

**2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters**  
**Sermon Series - Focus on Truth**  
**Sermon Title - The Wise and Foolish Builders**  
**Sermon Text - Matthew 7:24-27**  
**Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry**

### **Introduction**

Thank you, praise band! And thanks for letting me sit in with you last week! I have a renewed appreciation for the amount of hard work you put in every week! You lead us well! Thank You! Man, I love that song we just sang! "Christ is my firm foundation, The rock on which I stand, When everything around me is shaken, I've never been more glad that I put my faith in Jesus!" When I look back on my life, while I've certainly faced some storms, I've seen Jesus, the rock on which I stand, help me weather every storm! He's so faithful! We just had the 18th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. God got our church through that storm. And we need to be praying for our brothers and sisters in Florida as they are now picking up the pieces from the hurricane they faced the other day! Many of us in this room know what it's like to go through that kind of devastation! It can feel hopeless at the moment as with any kind of storm in life. Sometimes suck the life right out of you but Jesus will breathe the life right back into you if you will let Him! And as we're going to see today that none of us are exempt from storms in life, and some in this room have had some very recent storms, but if we build on the foundation of Jesus, while storms are no fun, we can survive the storms and not just survive but thrive! Let's pray and ask God to teach us how! Pray!

Let's jump right into our text for today found in Matthew 7:24-27 as we focus on this final truth of Jesus' sermon on the mount! Jesus said...

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matthew 7:25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Matthew 7:26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

Matthew 7:27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Both home builders, the wise and the foolish faced the storm! You see the rains are going to fall, the streams are going to rise, the winds will blow, and the winds will beat against you whether you are a believer or a non-believer! The difference is survivability! In this text Jesus let His hearers know that they must not only hear His Words, but they must put them into practice if they hope to build a life that withstands the storms of this world! Through the Bible, God has been gracious to allow us to hear the same message Jesus preached to His disciples and those who gathered around to listen to His sermon on the mount that day! So we need to focus on this truth...We must not only hear the words of Jesus, but we must put them into practice if we are to

build a life that will withstand the storms of this world! The only thing I'm going to say about the foolish builder is what Jesus said happened to his house...

Matthew 7:27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

We're going to focus on the actions you must take in order to become a wise builder of life! You must listen to what Jesus taught! You must hear it with your ears, your intellect, and your eyes! I'll explain these three things in just a minute, but I want us to do a quick recap of Jesus' sermon. Obviously I can't go into detail on everything we've talked about the last 26 weeks! Yes that's how many messages we've had on Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount! Jesus ends His sermon by saying...

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

What words is He talking about? While I'm sure Jesus is talking about God's Word in Scripture as a whole, I think He is specifically referring to what He had just preached! So let me just give you a little synopsis of the past 26 weeks...

We are to hear and put into practice what Jesus said about realizing our spiritual poverty, about our being meek, being hungry and thirsty for righteousness, being merciful, being pure in heart, being peacemakers, blessing those who persecute us, being the salt and light of the earth, practicing the commands of God, not being angry at others, not committing adultery, not even in the heart, being committed in our marriages, and our oaths and promises, which means having integrity. Giving sacrificially to others, loving even our enemies, caring for the needy, praying to our Father who art in heaven, but Who also lives in our hearts by way of The Holy Spirit! Forgiving those who sin against us, being willing to fast at times in order to pursue a more important spiritual goal, keeping our most important treasures stored in heaven, not worrying, but trusting God, not judging others! Asking, seeking, and knocking on God's door in prayer, for the right reasons! Walking through the narrow gate and staying on the narrow road of God's will, watching out for false prophets, and so becoming wise builders in this life! It's only logical that before we can become a wise builder in this life we must first take some action steps, big and small!

### **Action Step #1 - Listen**

So how do we take the action step of listening to the words of Jesus? First you need to...

#### **Hear with your ears!**

Jesus said many times, "He who has ears to hear let him hear!" So one question for you to ask is this: Do I have spiritual ears? What is that? It would be a spiritual sensitivity to the things of God. Listen to what Jesus said in John 6:63...

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.

And for a person to have that spiritual sensitivity, they must allow The Holy Spirit to soften and prepare their hearts to receive the Word! Jesus said this about some of the people in the crowds of His day and I think it applies to many in our world today...

Matthew 13:14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “ ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

Matthew 13:15 For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’

They had hard hearts and refused to allow The Holy Spirit to soften them. Some were full of judgemental self-righteousness, and others full of wickedness and worldliness that caused their hearts to become unreceptive to the “still small voice” of God’s Spirit speaking to them and calling out to them. Such a sad state to be in! However, Jesus told His disciples this...

Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

Man, I want Jesus to be able to say to me that my eyes and ears are blessed because they see and listen! Now I have a question for us: How do we expect to hear God’s Word if we never put ourselves in places to hear by getting alone with God? Or if we never take the time to hear by making room in our schedules, and if we never turn off the noise makers so we can hear by limiting distractions? In other words, we must be intentional about hearing God speak! And for this to happen we need to desire and seek to be in His presence. We need to...

### **A. Have a Place to Hear (get alone with God)**

The Psalmist put it this way...

Psalm 27:4 One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Psalm 27:5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

Boy does that not echo what Jesus said? If you seek to be in the presence of God so you can gaze on His beauty and hear His voice, when the storms come, and come they will, you will be sheltered in His sacred tent, set high upon a rock. And here’s the thing, you typically wouldn’t want to be in a tent in a storm, but if it is the sacred tent of Almighty God, you’ll be fine! So if you want to build a life that can withstand the storms of life, put yourself in a place to hear God’s voice! Have a place where you can be in God’s presence! Maybe this is somewhere in your

house or somewhere you go for a walk, or maybe listening to your Bible app on your commute to work. But don't forget to have a place where you gather with others in corporate worship and listening to God's voice, like right here! But not only do we need to have a place we need to...

## **B. Have a Time to Hear (fix your schedule)**

Jesus took the time to spend with His Heavenly Father. His preferred time was in the morning...

Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Regardless of whether you take time in the morning, mid-day, evening or late at night, you must set aside time if you want to hear from God! We need to be aware of God's presence at all times, but that "all the time" awareness is developed in our alone time with God! The Psalmist said it beautifully...

Psalm 139:7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

Psalm 139:8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

Psalm 139:9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

Psalm 139:10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

And in order to have a place and time we need to...

## **C. Have the Focus to Hear (limit distractions)**

You may have to have someone babysit your technology, phones, I watch, computer, or whatever it is that will keep you from concentrating on hearing God's Word! My son gave me a birthday card back when he was a kid, and it had a picture of a kid with headphones on playing air guitar. It read: "Dad, I've always listened to your good advice... Well, maybe 'listen' isn't quite the right word. I've always 'heard' your good advice. I mean, I saw your lips move...I could tell you were saying something, but with headphones or the T.V. on, it was kinda hard to make out your actual words...But thanks anyway, Dad and have a happy birthday." Sounds like us and our Heavenly Father sometimes! We live such distracted lives with something always going and it's not just a T.V. screen anymore, it's a really big screen T.V. And think about it! I know this is going to make me seem old, but our telephones now have screens, our typewriters have screens, called computers, our tablets now have a screen, our car dash has a screen, some people's refrigerators even have screens and they're still trying to make a screen you wear on your face so you can live in a virtual world! Sometimes it's hard to hear God's Word with all of that going on. Let me tell you one of my little secrets to not let technology drown out God's voice. I moved my Bible App right beside my Google News Feed App. So when I start to look at my Google News Feed first thing in the morning, I'm reminded that I need to look at God's Good News Feed in the Bible first! You have to figure out ways to outsmart the smart phone when it comes to distractions. Here's what God's Word has to say about this...

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Isaiah 26:4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.

Minds that are steadfast, and focused, allow you to also...

### **Hear with your intellect!**

What in the world am I talking about? You need to not just hear with your ears, you need to meditate, contemplate, evaluate, investigate, illustrate, and reiterate the Word of God with your thoughts! This allows your mind to absorb the truths of God's Word and makes them a part of your life! This is a major part of building upon the foundation of a rock! And for us to hear with our intellect we also need to have a place, a time and a focus! The Psalmist said...

Psalm 19:14 May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

This should include memorization of God's Word so that you can hear God's Word 24/7 in any situation you might find yourself in! The Psalmist said...

Psalm 119:10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

And if you're like me, and memorization is hard, just work on it and while you might not remember every single word, at least you will remember the basic principle of a passage and The Holy Spirit will bring that principle back to your mind when you need it most. Jesus said this to His disciples...

John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

And you might remember that I said this...

### **Hear with your eyes!**

And what am I talking about? I'm talking about putting yourself in places and situations to learn from others! Taking the time to learn from others and having the focus to pay attention to the lessons you can learn from spiritual mentors! A Godly family member, or brothers or sisters in Christ who are genuine and faithful followers of Christ! And you can also see with the eyes of your mind pictures of the actions of Jesus in the stories of the Gospels. It was once said...

