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The Wise and Foolish Builders
Matthew 7:24-29
July 13th, 2014, Jeff Germo

This is the final sermon in our Sermon on the Mount series. We've been at it since January, and for me it's been an exciting ride to dig into Jesus' keynote message. It is in his message that he gave to the crowds of people sitting at his feet where we find out the kind of life that Jesus calls his disciples to. And everything that he calls us to is opposite to what comes natural to us. Knowing that could leave us feeling hopeless if we have the idea that our natural way of doing things is the best way for us to live. If that's the case we will have a difficult time of letting go of the old way.

Or, it could make us feel hopeful knowing that the way Jesus has called us to is actually the better way, the way to the abundant full life that he promised. It's not the easy way. It's not the way that most people will travel because it is the way that seems to be fraught with obstacles, uphill climbs, and danger, but it is the best way. It is the way to an exciting life for those who dare to follow Jesus in it.

This final sermon is the climax. This is where everything we have looked at in the last six months all comes together and makes sense. So, with that in mind, we are going to do summarize Jesus' sermon and then we will see that it's going to funnel into this last section about what it looks like to really be a disciple of Jesus from 7:24-29.

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One of the things that we are going to look at when we go to Israel is the temple that Herod built two thousand years ago. We are going to go in some tunnels down to the foundation where the largest single hewn stone in the world still lays. It is 45 feet long by 12 feet high by 14 feet deep and weighs 600 tons. That's heavier than two 747 Jumbo jets with all filled with people and their luggage. And somehow Herod was able to engineer a way to move the stone from a rock quarry where it was perfectly carved out to where it has sat for the last two thousand years. There is no foundation in the world that is stronger. And yet, everything on top of it crumbled in 70 AD when the Romans sacked Jerusalem, just like Jesus predicted, because the entire religious system of the day was built on a faulty premise of legalistic piety.

So, before we get to the sermon where Jesus talks about good and bad foundations lets skim through the sermon from the beginning and you can follow along in your Bibles if you want.

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5:3-12: Jesus begins by teaching what we call the beatitudes by saying that **this great life that he's called us to is available to everyone who is willing to follow him**. It doesn't matter how small or insignificant you feel, the offer of a full exciting life in his kingdom is open to you if you are willing to follow.

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5:13-16: He then says that he will use those who follow him to be sources of hope and life to everyone they come in contact with. **We are to be salt and light**. And if you remember, the salt is not table salt, but the kind of salt that is harvested from the Dead Sea. It is actually fertilizer. We are to be all about creating places of flourishing in the world. We are to reflect the light of Jesus like the moon reflects the light of the sun and a people who brings life to a dying world.

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5:17-20: Then, in case anyone misunderstands, he tells his listeners that if they want to be a part of what he is doing on earth they need to have a paradigm shift in their thinking. **The so-called righteousness of the religious is not good enough**. If you are using the Bible to find rules or principles to live by you've missed the point. The way of Jesus is not about religion or rules. **The way of Jesus is about a person. It's about walking with Jesus. He completely satisfied the law** at the cross and those who follow Jesus will be indwelt by his Spirit empowered to live the life he's called us to. He has not left us alone. Life gets exciting when you realize that there is more to it than dead religion and learn to walk with Jesus. And as we said last week, the main point is not to know more about the Bible or more about God, but get to know the God of the Bible more.

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5:21-26: In this section Jesus said that **one of the fruits of following him will be an increased ability to control one's anger**. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit. And anger is a dangerous and evil emotion if we let it get out of control. Anger left to it's own devices without any restraint will lead to murder, which is why Jesus said that it's so important to keep our anger in check. And as a matter of fact, he said if you store up anger in your heart towards someone its like murder, which is why it is vital that we learn to forgive even those who we find hard to love.

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5:27-30: The same principle holds true with lust. Jesus said that it's not just the physical sex outside of marriage that is at issue. He said, if you lust after someone in your heart it's as if you have committed adultery because lust left unrestrained will lead to adultery. Lust is as dangerous as anger. If not restrained it destroys relationships.

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5:31-32: In each of these teaching topics the point is that it is not about law or religion. Each is about the heart. In each one Jesus sticks his probe in our hearts and asks us, "Where is your heart in regard to these issues?" It's not just the externals of what you do. It's also why you do it, which gets to the motive. The same holds true to the issue of divorce. The point Jesus is

making here is that **the husband's main role is to make sure that he creates a place of flourishing and life for his wife**, to make sure that she is cared for and loved. Remember, in those days, women had not value. Husbands could divorce their wives for any reason they wanted. Jesus turned this thinking on its head.

