

Readings

Scripture

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on 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 was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”

- Matthew 7:21-29 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

Jesus is not an ordinary prophet who says, “Thus says the Lord!” Rather, he speaks in the first person and claims that his teaching fulfills the Old Testament; that he determines who enters the messianic kingdom; that as the Divine Judge he pronounces banishment; that the true heirs of the kingdom would be persecuted for their allegiance to him; and that he alone fully knows the will of his Father... Jesus’ authority is unique, and the crowds recognized it even if they did not always understand it.

- Donald A. Carson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (p. 195-196)

Here is the crucial question – has Jesus known us or not? First came the division between Church and world, then the division within the Church, and then the final division on the last day. There is nothing left for us to cling to, not even our confession or our obedience. There is only his word: “I have known thee,” which is his eternal word and call. The end of the Sermon on the Mount echoes the beginning. The word of the last judgment is foreshadowed in the call to discipleship. But from the beginning to end it is always his word and his call, his alone. If we follow Christ, cling to his word, and let everything else go, if will see us through the day of judgment. His word is his grace.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (p. 195)

Sermon Outline

His Word is His Grace
Matthew 7:21-29

And His Disciples Came to Him
Brad Anderson

There is an astonishing grace encountered by anyone who comes to Jesus...
(Matthew 5:1, 7:28)

As we come to Jesus, that astonishing grace defines us in three consistent ways:

We are defined by the grace of being known by Jesus... (Matthew 7:21-23)

We are defined by the grace of a solid foundation in Jesus... (Matthew 7:24-27)

We are defined by the grace of living under the authority of Jesus...
(Matthew 7:28-29)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- When exploring a new area and seeing a fork in the road, are you more likely to follow the one that most other cars drive down, go the other way, or always trust your GPS route? Why?
- When Jesus describes the point of decision between true and false prophets, sand and solid rock, narrow ways and wide roads, what is most challenging about these options? Do you typically recognize them at the point of decision?
- What was the fault of those ultimately banished as “evildoers”? If the ability to prophesy, drive out demons, and perform miracles is not what Jesus means by doing the will of the Father, what is?
- How do the similarities and differences between the two house builders reflect the people who heard Jesus? What kind of commitment is Jesus calling for here? What is the alternative?
- How would you sum up the attitudes Jesus is encouraging in Matthew 7? Why are these required for “kingdom people”?
- Considering the sermon as a whole, is your foundation on solid rock? Or on sand, but with a nice view? What would you have to tear down in order to shore up that foundation?
- Looking back over Matthew 5-7, what teachings of Jesus are most astonishing? What does it mean that Jesus’ teaching was filled with authority? Can you think of other passages in Matthew that might help shape your answer? Consider Matthew 8:1-17.