"I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day!" Not that you shouldn't listen to sermons, but it's always good when you can see someone practicing what they preach! And for those of

us who are preachers and teachers, small group leaders, ministry leaders, Christian parents and outspoken followers of Jesus, it's so important that our actions match our words. Paul told the church at Corinth to...

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

And this takes us to our last major point of the message today...

## **Action Step #2 - Practice**

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matthew 7:25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

## **The Principle of Practice**

Why does He say put them into practice? Because the principles of Jesus are not things you do one time and then you're golden! In fact the golden rule is something you are to do every single day of your life! Remember this part of Jesus' sermon...

Matthew 7:12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

We must put the words, the wisdom, the instructions of Jesus into practice daily! Living by Jesus' Word, putting it into practice is not a one and done, it is a daily activity, a daily decision, a daily commitment! We daily grow to be a little more like Jesus! I wrote a song on my third album called so far to grow, which you can hear on my personal website, [larrymcewen.com](http://larrymcewen.com). Here's what it says...

"I've got so far to grow in my quest to be like Jesus, every day's a learning day as I seek to know how He would live and what He would do, I've got so far to grow as I onward go! Entered this life by grace and grace alone and that same ole grace is gonna one day lead me home, but in the meantime as through this world I trod, I want others to see Jesus and learn to love our God and be more like Him so they can say...I've got so far to grow in my quest to be like Jesus, everyday's a learning day as I seek to know, how He would live and what He would do, I've got so far to grow as I onward go!"

This is not rocket science, but here's the deal: When it comes to putting the words of Jesus into practice, you can't do it if you don't know it, but if you know it but don't do it, it's useless! James, the brother of Jesus said...

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James was not trying to say that we are saved by our works, rather, he was saying that if you hear the gospel message of Jesus but do not take action and respond, then faith is dead. When it comes to building on the foundation of Jesus, which we will have a whole sermon on in a few weeks, building on the foundation of Jesus it's not just believing about Jesus but believing in Jesus! It's one thing to believe there's a God, but it's another thing to put your faith and trust in God. You've heard me say it before, but faith is believing God can and trust is believing God will! Faith is believing God can change your life and trust is letting God change your life. Faith is believing God knows what's best for your life, trust is letting God do what's best for your life! And this will result in putting the words of Jesus into practice! You see, it is about doing God's will, as Andrew mentioned last week. And God's will is twofold. He wants you to let Him save your soul, which is salvation, and then He wants you to let Him save your life, which is sanctification! You see we don't work for our salvation, but God's Word says this...

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

In other words, we allow God to apply the power of salvation not only to our souls for heaven, but to our lives in this world! We don't work for our salvation but we work it out as we put into practice the truth that Jesus taught us! You see, without Jesus our lives here on earth lack eternal purpose. We live only for the here and now. However, with Jesus we live for more than just the pleasures of this world. We have an eye towards eternity, but not only to eternity! We have an eye and a heart for the next generation. What are we teaching those who will follow in our footsteps? Are we teaching them to live only for themselves, for the things of this world and only for today, or are we teaching them to think about their children and grandchildren who will inherit, not only their stuff, but will inherit their priorities, their values, or lack thereof, their morals, their standards, and potentially their faith, that is if they have faith! Can you see how important this last point of Jesus' message is? It's about the life we are building not only for ourselves but for our children and for generations to come. What are we building our lives on? Are we building on the solid rock principles of Jesus or are we building on the loose and shifting sands of this world! Folks, it really is so important that we think about these things. James, the brother of Jesus also said this...

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror

James 1:24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

James 1:25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

## **The Process of Practice**

If you just hear but don't do, something is wrong! It's a wonderful thing when a person allows Jesus to save their soul for heaven, but what a wonderful and blessed thing it is when that person also allows Jesus to begin the process of sanctification to save and change their life here on earth for the better. Allowing Jesus to add purpose, meaning, and value to your life that goes way beyond the acquisition of things and treasures in this world is simply awesome! This change in life is a process and is based on putting into practice the things we've heard Jesus say.

### **Process #1 - Accept Jesus**

It all starts by placing your faith in Jesus Christ for your salvation by admitting you're a sinner in need of a Savior, believing Jesus died on the cross to be your Savior and calling upon His name! When you do, your sins are gloriously forgiven and though you will not be sinless and perfect, you will have a changed heart that desires to do better, to follow Jesus and to become more like Jesus! And this change of heart will in turn lead to this...