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5:33-37: This is the section that Robin handled on taking vows. Jesus challenges us to do what we say. Keep your commitments. If you say you are going to do something, do it even if it hurts. ***“Let your ‘Yes’ be yes and your ‘No’ be no.*** This is not natural for us. What is natural is self-preservation. We make a promise and if it looks like it is going to hurt us in some way to follow through we renege on the promise. None of the things that Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount come naturally for us. They are all counterintuitive.

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5:38-48: The same holds true for getting revenge and loving our enemies. The natural way when someone hurts us is to want to hurt them back. And, as a matter of fact, we don't just want to hurt them in the way they hurt us. We want them to hurt more. It is not natural for us to love our enemies, but it is the way of Jesus, and it is the way to a joy-filled abundant life.

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6:1-18: This next section about the spiritual disciplines of giving, praying, and fasting also go against our natural inclinations. We are typically quite selfish in our prayers and even in our giving. There are not too many people who give for truly altruistic reasons. We want something in return, whether it's recognition, or a tax receipt, or that good feeling when we give or whatever, the natural way is to give if it will benefit us in some way. And if it is going to hurt us, or if it takes a real sacrifice we just say, "Pass."

It's the same with our prayer life. We most naturally pray when we are in trouble. "Help" is our most natural prayer. And we certainly do need to pray to God for help. He should be our first go-to Person. However, prayer is not just about getting things from God. It is about building a relationship with our Father in heaven who desperately seeks after us so we can get to know him in an intimate way. God is not Santa Clause that we only go to when we have our wish list. He wants us to spend time with him so we get to know him on a minute by minute, day by day basis. Practice the presence of Jesus. Be aware of his presence with you.

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6:19-34: This unnatural way of Jesus holds true for how we deal with our money too. In this next section Jesus focuses our hearts on what is really important - things that are eternal. Our natural way is to gather and accumulate and create a comfortable place for ourselves here, as if we can make a sort of heaven on earth. We try to do whatever we can to make sure that we don't need to trust God. We do that as individuals and we do it as a church. We budget God right out of our lives so that we don't need him.

Jesus says in this section. Don't worry about tomorrow. Today has enough trouble of its own. And as soon as we have one problem taken care of another one comes rushing in to take it's place. So, if we are waiting until all our problems are taken care before we have peace or joy, we will never arrive there. Jesus says, "Don't worry. Just do the next right thing and then trust God." ***“Seek first his kingdom kind of life and his righteousness and all those other things will be added to you as well.”*** This is not natural for us.

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7:1-6: Nor is not judging. We are a people who likes to judge everything. And, we set ourselves up as the standard by which others should be judged. Jesus says that when we do this we look ridiculous. It's like we have a huge log sticking out of our eyes while trying to take a tiny speck out of someone else's. But, it's the natural way, and so it is the way we default to. But, Jesus plainly says, "Just stop it!"

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7:7-11: Because none of this is natural for us what we do is think we can manage our lives on our own. We think we don't need God. And so in this next section Jesus says, "Don't try to handle things on your own. Go to your Father in heaven who desperately loves you and cares about you more than you will ever know. You have not because you ask not. Keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking until you get an answer. Even if the answer is 'No'"

Are you having trouble loving someone who is hard to love. Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. Are you have trouble trusting God to meet your needs? Ask, seek, knock. Then do the next right thing and trust God.

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7:12-14: Adrian did a fantastic job of handling this passage. In verse 12, Jesus said that the essence of everything that is written in God's Word is to treat others the way you would like them to treat you. And in verses 13 and 14 he says this way is not the way that people normally choose. The world is full of people who just do what is good for them without thinking about others. That's the easy way. It's the wide gate. Many walk on that road, but Jesus says it's not the way that leads to life. It's actually they way that leads to a destructive life. And he said, even though the way is open to everyone, very few people choose the way of life, the Jesus way, the way that puts others before themselves. The way of Jesus is not natural for us.

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7:15-23: Jesus then says that the way you can tell a false teacher or prophet who leads people on the wide, easy road, from a true teacher or prophet who leads people on the narrow road is by the fruit that is produced in their lives.

He said that there are many out there who talk the talk, but they are dangerous. They are disguised as sheep but are really ravenous wolves. Not everyone who calls Jesus "Lord" is one of his he says. Be careful who you follow.

