



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS



The Final Exam

Tim Badal | May 18, 2014 | Matthew 7:24-29

The Upside-down Kingdom Series, Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount, Part 30

As we turn to Matthew 7 for the end of our series, let's take stock of what we've learned and where we've been. Jesus has shown us that He is the Master Teacher and the One Who knows how to get to the heart of the matter. He has shown that He's never afraid to deal with difficult subjects or controversial themes but that He does so while speaking absolute truth balanced with absolute grace.

Like every good teacher, Jesus recognizes that as He comes to the end of His lesson it is important to finish strong. Any preaching class or speech class will tell you that your conclusion is one of the most important parts of your sermon or speech. In our passage, Jesus shows us how the Master does it well. He finishes by using a story that's easy enough for a child to remember and understand. He uses that story to hammer home the importance of putting into practice everything we have learned in the 30 weeks of this series. Let's read God's Word. Let's look at the story Jesus tells and glean some truths from it. Matthew 7:24-29 says:

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. ²⁵And 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. ²⁶And 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. ²⁷And 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.”

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

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father God, we come before You and thank You for Your Word, for the opportunity to read it in public, for the opportunity to hear it read and the opportunity for it to sink into our hearts and minds. As we open Your Word and study from it I pray that You would allow us to glean truth—some are simple enough for a child to understand and others take real examination on our part. We have to look at the very essence of our lives and for what we are living. I pray that You will speak through me and that Your people will be blessed as a result of our time together. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

It's the middle of May—time for the teachers to remind our students to prepare for finals. Those dreaded moments are coming when students will be tested on everything they have learned since January. One test or one project will determine the vast majority of their grade. Some students approach finals with great dread. They spend all kinds of time and energy studying the truths they've learned throughout the semester in that particular class. Many of them have one last opportunity to determine whether they will pass or fail the class. So finals bring with them a lot of stress and anxiety.

As we come to the last part of the Sermon on the Mount I want you to view this last passage like Jesus' final examination for us. This is where Jesus asks the same questions that every professor and teacher is asking right now, "Students, have you been listening? Have you heard the things that I've taught?" As important as algebra, English and the social sciences are, what Jesus has been teaching us is of far greater importance. Jesus wants to know—both His original audience in Matthew 7 and us today—"Have you been listening?"

Have you been hearing the words coming from Jesus' mouth? Have you taken them to heart? Have you done some "homework" regarding the things Jesus has told us to look at deeper? Have you taken time to explore whether or not you have passed the test?

As we've studied this series I've heard from many of you who have said, "I'm not sure I'm passing the class right now." I'm so thankful that even though we fail, miss assignments, get incompletes or even get an F at times in the Christian life, Jesus' grace and mercy comes through in our hour of need. Jesus is now bringing us to the final examination. After all these weeks together Jesus places a test before us. Hopefully we've been studying for it.

This test has three questions. That doesn't sound very difficult. But in these three questions we'll examine ourselves and tell the world whether or not we have passed the test of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Here are three vital questions that we need to answer:

To Whom Are You Listening?

On What Are You Laying Your Foundation?

What About Your Life Must Change?

1. To Whom Are You Listening?

At the end of Jesus' sermon He asks us the question, "Have you been listening?" Even more than that, He asks, "Are you listening to Me or are you listening to someone else?"

As we talked about earlier in this series we don't know if this Sermon on the Mount was a series of sermons preached over a period of time or one very long and drawn-out sermon. I like the idea of it being one long sermon. Homiletic professors and scholars say that this sermon would have been hours long if it was given all at once. I like that; it tells me that I'm doing a good thing by preaching long sermons. You are getting off easy by listening to what you call "Tim's long sermons."

Matthew doesn't tell us whether this is a series of sermons or one sermon. I believe it seems to be one long sermon. We know that Jesus preached some long sermons. Jesus preached so long that people got very hungry. So if they were there long enough to get hungry then you have to imagine He had been speaking for hours.

Not only that but scholars believe we don't have all of what Jesus spoke. Whether the Sermon on the Mount was one long sermon or several smaller ones, we only have the CliffsNotes version. Even though we only have the CliffsNotes, the Bible makes it clear that the things written in God's Word are there so that we might believe, have faith and trust in Jesus Christ. So we have all that we need but we also recognize that Matthew probably didn't give us everything.