### **Process #2 - Attitude Change**

Paul said this...

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, Philippians 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Wow, that's a whole sermon right there in those two verses! Think about this: Having the same mind or attitude as Jesus! Is that even possible? Well Paul also said this...

Philippians 4:13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Let's hear with our intellect, by thinking about this example from Jesus' life when He was betrayed by Judas.

Matthew 26:50 Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

Putting the words of Jesus into practice is not an easy thing. When you've been betrayed by someone, could you still call them "friend?" Jesus did! There's only one way to be like Jesus and be able to put into practice His words and His actions. Paul tells us how to be "like-minded" as Jesus. He said...

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,  
Philippians 2:4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.



Philippians 2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Think about that. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Remember, Jesus had even told us to love our enemies, not simply tolerate them! I know, you might be thinking, "Pastor Larry, you could have just skipped over that part!" Sorry, I couldn't! So let me encourage you with this...

His presence will not only give us the strength to be firm in our convictions, standing on what we believe and on our principles, but will cause us to have a gentle spirit in the way we deal with people even when they've hurt us. Jesus said the wise build on His words and remember that he said...

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

And He said...

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

Matthew 5:44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 5:45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven...

And this kind of attitude change leads us to...

### **Process #3 - Action Change**

When you accept Jesus as your Savior, He begins the process of helping you practice the words of Jesus literally! To live them! To do them! To walk them! When Paul said this...

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we live by faith, not by sight.

Paul was not saying that we simply have faith and no works. Read it again...

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we live by faith, not by sight.

To live is to walk, to do, to be, to become. You live by doing things as you are doing life. The question is: What are you doing? What are you doing with your life? Life is not static, it is ever moving. Life is action! Life is doing! Life is practicing! What are you practicing with your life? What are you accomplishing with your life? God has some great plans for your life, but you have to be listening to His Words, His principles, His desires, His will for your life! We do this by building our lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ the solid rock and His words, instead of the ever changing, shifting, and sinking sands of this world? If you're thinking it's too late for me, think again! It's never too late to get your life on the solid rock. If you have heard the Words of Jesus when He said...

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

...if you've heard those words and believed, then salvation is yours. The question now is whether or not you will allow Jesus to begin the process of sanctification in your life as you put into practice the words of Jesus, the principles of Jesus, and the actions of Jesus. Will this be easy? Nope, but oh so very rewarding! The reason it is not easy is not that Jesus makes it hard on you because He doesn't! The world does. The enemy of your soul, Satan, will fight you every step of the way! Peter reminded us of this...

1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

1 Peter 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

1 Peter 5:11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

So don't be dismayed, Jesus will be there to help you fight the battles and to carry the weight this old world will put on your shoulders! Jesus said this...

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Thank God His yoke is easy and His burden is light! And Thank God that He will give us rest when we need it and as Peter said, God will restore us, make us strong, firm and steadfast! Ever have one of those weeks where it seems Satan just won't stop? He throws punch after punch! And sometimes you just feel weak, discouraged, worn out! This past week was one of those kinds of weeks for me. And on one of those difficult days I read this devotional from Oswald Chambers based on the words of Jesus found in John 11:40...

John 11:40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

Oswald Chambers said...

"Every time you venture out in the life of faith, you will find something in your common-sense circumstances that flatly contradicts your faith. Common sense is not faith, and faith is not common sense; they stand in the relation of the natural and the spiritual. Can you trust Jesus Christ where your common sense cannot trust Him? Can you venture heroically on Jesus Christ's statements when the facts of your common-sense life shout - "It's a lie?" On the mount it is easy to say - 'Oh, yes, I believe God can do it'; but you have to come down into the demon-possessed valley and meet with facts that laugh ironically at the whole of your

mount-of-transfiguration belief. Every time my programme of belief is clear to my own mind, I come across something that contradicts it. Let me say I believe God will supply all my need, and then let me run dry, with no outlook, and see whether I will go through the trial of faith, or whether I will sink back to something lower. Faith must be tested, because it can be turned into a personal possession only through conflict. What is your faith up against just now? The test will either prove that your faith is right, or it will kill it. "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." The final thing is confidence in Jesus. Believe steadfastly on Him and all you come up against will develop your faith. There is continual testing in the life of faith, and the last great test is death. May God keep us in fighting trim! Faith is unutterable trust in God, trust which never dreams that He will not stand by!"

Jesus said it best...

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matthew 7:25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Let's Pray!