

Sermon: Are You Wise or Foolish?

Text: Luke 6:46-49; Matthew 7:24-27

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Introduction: The title for the sermon is influenced by Matthew's use of the words *wise* and *foolish* for his Jewish audience. In the Old Testament the wise are those who are obedient to God. The foolish are those only concerned about themselves and today. Even though Luke does not use the exact words, the parable, by its two builders and different outcomes demonstrates who falls into these categories. The future will not change who is wise or foolish, it will only reveal the fact.

In the Old Testament there is a large volume of consequential talk in the Prophets for those who refuse to obey God.

Ezekiel 13:13-14 (NIV) ¹³“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury. ¹⁴I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you will be destroyed in it; and you will know that I am the LORD.

There are whole sections of Scripture called “wisdom literature” of which the Proverbs would be a good example.

Proverbs 12:7 (NIV) ⁷Wicked men are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous stands firm.

In Luke's gospel we will see many parables. Some parables are full of surprises, paradoxes, and even seemingly unfair resolutions, but this story is pretty much what one might expect. And the application one could make from the physical realm to the spiritual is an easy one.

Jesus' parable (simile) provides us with a:

I. Definition of Discipleship (vv. 46-47)

Even though the word “disciple” is not used in our text. It is clear that is whom Jesus was teaching. He was trying to bring distinction between the casually interested and those who were becoming more and more devoted to Him and his message. Some had gotten the idea that being a disciple only meant giving lip-service to Jesus' teaching. Having respect for Jesus' teachings is not enough. Jesus asked them:

Luke 6:46 (NIV) ⁴⁶“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

A. A disciple of Jesus knows what to do.

It is important to know the word of God because it helps reveal the will of God. The Bible needs to be our constant companion. Studying God's word is critical to our spiritual growth and safety.

Psalms 119:105 (NIV) ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

There are bible scholars and PhDs in theology who are going to go to hell because they only know about Jesus, but have no saving relationship with him. Jesus had warned the religious leaders and scholars of his day:

John 5:39-40 (NIV) ³⁹You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

“The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not to be admired but to be obeyed” (R.T. France quoted by Blomberg, Matthew, p. 134)

B. A disciple of Jesus does what Jesus says.

Luke 6:47 (NIV) ⁴⁷I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice.

There are three important aspects of this verse. The first part of this relationship is found in the phrase comes to me and is echoed in **John 6**. Jesus must be our Savior!

John 6:35, 37, 45 (NIV) ³⁵Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

This is a willing relationship that is always founded on instruction and learning. Jesus must be our Teacher. The second phrase is hears my words. This carries with it the idea of understanding. It is never a blind or uninformed following. Faith may not have all the answers, but neither is it irrational. Hearing and obedience are tied together and involve how God will judge us (**John 12:47-50**).

It is when we put God's words into practice that we are following Christ, our Lord, and being a wise disciple. It is the way we are related to Jesus.

Luke 8:21 (NIV) ²¹He replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.”

Ezekiel 33:31-32 (NIV) ³¹My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. ³²Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice. The crises in life will reveal the quality of a disciple's work and also his Lord.

Firstly, Luke describes the “wise” man and gives us a:

II. Good Example of Discipleship (v. 48)

Luke 6:48 (NIV) ⁴⁸He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

This is a person:

A. Who builds well

Where Jesus tells this story it was well-known that to build a “good” house, one needed a firm foundation that would hold fast, and secure the building on top of it. A prudent builder would go down to rock to make a foundation and secure his house to it.

This person is one who takes the time to do the necessary work. He is going to build it right and according to plans. If a person's house is going to be stable and strong, it needs to be built on Jesus' words. A person who builds well has taken the time to get good instruction and ask questions from people who know.

I Corinthians 3:10-11 (NIV) ¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

This wise disciple wants what he is building to last. He is aware there will be problems coming that will impact his house.

So it is the wise builder:

B. Who considers the future

How one builds now will determine one's future. The wise man does not ignore the value of time. He does not squander one of the most important gifts God has given us.

Show me a “good” marriage of 25, 50 or 75 years, and I will show you someone who has put Christ at the center of their relationship and made faith the foundation. Many marriages appear to be healthy, and an early check of its foundation will determine not only survivability, but quality.

In the parable of the Ten Virgins, five were wise. Why? Because they looked ahead and were prepared for who was coming.

In every life there will be trouble. Relationships will fracture. Finances can be depleted, jobs lost. Health will decline and death will occur for everyone. The question is: are you ready for the coming crisis?