It has taken us more than 30 hours to examine this sermon as a church. Add to that the small group discussions and that's another 30 hours. Then let's say you have all taken an hour each week to work on your small group material—that's another 30 hours. That's a total of roughly 90 hours spent on the Sermon on the Mount and we haven't even scratched the surface. What Jesus articulates is so much more than what we've been able to go through. That's what I love about the Scriptures: even though we spent a lot of time—30 weeks on three chapters of Scripture going a couple verses at a time—studying it we still haven't plumbed the depths of the great teachings before us.

We also need to understand that Jesus was teaching in a time and place where He wasn't the only voice. He had competition. There were many other voices in Jesus' day proclaiming the way to live.

Some of Jesus' greatest enemies were the chief priests and Pharisees. These men were preaching their brand of law and works-based salvation saying, "If you just follow our laws, rules and regulations exactly then you can have eternal life with God." They had drawn a large number of people who simply put on the duty hat and followed the prescribed rules.

During Jesus' time the Greek philosophers were at the height of their popularity. They proclaimed the idea of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment as the highest form of human existence.

So there were many scholars in Jesus' day proclaiming something very different from Jesus. Each of these groups also garnered a group of followers for themselves.

There was still another group of people not only listening to Jesus' message but also to their own leaders: the political zealots. These individuals were more focused on reformation of the government and throwing off the tyranny of Rome. They were not asking about what is needed for regeneration of the heart.

Just as in Jesus' day, Jesus isn't the only voice speaking today. We are receiving messages from all sorts of people. If you turn on the TV you will find myriads of messages coming your way. So many people have a new idea here or a new direction there. Jesus is just one amongst the many who are proclaiming they have the answer to the blessed life.

So the question is, "Are we listening to Him?" Or are we missing Jesus' voice amidst the many because we are being bombarded by all those other messages?

Jesus Alone Is to be Your Authority

When we start listening to Jesus and push away all the other voices, we will see that Jesus is to be our authority. Verses 28-29 of our passage say, *“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*

After Jesus finished His sermon the polling began. As people were walking away from the Sermon on the Mount they were asking each other, “What did you think of it?” I know that happens here in the foyer on Sunday mornings. As you leave some of you say, “Tim really brought it this morning. He got up on the right side of the bed today.” Others say, “I don’t know why he was so chipper this morning. His sermon really left a lot to be desired.”

But look at the results of Jesus’ exit polls: the people were absolutely astonished. After listening to Jesus preach, the only word that came to their minds was the word “astonished.” This is the Greek word *ekplēssō*. *Ekplēssō* means to strike out, to expel by a blow, to drive out, to drive away or to force or cast off with a blow. That’s an odd way to explain the idea of being astonished so we need to understand how was this word used.

In the Greek language this word meant to figuratively drive out one’s senses by a sudden shock or strong feeling. *Ekplēssō* literally meant to be exceedingly struck in the mind. So after the people heard these words from Jesus they were filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed. The idea here is wonder, astonishment, amazement—stunned amazement that leaves the subject unable to grasp what is happening. So they were overwhelmed and beside themselves. They were totally dumbfounded by the words of Jesus.

Now what would cause them to be that way? What caused their astonishment? The Scriptures say, *“He was teaching them as one who had authority.”* Then Matthew gives a contrast, “He spoke with authority, unlike the scribes and Pharisees.” Why would Matthew say that?

In Jesus’ days the rabbis, chief priests and Pharisees were walking and talking bibliography pages. They never spoke with their own authority; they always spoke using someone else’s words. They never took a step out themselves and said, “This is what I believe. This is what I think we should do.” The people had come to know that their religious leaders were simply parrots spouting off stuff they had heard someone else say.

This wasn’t always the case. For 400 years the people only had someone else’s voice speaking to them but before that they had the prophets—men and even women—who thundered down the voice of God saying, “Thus sayeth the Lord. We need to do this. We need to go there. We need to advance against this country. We need to bow in obedience to this law that God has given us.”

