serious thunderstorm.
 - Describe how you felt in the midst of this storm?
 - What/Who did you rely upon for safety?
- When danger looms, we run to what we rely on for rescue. That's why people build storm shelters and stock up supplies to prepare for potential disaster. The same is true of our spiritual lives. Our concerns cause us to run to what we believe will rescue us (and that's not always God). Sometimes we look to our own strength. Either way, storms always lead us to what we look to for salvation. (What we look to makes all the difference.)
- **RE-READ:** Matthew 7:21–27. [Study Notes: Jonathan Evans]
- **WHILE YOU WERE WATCHING:**
 - **What does Jonathan call "the fruit that looks good on the outside but is produced by those who do not follow Christ?"**
 - **What is "the rock" that all followers of Jesus are supposed to build their house upon?**
- **DISCUSS:**
 - Matthew 5–7 contains perhaps the most important words uttered throughout the ministry of Jesus. Typically referred to as the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus took the opportunity to lead his listeners through a thorough examination of a life marked by faithfulness to God. In this parable, Jesus is winding down and getting ready to "land the plane." In vs 15, he warns that *true and false prophets are determined by the kind of fruit they produce*, a warning connected to his words in verses 21–23.

- **What fruit do the “many” claim as *evidence of their faith* based on verse 22?**
- **What does Jesus indicate as the true evidence of faith?**
- These verses should startle us. They tell us that it’s possible to perform mighty works in the name of Jesus without ever knowing him as Savior. In other words, it’s possible—quite literally—to mistake the fruit for the tree. Christ is the one who saves, and we experience that salvation by belonging to him, not by performing for him.

1. *Belonging to Jesus: what does it mean to belong to Jesus?*

- Read Luke 10:1–12, 17–20.
- **Who are the seventy-two?**
- What happens just before this passage in Luke 9:1-9? What connections can we make between the 12 and the 72?
- In many ways, Luke 10 concludes like the one we see at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, but the key difference lies in the fact that these seventy-two were disciples of Christ. They were not merely ‘bystanders’ who were eavesdropping on Jesus’ preaching. Rather, the seventy-two had committed their lives to him and were sent out to prepare the way for Jesus.
 - o In other words, Jesus knew them, unlike the “many” in Matthew 7:21.
- **When the seventy-two return, what do they describe as the source of their JOY (10:17)?**
- **How does Jesus respond to all they reported had happened?**
- Like the video says: it’s possible to create “genetically-modified” fruit. We also know from Scripture that it’s possible to do wondrous works by drawing on power from sources other than God (Acts 19:13–16; Rev. 13:13–14). But Jesus makes it clear in these verses that even when great works are truly accomplished in his name, these great works are not to be the primary source of our joy.
- **Based on verse 20, what are Christ followers called to REJOICE in?**
- The greatest miracle any of us could ever witness is having our hearts transformed by the gracious mercy of God. More astounding than any authority we may possess or work we may perform is the fact that, by grace, our names are written in heaven.
- **Reflect on your spiritual life for a moment. What do YOU rejoice in?**
- **What can you do to more fully “rejoice” in *belonging to Christ* in the days ahead?**

Our world measures success by what is visible, but God looks at our hearts. Belonging to him requires an internal transformation before anything can change on the outside. If your name is written in heaven, strive to make that the source of your joy. And if you do not know Jesus today, why not surrender to him?

Stop trying to justify your life with a résumé of performance. Instead, rest in his finished work and rejoice as he leads you into new life.

- The video referred to fruit produced by those who do not belong to Christ as “genetically modified.” It may look good on the outside, but it is ultimately unusable when it comes to the kingdom of God.
 - o **What are some examples of “genetically modified fruit” that you have witnessed in others? What looks good, but may, in fact, have little to do with a genuine faith or sincere desire to serve.**

- **In what ways have you looked to “genetically modified fruit” as evidence of your own salvation? Maybe we’re all a little guilty of bragging on our own efforts instead of living and giving to have God receive all glory?**

- This fruit is unusable because it’s produced to make much of *ourselves*. As we see in verses 21–22, “the many” boast in their works as the evidence of their salvation, but Jesus makes it clear that only those who know him will enter the kingdom of heaven.
 - o **How would you define what it means to “know” Jesus in this most genuine way?**
 - o **How does ‘knowing him’ in this way differentiate from simply ‘knowing *about* him’?**

- Vs. 24 refers to everything he’s taught in his entire Sermon on the Mount.
- Skim over Matthew 5 and notice what Jesus has relayed:
 - o Who is blessed?
 - Everything Jesus lists is completely counter-cultural. Pay attention to who receives these blessings.
 - Sharing your faith
 - Right, wrong/morality, immorality
 - Revenge/Grudges
 - Spiritual disciplines: generosity, prayer, fasting, faith
 - Being with God
 - Anxiety, judgment
 - Falsehoods: prophets, disciples, Gospels

- **Re-read vs 24: what are the two qualities of wisdom?**

- Jesus says that it is not enough to hear his words, to study them closely, to memorize them. True Christ followers hear his words and act on them in obedience. **Take a moment to reflect on your spiritual life. Are you a doer? Simply a hearer? Where are YOU most struggling to obey God’s Word?**

- **How would you like to grow in your obedience to Christ? Be specific.**

- **How can your group help hold you accountable?**
- Like verses 21–23, this parable should startle us. Jonathan pointed out that both the WISE man and the FOOLISH man looked good on the surface, heard the same words of Christ, and lived in the same community. Just like it’s possible to do good works in the name of Jesus without actually knowing him, *it’s also possible to hear his truth and live foolishly never actually knowing him.*
- **Based on this parable, what allows us to know the difference between the wise and foolish man? Which are you most like?**
- In terms of outward appearances, both men probably looked like they “had it all together.” They each had a stable enough situation to build comfortable homes. It’s only when the storms arrive that we’re able to discern between the wise and the foolish.
 - **Describe a storm that tested your spiritual life. What did it reveal about your foundation?**
 - **How would you like to respond differently in the future?**
- Storms are inevitable. We all face them at some point or another. That’s why the foundation we build our lives upon is so crucial. God’s Word keeps us afloat and helps us to wade through the flood waters when they come.
- **What are you doing to build your life on the rock of God’s Word? How practically can you be more intentional about doing so in the days ahead?**
- **As you reflect on past times of difficulty, what would it have looked like for you to more fully cling to the Lord in that time instead of relying on your own strengths?**
- **What can you do to cultivate the kind of dependence upon God Matthew 7 points to so that as future storms come, you will hold onto Christ all the more?**

LAST WORD

- None of us has faced our storms perfectly. Thankfully, God is patient and gracious. He does not look down on those shortcomings as reason to withdraw. Instead, he paid for them by sending his Son to take our place on the cross and to lead us into new life through his resurrection from the dead.
- Think back on those times when you tried to go it alone, but not with shame. Christ paid for your failures. Instead, look back to learn how to better walk *forward*. Identify the places where your spiritual home has been built on a faulty foundation. Ask the Lord to teach you how to rebuild it on the Rock of his Word.
- When you have the right foundation, you don’t need to fear the storms. The rain will fall, the flood will come, the winds will beat against your home, but your house will withstand. Take hope in that truth! Dig deep and build your foundation on the rock of God’s Word. And when the storms arrive, hold onto our loving God who will carry us through to safety.