

BUILD YOUR HOUSE ON THAT!

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 7.21-29
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I. Connecting With One Another

What was the last really great song you heard? Movie you saw? Book you read?

What made it so meaningful to you?

How did you react after you heard, saw or read it? Why did you react the way you did?

II. Introduction to this Study

We have spent this summer “on the mount,” asking how we can better build our lives on the countercultural, revolutionary teaching of Jesus. Last week we encountered unsound *teachers*, this week we encounter unsound *hearers*: we are to not only “hear these words of [Jesus]” but also “put them into practice.”

The end of Jesus’ sermon is, in a sense, the beginning! While the authority of His sermon amazed the crowds, his intention in offering it was not simply amazement – or even education – but obedience!

The same is true today: Jesus calls us to not only love His Word, but apply it to our lives.

III. Study the Text

a. Read Matthew 7.21-23 aloud. Does anything of particular interest jump out to you? Is there anything particularly troubling? Confusing?

b. What do you think of when you hear someone use the word “Lord”?

John Stott notes four things about use of “Lord, Lord” in the first century context:

1. It’s polite: “Lord” was the most respectful and courteous way of referring to Jesus
2. It’s orthodox: “Lord” was a divine title, used by Christians to proclaim that Jesus was God in the flesh as well as to declare their worship of Jesus instead of the Roman Caesar
3. It’s enthusiastic: Repeating “Lord” twice infers enthusiastic zeal and devotion to Jesus
4. It’s a public confession: This proclamation is done in the presence of others, even alongside supernatural healings in Jesus’ name!

So, then, why do you think Jesus calls them “evildoers”? If they are doing such wonderful things in their ministries, how could they be considered *evil*!?

Is it possible that their lives and ministries, though constantly referring to Jesus, weren’t based on Jesus?

c. Read James 2.14-26 (note especially verse 18). Do James’ words help you understand what Jesus is getting at in Matthew 7.21-23? Why or why not?

Do you think this passage in James contradicts the doctrine of “justification by faith alone”? (see, for instance, Romans 10.9-12) Why or why not?

- d. Read Matthew 7.24-27. How do you understand these verses? How have you heard them used in the church? In children’s songs? Hymns?
- e. “Therefore” is a key word in this passage (and, really, all of Scripture!). This word – and others like it – connects what has come before in Jesus’ message to what He now says. How much of His previous message do you think He’s trying to connect this “therefore” with?
- f. Though it’s sometimes missed, notice that both the “wise” and “foolish” hear the words of Jesus; the difference between them is only whether they act upon them. Scan chapter 7 again, counting how many specific things the follower of Jesus is called to do or not to do.

To get the full perspective of the life Jesus is calling us to, scan chapters 5-7!

- g. Notice also that Jesus makes no distinction between the quality of the two houses. The only difference is what they’re built *on*. What, if any, significance does this have in the overall meaning of Jesus’ metaphor?
- h. Read Isaiah 28.1-19, paying special attention to verses 14-19. How does Isaiah refer to their religious life? How does an eye opening passage like this help us understand Jesus’ words in Matthew 7.24-27?

Do you see the prophecy in Isaiah 28 that Jesus fulfills in Matthew 7?

If you’re interested, notice how this theme is also found in Psalm 118.15-27, Mark 12.1-12, Acts 4.1-12, Ephesians 2.11-22 and 1st Peter 2.1-10.

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Are there parts of Jesus’ sermon you find particularly difficult to live out? What are they? Why do they seem difficult to you?
How could you be encouraged to anoint Jesus as Lord over those parts of your life as well?
- b. Have there been times in the past you merely said, “Lord, Lord” instead of seeking to live the life Jesus intended? Have you confessed that to God?
- c. We talk a lot about knowing Jesus – and rightly so! In these words, however, we see the importance of Jesus knowing *us* as well. How should that reframe our understanding of discipleship?
- d. What things does our culture encourage us to build our lives upon? What does it consider the teachings of Jesus – sand or rock?
- e. How could we, as a community, be encouraged to not only *hear* the words of Jesus, but *do* them as well?

V. Pray

Spend some time in prayer, lifting up the various ministries and programs of our church community, that in and through them we would build our lives on the Rock of Christ.