Those days were gone and only recently had someone risen up to do that once again. Jesus’ cousin John the Baptist did so for a short season before the coming of Christ. John had announced, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 3:2). People were flocking to these two men—John the Baptist and Jesus—who spoke with a level of authority.

Look at Jesus' Sermon on the Mount at [Matthew 5:21-48](#). Jesus doesn't cite other people. Six times He says, *"You have heard that it was said...but I say to you..."* Jesus gives it straight to you from the horse's mouth. You're going to hear what Jesus has to say. He spoke with authority and commanded people to live in a very different way than they had before. That rang true in the ears of those in the crowd.

Jesus Alone Has All the Answers

Jesus wasn't just a charismatic speaker Who wowed the people with His eloquence and flowing rhetoric. He was the authority Who had all the answers. In [verse 29](#) we see they're amazed because of Jesus' authority which was seen in His teaching. Twice Matthew tells us that Jesus' teaching was awe-inspiring.

I like what [A.T. Pierson](#) says. He observed that Christ taught the Scriptures to people as if He was the Author rather than a commentator. He said, "Jesus comes forth from the carpenter's shop, where like all other well-trained Hebrew youth, He learned His father's trade [He's a carpenter], and His first public utterance is the most original and revolutionary address on practical morals which the world has ever heard."

What Jesus shares is absolutely, positively revolutionary. It's life changing. It's world changing. People in the secular and in the scared realms find themselves repeatedly pouring over Jesus' words.

Jesus had all the answers and He was not afraid to speak about any particular subject matter. Everything He said was controversial to someone in the crowd. Many people were there to dispute what Jesus was saying. He knew His words would cause rifts. He knew His words would cause trouble for Him. He knew that His very words would later be used against Him when people falsely accused Him.

When Jesus shared the Sermon on the Mount He spoke about sin. He spoke about sinful acts that we commit in the flesh. But right when you thought you were okay—you never committed adultery in the flesh or killed in the flesh—Jesus turned it on its head and said, "But have you done it in your heart? If you've done it in your heart then it is just as if you've done it in the flesh." He addressed things like lust, greed, divorce, selfish ambition and the pursuit of money and riches. He addressed things like judgment and hell.

The whole time that Jesus addressed these issues of the head, heart and hands, He was saying, "If you want to be part of My kingdom then you're going to have to be absolutely perfect." The people couldn't get enough of this because it was clear that Jesus had the answers.

As we look at our lives we have to ask ourselves, "Who am I listening to?" Are you listening to the pundits on the radio and television who have all the right answers? They tell us to just get this and just do that and then our lives will be so much better. Maybe you are reading books and magazines that say, "If you fix this part of your body then you'll be happy. If you only have this amount of money and you work really hard then with that certain dollar amount everything will be just fine. If you could just find that perfect mate than everything will be fine."

Jesus says, "Stop listening to the voices of the world and start listening to Me because I am the authority. I have all the answers." The Apostle Peter—an original audience member of the Sermon on the Mount—

says that Jesus has given us everything we need for life and godliness. We have it all in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Which Means Our Hearing Must Lead to Action

Now if Jesus truly is the authority and has all the answers, then our hearing has to lead to action. Verse 24 says, *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man."* Then there is a contrast in verse 26, *"And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man."* If you listen, do what Jesus is telling you to do and put those things into practice then you're wise. But if you listen and don't put those things into practice then you're a fool.

Each of my children has a hearing problem that Amanda and I have struggled to figure out. So we went to the ear doctor and said, "Something's wrong. There has to be wax in there, some sort of buildup or maybe their eardrums have been damaged. Something's wrong with our children. They can't hear."

So the doctor examined our children and told us, "No, everything's fine. They can hear normally. They're good to go."

We learned that our children didn't have a hearing problem but a doing problem. My wife will say, "Come here," and they won't come. So she keeps saying, "Come here. Come here. Come here. Come here." She sounds like a broken record. I want to go over and nudge her to stop the skipping. But she keeps saying, "Come here," and our kids don't come.

