



river west church

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders

Matthew 7:24-30

Pastor Guy Gray

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Why so Intense?

In our study of the parables we have been exposed to a steady stream of intensity! The parables are not intended to be casual “suggestions for living.” The parables are not “spirituality-lite.” Quite the contrary, the parables consistently hit us with images that shake us. We hear intense contrasts, like those who are “cast out and experience weeping and gnashing of teeth”, versus those “who will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father” (Matthew 13:40-43).

Why so intense? Jesus wants to grab our attention, that's why. Jesus wants us to listen, to truly listen. So He shakes us up with His words and images. But this is much more than just an attention getting device. Jesus REALLY IS talking about ultimate things. This comes as a surprise to us. We live in a world in which we don't focus much on ultimate things. We focus on the immediate. We worry about things of very little consequence. In our culture, we make a big deal about small things and treat ultimate, eternal things as insignificant.

This is why the parables are so intense. We need this. We need a shot of reality from Jesus.

The Closing Words of the Sermon on the Mount

The parable of the wise and foolish builders is the final paragraph in the teaching we call the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). This sermon is amazing. In it we find the Beatitudes, the metaphor of salt and light, the city set upon a hill, the intensification of the 10 commandments, the Lord's prayer, the instruction to “seek first the Kingdom of God”, the warning against worry and the way of trust, and the “golden rule” – “whatever you wish people would do to you, do to them.” It's incredible how rich and powerful this sermon is.

But at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount we find a warning. It comes in three parts (see Matthew 7:13 - 29). The parable of the wise and foolish builders is the final word of the sermon and the final part of the three-fold warning. It is intense, and it is important!

Who is Jesus Talking To?

The context of the Sermon on the Mount is a guide to it's meaning. The context is given in Matthew 5:1-2, “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying...” It is crucial to see that when Jesus teaches the Sermon on the Mount, He is speaking to His disciples. That means Jesus is speaking to those who have already responded to Jesus' invitation to follow Him. They have already experienced the grace of acceptance. They have already been received as forgiven sinners.

This helps us remember that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not teaching us what we have to do to earn God's favor, or receive forgiveness for our sins. Instead, Jesus is teaching those He has called and forgiven by grace. He is teaching them how to live true lives of discipleship in this broken world. This is what the Sermon on the Mount is really all about. And that is our goal! Or is it?

This final parable in the Sermon on the Mount challenges us to examine our hearts. But even more than that, it challenges us to examine our real life practice of Christ's words. In the end it's what we DO that will reveal what is really in our hearts. So let's listen carefully to the parable of the wise and foolish builders this morning. Let's pray that we may be found to be true disciples of Jesus the living Lord.