That was a whirlwind spin through Jesus' keynote sermon leaving one part which is the climax of the whole thing. And at every turn he tells us to do something that is not natural for us. How did you feel as we walked through that? Did you think, "No problem. I got it cased. I can do that." Or, like me, did you feel like you fell short all the way through, that you have so much to learn, so many ways to grow. I hope it's the latter. Because, in reality, that is where we all are. The life that Jesus has called us to is not natural and it is why we so desperately need him.

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If you grew up in the church you likely learned a song in Sunday school based on this next section. *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
The wise man built his house upon the rock
And the rain came tumbling down*

[18]

*Oh, the rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
And the wise man's house stood firm.*

[19]

*The foolish man built his house upon the sand
The foolish man built his house upon the sand
The foolish man built his house upon the sand
And the rain came tumbling down*

[20]

*Oh, the rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
And the foolish man's house went "splat!"*

[21]

*So, build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
Build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
Build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
And the blessings will come down*

[22]

*Oh, the blessings come down
As your prayers go up
The blessings come down
As your prayers go up
The blessings come down
As your prayer go up
So build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Now, when you ask people what difference between the wise and the foolish builder is everyone answers that the wise man builds his house on Jesus and the foolish one doesn't, which is true, but what does that mean? Let's read what Jesus actually said.

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Matthew 7:24–29 (NLT)

24 "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse

with a mighty crash.”²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,²⁹ for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

What’s the only difference between the wise and foolish builder. There’s only one difference. Both listen to the teaching of Jesus. So, they both have knowledge of him. They both suffer storms, and yet, one of the houses is not able to withstand the storms of life and the other one is. Now, the typical answer we give when we ask what the difference is, is that the wise person built his life on a foundation of Jesus. But, is that what Jesus said?

All the way through *The Sermon on the Mount* Jesus taught how to live the kingdom kind of life. Over and over again, he taught the way his followers who actually followed would live. And then in verse 22 he says not everyone who calls me Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. And now he teaches this parable of the wise and foolish builders and he says the wise person who will be able to withstand the storms of life is the one who doesn’t just hear his words, but actually obeys them in the ways that he just taught in *The Sermon on the Mount*.

What’s he saying? He is saying that it’s easy to get revenge. It’s natural. It’s easy to hurt someone who hurts you. It’s easy to focus our lives on the here and now. It’s natural to live our lives build our empires and storing up our treasures down here on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. It’s easy to judge others unjustly. It’s natural. It’s easy to harbour unforgiveness in our hearts for a wrong done. It’s easy to think that we are so spiritual because we haven’t committed the big sins like murder and adultery, but Jesus is continually sticking his probe deep in our hearts and asking the hard questions. “What’s going on on the inside?”

We can easily take a look at this last parable and think that the answer to the question of what our foundation is is to have more knowledge of doctrine, theology or be studied in the Bible. And so what we do is go to more Bible studies so we can learn more about God and make sure that our theological ducks are in a row. But, it’s interesting that Jesus doesn’t focus on that in any of his teaching. His focus is completely on right relationships. Are you growing in your love of God and people? That’s the question. And the answer, Jesus said, will be in the fruit that is growing in your life.

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Are you growing in your capacity to love others better? Are you becoming more joyful even when the storms are beating against your house? Do you have increased peace even when things are not ideal? Are you becoming more patient and kind and gentle? Are you growing more faithful in all of your relationships. And finally, are you learning to be more self-controlled in every area of your life?

None of us has arrived. But, we should all be growing. Some of us, because of suffering in our childhoods have started with a huge deficit and might have a little further to go, but each of us should be growing in each of these ways. That is the wise person whose life is rightly focused. She has learned to walk with Jesus, trust him and do the right thing. Do the next right thing and trust Jesus. As we learn that we will find increasingly that no matter what storms we have to endure the foundations won’t be knocked out from under us because Jesus is big enough.

And here’s the thing. It’s the good news. We are not on our own. Jesus did not call us to this kind of life and then leave us alone. That was the last thing he said before ascending to heaven.

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Matthew 28:20 (NLT)

²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

If you are one of Christ’s he lives in you and gives you the power to live the life he’s called you to. That is the promise we have. It is the good news that we can stand on.

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I want to close by reading a short passage from Romans. This is true of you if you have trusted Christ.

Romans 8:9–11 (NLT)

⁹ But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.