They don't have a hearing problem. They hear the words coming out of our mouths. The problem is they don't want to listen. Listening is more than hearing audible voices and noises through our ear canals. Listening is putting those things that we hear into practice. It means that when my wife says, "Come here," our children say, "Okay, we acknowledge that." Their legs start moving to where the voice is and then they do exactly what the voice says. Jesus says that we have a problem not with our hearing but with our listening.

Why is that? In our day and age people will say about the Sermon on the Mount, "I'm all good with the Sermon on the Mount as long as I get to pick and choose what parts I have to do." You will hear this repeatedly. People love the Sermon on the Mount because they love this Jesus Who preaches the Beatitudes—to be poor in spirit, to be merciful, to be kind, to be those who are peacemakers and to be pure in heart. They preach that section again and again. They say, "We shouldn't judge or retaliate." They say, "We love this wonderful meek and mild-tempered Jesus Who makes us feel good." They choose to take this Sermon on the Mount à la carte. They take the parts they like, ignore the parts they don't like and say, "I'll have a little of this and a little of that. Oh, let's hold back on the hard words of Jesus."

I'm currently reading a book my wife gave me for my birthday called The Art of Power. It's a biography of Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson is a brilliant man but as a Christian I struggle with Thomas Jefferson. I love his politics but I hate how he approached the Scriptures. Thomas Jefferson made his own Bible. He cut out all the passages that he didn't like.

That's the easy way. It is easy to say, "Hey Jesus, I love You as long as I can mold You into what I want You to be." Many people in our society say, "We love Jesus." You have to ask, "Which Jesus are you talking about? Are we talking about your Jesus—the One you've molded into your own image—or the One contained in both the easy and difficult passages of Scripture?"

If we think we can listen to Jesus by picking and choosing what we want to hear then we should tell our kids to take the same approach in the way they listen to us. Try telling your kids it's okay for them to pick and choose when they listen to you and see how well that goes.

Some people fall in love with Jesus and love to listen to Him. They love to hear others talk about Him. They love to be part of His gatherings.

Some of us are like that. We love being here at church. We love singing songs to Jesus and it warms our heart every Sunday. We come together, hear the Word taught, sing songs about Him, hear people talk about life change and we love it. We walk away feeling so good about everything.

We need to remember that's not good enough. Jesus was not a fan of the crowds. He did not love talking to a group of people who had no intention of doing anything about what He said.

James—Jesus' half-brother—reminds us of this truth when he says in [James 1:22-25](#) words that we need to hear:

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

You can't approach the Sermon on the Mount saying, "That's just wonderful," walk away and still say you're a fan on the Sermon on the Mount. It's just like you can't say, "I love having a mirror in my bathroom," then walk away without addressing any of the issues you saw in it. It's as if I wake up, look at my wrangled face in the mirror and say, "Man, I have some things I have to fix. Oh well. I'm going to go ahead and head out." I've forgotten that I needed to shave or fix this other thing.

If you look at that mirror and leave without ever doing anything about it then you have made the mirror obsolete. That is what you do if you simply hear the words of Jesus and don't do anything about them. You can talk about how great it is until the cows come home but you've made the Sermon on the Mount obsolete by your inaction.

So Jesus asks, "To whom are you listening? Who is your authority? Where are you going for the answers? And when you hear someone talking, what leads you to action?" At the end of these questions you will find out whom you're serving and following. If it's anyone other than Jesus go back to the Sermon on the Mount and you will see Jesus makes it very clear that things will not go well for you.

2. On What Are You Laying Your Foundation?

In this second exam question Jesus gives us a word problem. Do you remember those story problems? "Two trains are heading from two different towns and travelling at a certain speed, which train will make it to the destination quicker?" I never got those. I wanted to know what kind of trains they were, what they were carrying and all the unrelated details. I never got around to actually answering the problem correctly.

You can look at my transcripts and understand why I finished with that GPA, although I do want to remind you that I finished third in my class. You might ask, “How many students were there?” There were 93 students and I was third in my class. Here’s the problem: it was third from the bottom.

Anyway we need to understand some things about the story in our passage. Jesus shares this story in order to address the question, “What are you building in this life?” That is a universal question each of us must ask no matter what our background, age, gender or occupation might be. What are you doing with this life? You have a certain amount of time on this earth. We’re all hoping for 80 or 90 years. But that really is a small allotment of time. What are you doing with your life and upon what are you building?

