

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes December 6, 2006

Matthew 7:24-29

- 24: "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them
will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock;
25: and the rain fell, and the floods came,
 and the winds blew and beat upon that house,
 but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.
26: And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them
will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand;
27: and the rain fell, and the floods came,
 and the winds blew and beat against that house,
 and it fell; and great was the fall of it."
- 28: And when Jesus finished these sayings,
the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
29: for he taught them as one who had authority,
 and not as their scribes.

Discussion Notes:

Introduction:

- How do you respond when you hear the words of Jesus, especially if He is calling you to either do something you'd rather not do or stop doing something you like to do? And for that matter, today in the twenty-first century, how do you know if and when you are hearing the words of Jesus? Is it sufficient to merely read the Bible to hear Jesus? When people wear a *WWJD?* Bracelet and try to guide their lives by the question, "What Would Jesus DO?", this presumes that they are hearing what Jesus says and then trying to do it? So how can you be sure you are hearing Him correctly, and is this important?
- This is what we will discuss today on **Deep In Scripture**.

- With Today's passage we conclude the Sermon on the Mount. (read text...)
- As with the rest of the Sermon, many biblical scholars view this as a separate saying...
 - One question that arises with this assumption: Why, given the wealth of stories from the life of Christ did Matthew / Luke include this story? What needs of the early Church community were addressed in this story?
- But this parable makes perfect sense as the closing illustration for his sermon.
 - Jesus has delivered his core foundation teaching on discipleship.
 - Now how will they respond?

1: The parable is told in poetic parallel form: for memory and for clarity:

- Everything is basically identical word for word, except for the key points of his argument:
 - Hearing and doing vs. hearing and not doing;
 - A wise vs. a foolish man;
 - Rock vs. sand;
 - The house did not fall vs. it fell.
- The only break from the poetry is the concluding statements:

- 1st: because it had been founded on the rock;
- 2nd: He assumes the obvious conclusion: because it had been founded on sand, and instead offers a powerful final word to the story & his sermon:
"And great was the fall of it!"
- Then Jesus went silent! Leaving his audience in awe & walked down the mountain (8:1).

2: Jesus emphasizes the importance of hearing and doing:

- A common, continuous plea throughout Scripture & the Early Church:

Deuteronomy 31:12, "Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may **hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law.**"

Jeremiah 11: 6, "And the LORD said to me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: **Hear the words of this covenant and do them.**"

Ezekiel 33:30-32, "As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, 'Come, and hear what the word is that comes forth from the LORD.' And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and **they hear what you say but they will not do it;** for with their lips they show much love, but their heart is set on their gain. And, lo, you are to them like one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they **hear what you say, but they will not do it.**"

Luke 8: 19-21, "Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.' But he said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who **hear the word of God and do it.**'

John 8: 43-47, "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because **you cannot bear to hear my word.** You are of your father the devil, and **your will is to do** your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? **He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.**"

Philippians 4:19, "**What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do;** and the God of peace will be with you."

James 1:21-25, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only,** deceiving yourselves. For if any one is a **hearer of the word and not a doer,** he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, **he shall be blessed in his doing.**"

- Therefore, being present at the Sermon (hearing it) was not enough!
- When he descends, and they go back to their lives, what will they do?

3: The Parable:

- Rhetorical to his rural audience, whereas today someone else builds our homes;
- The house:
 - Their entire lives were centered around their home & property;
Whereas today our futures are in our investments!
 - How they build home determined the safety / security of family.

- ∴, this parable easily transferred to image of their entire lives...
- Rock vs. sand:
 - Their desert environment made this vividly clear ... they've seen this!
 - ∴, How dependable was the foundation of their lives?
- Rain, floods, wind
 - Common enough threats...not surprise attacks!
 - ∴, Can't say, "I didn't know!"
- Did not fall vs fell!
 - Again, their houses/ towns were built on ruins! They knew this image!
 - ∴, how secure was their future?
- Great was the fall of it!
 - They may even know people who had been injured in just such a fall.
 - ∴, this was a matter of life & death; eternal blessedness or damnation.

4: The immediate response of the crowd:

28: *And when Jesus finished these sayings,
the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
29: for he taught them as one who had authority,
and not as their scribes.*

- Astonished? Why, because of his wisdom? Creativity? Charismatic personality? Delivery?
- No, his authority:
 - Unlike the scribes, who based the authority of their teaching on authority of others, Jesus spoke upon His own authority;
 - They were to hear & obey what he said,
 - NOT because he chose to quote the authorities **they** trusted in and quoted them well,
 - But because they were to believe in Him,
 - Trust and follow HIM.
 - This would be the offence that would lead to the cross!

5: How has this been understood?

- The most significant use of this imagery: Mt 16:17-18
"And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."
- Building the house upon a firm foundation became an image of the Church:
 - When Luke related this story, he added the word "foundation" (Lk 6:48-9)
- St. Paul especially used this imagery:
 - 1 Cor 3:10-13,
*"According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. **For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.** Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw -- each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done."*
 - Ephesians 2:19-22,
*"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built **upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."*
 - Revelation 21:14,
And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

6: The Story of the Three Little Pigs

- A common nursery rhyme with no known origin! So why was this written? Purpose?
- Many nursery rhymes were written with religious / theological purposes.
- **The Twelve Days of Christmas: A Catholic Catechism for children under persecution!**
 - 1 Partridge = Jesus*
 - 2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments*
 - 3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity, the Theological Virtues*
 - 4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists*
 - 5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which gives the history of man's fall from grace.*
 - 6 Geese A-laying = the six days of creation*
 - 7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments*
 - 8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes*
 - 9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit*
 - 10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments*
 - 11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles*
 - 12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed*
- **The Three Pigs:**
 - The big Bad Wolf = the devil!
 - The three little pigs = you & I off on our own;
 - Houses of straw & twigs = false foundations!
 - House of bricks = the Church!

7: How, then, do we hear the word of Jesus today so we can do it?

- The Bible!
 - Yes, but the Bible alone? What's wrong with WWJD?
- What did Jesus say about this? How did He say we would continue to hear His word?
 - Luke 10:16,
"He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."
 - John 14:26,
"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."