Answering This Question Involves an Illustration

Jesus asks this fundamental question by giving us an illustration. Notice the story He gives. He says, “[There’s] *a wise man who built his house on the rock. 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...* [There’s] *a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 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.*”

So once again there is a contrast: this illustration involves two structures. Two men go about building a house for themselves.

Now let’s stop and observe some things about the story. First, what are they building? Both men are building houses. You can’t get much nobler than that. It isn’t as if one man is buying a boat or taking his money to pursue all kinds of pleasures, debauchery and sin. No, these two men are building homes, something that we all need.

We need to recognize that their motive for building these houses is incredibly pure. Why do we build homes? Hopefully we build homes to be dwelling places for our families. They are places to keep us warm and dry, sleep, eat and receive guests. There’s nothing in Jesus’ words to make us think that the houses these men were building were any different. They were two homes built for good reasons.

Next, it doesn’t seem as if the builders have any difference in their building expertise. It wasn’t as if there was Rich Wood—who is a master carpenter—on one side and Tim Badal on the other side. Of course Tim would build a junky house compared to Rich’s house. He has all the gifting and abilities to build a solid, sound house. But I better just stick to cooking and preaching. There’s nothing indicating a difference in expertise in the text. So we have two guys who both know how to build houses.

Finally they both persevere to the end and actually build the house they were intending to build. It’s not as if one was only half-built and that’s why it fell. Both of these men built the house they’re going to live in and it seems that we have two very similar houses built by very similar builders.

Then a storm comes. I want you to notice this illustration involves one storm. The two structures are hit by one and the same storm. Jesus says the storm that hit each of the houses has the same characteristics: the rain fell, the floods came and the winds blew and beat against both of the houses.

This tells us something about what Jesus is trying to articulate in this story. By listing those characteristics identically He's saying that the two houses got hit by the same storm at the same time. So it's not as if one was hit by an F5 tornado while the other one was hit by a simple rainstorm. Both houses were hit by the same storm.

We don't have to look very far for a picture of this. Not too long ago we saw tornados hit the Peoria area and it was amazing: one house was obliterated while the one right next to it was standing as if nothing had happened. That's the picture Jesus is giving. Two homes in the same neighborhood are enduring the same storm: the same rains, floods and winds. What happens? One of them is utterly destroyed and the other one stands untouched.

What in the world is Jesus trying to say? To understand this illustration we have to look for an explanation. Jesus is telling us that all of us in humanity are building our lives whether we are full-fledged followers of Jesus Christ or simply people going about life without thinking about Jesus or His words at all.

So whether you are a follower of Christ or not, you, your neighbors, your friends and your family are all building your lives. We're married, raising a family, going to work, loving on our kids and trying to provide for their well-being. We go to work, come home, enjoy the weekends and enjoy the good things of life. The Bible says these things are the same amongst believers and unbelievers alike. Jesus says in Matthew 5:45, *"For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*

So there is equality in that we're all living life. Jesus reminds us that a person can look at a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ and a total unbeliever and from the surface those two lives won't look any different. They're not going to look any different until the storms come.

Now what are the storms? What makes the two houses look different are the storms that come. The storms could be real storms because they can bring all kinds of issues and struggles into our lives. But most likely the storms Jesus is talking about are figurative storms. They are those things that darken our day. When everything started out so well on a random Tuesday it is the storm clouds that move in, darken our day and change the whole mood of how we are living. Those moments will determine upon what foundation you built your house. Those storms of life will show you either to be a full-fledged follower of Jesus Christ or one who has no intent of following Jesus at all.

So what do those storms show? They show our foundation. The storm comes and it destroys one of the houses. Why? Because it was built on sand. The other house is upheld because it was built upon the rock. If you've been around our church for very long then you know that we talk a lot about the storms of life. Here's why: the Bible makes it abundantly clear that just as man was born he can expect trials and trouble. Job 5:7 says, *"...but man is born to trouble."* We should not ask, "Why are these bad things happening to us?" because we recognize that the human existence is all about trials and they're not easy ones.

Earlier we prayed for Dorothy's mom Nancy. Nancy was talking with me and she said, "One minute my mom was totally fine and the next minute she's being rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery. Man, that's whiplash." That's what troubles do. They come out of nowhere and cause our heads to be strained

because we were thinking one way and all of the sudden everything changes “in a New York minute.” We need to recognize that troubles are going to come.

Here in our own body of believers one of our own has experienced an absolutely life changing trial in the last 24 hours. Maybe it's them today but it's going to be us at some point. Whether you're a believer or not God says you're going to endure struggles. The storms are going to come in a variety of reasons and ways. They come in the breaking of a marriage covenant. They come in a child who says, “I no longer want to deal with you, Mom and Dad. I'm going to live on my own do my own thing.” The storms come in a job loss. The storms come in a bad medical report. They come in a depression that you just cannot shake. They come in the loss of a loved one. The storms come in a myriad of ways and how you address these trials will show whether you built your house on the rock or on the sand.

Now why would we care about what the men built their houses on? This is the only difference in the picture that Jesus paints of the two houses. Sand was the easy way to build. You didn't have to move anything or drive through anything. You could put up a good house on a sandy foundation and it would stand. In our illustration we see that it stood until the storm came. In the same way people build their lives on the sand and say, “Everything's fine,” but the storm hasn't come yet.

The one who builds upon the rock is in for a backbreaking process. Just think about having to build in that time without any kind of Caterpillar equipment—it would literally test the heart of a man! Sand was the easy way to build and building on the rock was the hard way.

Jesus reminds us that there is an easy way and a hard way to live life. The easy way is to ignore the words of Jesus, not make Him your authority and live life as you see fit. The hard way is to put yourself under Jesus' teachings, confess yourself as a sinner in need of God's grace and pursue obedience. So we need to ask, “How do we build on that rock?” That rock is going to be the thing that holds your life together during the storm.

Many of you know that my parent's storm took place in 1990. They lost their first-born son at the age of 16 to a car accident. It shook the very foundations of my parent's lives and our life as a family. Here's what I saw during that storm: my parents were able to endure that great trial and praise the name of Jesus because they had built on the foundation of Jesus Christ instead of building on sand.

On what are you building your life? You're going to fail this Sermon on the Mount exam if you don't answer this question in the right way.

Answering This Question Involves an Explanation

Jesus has an explanation for this illustration. Jesus wants to remind us that the rock is a Person. Jesus wasn't saying that you have to find a certain rock or cement to build your foundation on—the foundation is Jesus. Jesus is saying, “You need to build your life upon Me.”

Hundreds of years before Jesus would preach this message He was prophesied to be the Rock in Isaiah 28:16, *"Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'"* The rock is a Person.

Jesus Christ is the foundation because He paid the price. After Jesus' death, burial and resurrection the Apostle Peter—who was there for the Sermon on the Mount—stood before the religious leaders of his day in Acts 4:10-12 and said:

"Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

You can't pursue this world and be on the rock. You have to choose. Are you going to pursue the sands of this world or choose the rock of Jesus Christ?

The rock brings great peace. Peace of mind comes in the worst of all storms. Jesus' illustration is talking about the worst of all storms. Life doesn't get any worse than that. It's like when we talk about the storm of the century and say, "I've never seen it as bad as I saw it in that storm." And in that storm, your house stood. Even though the rains came, the floods rose and the winds blew at that house it still stood strong. That enables you to say this, "If our house endured that storm then it can endure anything." Jesus gives us peace that when you endure the hardest storm you will know that your faith can never be shaken again.

Seeing my parents struggle through the loss of their first-born son gave me confidence that my parents will never give up the faith for riches or anything else. If they had given up the faith it would have been when they were burying their son. But God proved Himself faithful. He proved that He was their peace in times of difficulty. So now they know, "While there may be more storms that come, we have come to recognize that Jesus Christ is our peace."

Jesus is the Person Who paid the price and brings peace. When we build our lives on the rock of Jesus Christ we are told that we can have peace with God, peace with ourselves and peace with one another. When we have that kind of peace we can know that we will be okay no matter what the storm clouds around us are doing.

Finally, Jesus brings great peace in the most perilous of times. We see that repeatedly. The Old Testament is filled with people who endured difficult times and difficult storms. By faith they obeyed and followed God, honored Him and found peace amidst the storm. They were able to persevere because they had built their lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ the Son of God. When you do that, you're ready no matter what comes your way.

Stop building the easy way—on the sand. Instead, use material approved by God Himself. Do that and God says, "You won't be ashamed." But if you choose to build your life on the absence of God and apart from Jesus Christ the text says that house's fall will be great. It will be utterly destroyed.

3. What About Your Life Must Change?

As we close out this sermon series we've gained nothing if we haven't asked these important, fundamental and pivotal questions. After 30 weeks we have heard the words of Jesus. Many of you have studied them personally. You've studied them in a small group and you've heard them preached. You know that the Sermon on the Mount demands change.

I have been gripped by this series because each week it has caused me to examine my attitudes, my actions, my affections and my aspirations. In each one of those categories, I have found myself wanting. In other words I am missing the mark. So Jesus demands that I change.

Change Involves Reflecting this Sermon

What does change involve? First we must become a reflection of this sermon [Sermon on the Mount] to everyone around us. The One Who preached this sermon must become our foundation and our authority. Every day we should be striving to make the Beatitudes our default attitude in life. We must recognize our actions aren't simply the things we do in the flesh but they go to the very core of who we are.

Do we see the importance of building disciplines in our life like giving to the Lord, praying, serving and fasting? Do we see these as crucial elements for us to experience the blessed life in Christ? Do we see the vital importance for the believer to seek first the Kingdom of God, knowing that He will bless us when we do? My prayer is that we would be a church that is a Sermon-on-the-Mount kind of church, filled with Sermon-on-the-Mount kind of Christians. It is then and only then that we will go out into this world able to be the salt and light that God has called us to be.

Change Involves Repenting When You Stumble

What happens when we fail? When we fail at reflecting this sermon in our lives we need to repent. We have learned that unless our righteousness exceeds the scribes' and Pharisees' we'll not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Face it—we are going to fail at this. We're going to fail continually when it comes to living up to the commands of Scripture. When we do we need to seek God's forgiveness. We need to run to Him with sorrow in our hearts and say, "I've blown it once again."

Here's the thing: God is faithful. God knows we're going to blow it. God recognizes we're going to fail. When we stumble we need to run to Him.

Change Involves Relying on Your Savior

That's why we must rely on the Savior. The Sermon on the Mount is an impossible task and apart from the grace of God we will never accomplish it. So what do we do? We run to the cross of Jesus. We say, "Jesus, apart from You I can't do this. I'm glad I don't have to do this on my own and that You've finished the work on the cross. You took care of it. Now You welcome me into the most glorious of endeavors: to walk with You in full realization that You took care of my sin. You took care of my bondage by nailing it to the cross.

You allowed my sin no longer to be mine by taking it on Yourself. As a result of that now I'm free." What the Son has set free is free indeed (John 8:36).

Stop living in bondage to those things. Start basking in the grace that you have a relationship with your Savior Who empowers you to be filled by His Spirit to accomplish what He's commanding you to do today. He has empowered you to live out this great sermon not as drudgery but with great gratitude in your heart. You can say, "I have the opportunity to follow my Master because He's the authority and has all the answers. So I will listen to Him and put those things into action."

I hope and pray these 30 weeks have been a blessing to you. In a couple of weeks we will endeavor to go into the life of Samson. As followers of Christ we're going to learn that we are flawed individuals. Thanks be to God that He sent His One and only Son Jesus so that we wouldn't have to do it on our own. Let's go to a time of prayer and meditation on what we've learned and where we've gone.

Let's pray.

Father God, I pray that You will take what we have learned in these many weeks and enlighten our hearts. Teach us Your ways so that we might follow You and pursue Your ways in order to experience joy, contentment and peace. As we do that, help us to shine as bright stars in a dark world so that they may see You. Even amidst the most difficult of circumstances when our world seems to fall apart, let us stand secure on the rock of Jesus Christ. Lead us in that and empower us so that we may fulfill what You've called us to do. In Christ's name we give all of this. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.net).