So it is the wise builder:

C. Who will survive the coming flood

The man who has been wise and built his life on God will survive. The man who has incorporated the word of God as the only plan for his life will live. Wisdom speaks: **Proverbs 8:34-35 (NIV)** ³⁴ Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. ³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD.

Proverbs 28:26 (NIV) ²⁶ He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

If you want to survive the coming tests and the final judgment, obey God. Be wise!

Lastly, Luke describes the “foolish” man who is a:

III. Bad Example of Discipleship (v. 49)

Luke 6:49 (NIV) ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

This is a person:

A. Who builds poorly

This house that is built by the foolish person (Gr. **μωπος**, JB - *stupid people*) may look the same as the wise builder’s home. It is different, though! The foolish man has no foundation. His house is unstable. It may not show up today, but at some critical point he has a big problem. His exterior hides, for the time being, a fatal flaw.

Thirty plus years ago I was a General Manager for Sherwood Products who made cellulose insulation. Cellulose insulation is made from ground up newsprint and chemical retardant chemicals. There were different formulations. We generally used borax, boric acid and alumina trihydrate. It was a good product (U.L. listed). Other manufacturers added sulfates which were very corrosive. The insulation looked OK and the R-factor was fine, but over time the product corroded electrical boxes and caused house fires where people died.

This foolish mindset is also found in our current culture that says it does not matter what you believe. These post-moderns weigh each idea the same. Wisdom, they say, is where you find it. Yet, the Scriptures say:

Proverbs 19:20-21 (NIV) ²⁰ Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise. ²¹ Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails.

The foolish builder is the one:

B. Who only thinks of Today

This is like the home improvement project by the landlord who figures it is good enough for now. I won't have to deal with it. It is like the Tower of Pisa. It has survived all these years, but it is going to fall if the foundation is not corrected.

The foolish builder knows that the area will flood, yet continues to build as if hurricanes aren't a real possibility and 100-year floods are not expected in the near future. It really isn't the reality of the floods that he denies; it is the timing. Somehow he deludes himself into believing it will not impact him - that he can avoid the inevitable. There is tremendous danger in self-deception. He refuses to believe God's word when he hears it.

A foundation may not be needed today, but in the future it will be essential for survival. Every year there are earthquakes that kill people needlessly. The thousands of school children in China died because of shoddy construction and the builders not allowing for what would come *someday*.

The foolish builder is the one:

C. Who will experience destruction

This is no minor setback. It is utter ruin. The Greek word (‘ρηγμα) is used of a breach in a dam, a laceration or rupture and carries the idea of ruin and collapse (see Rienecker, p. 156). With the house being swept away goes all of life's treasures.

What is left is spiritually born. The gospel writer is not talking about an incidental storm, but the BIG ONE. The final judgment will determine how a person has built. If you are to survive what is coming, a wise man will take Jesus at his word and use a sure foundation on which to build. His words are true!

A negative way to say it, but still appropriate is the way word and action are to be tied together. “The word which we fail to do is no rock to build a house on. There can be no union with Jesus. He has never known us. That is why as soon as the hurricane begins we lose the word, and find that we have never really believed it. The word we had was not Christ’s, but a word we had wrested from him and made our own by reflecting on it instead of doing it. So our house crashes in ruins, because it is not founded on the word of Jesus Christ.” Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 219-220

Conclusion: Matthew’s recording of Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount* and Luke’s shorter version, sometimes called the *Sermon on the Plain*, although different in some ways, are alike in others. Both teachings begin with blessing and end talking about ruin. Each writer wants to communicate the need for and the cost of following Jesus. And in spite of what things appear, there will be a final test that will determine whether Kingdom principles have been followed, indeed whether Jesus has been obeyed.

I do not believe this instruction is given for a “wait and see” approach, and then an “I told you so.” It must be an effort to prevent catastrophe from which someone cannot recover. It also seems to me that a wise person who would notice a faulty foundation would be under some obligation to warn or encourage sounder thinking.

Q. How can you tell who is wise and who is foolish?

A. By their fruit, whether they are like their teacher, whether they are obedient to the Master, and finally in the end - whether their houses survive proving not luck or good karma, but whether they followed the plan of the Word of God!

The Foolish builder likes the idea of the house, but refuses to do and invest in what is needed to guarantee success.

Death is knocking at the door. This parable of Jesus is not being told for entertainment. It is meant to relate the utter seriousness of a decision to follow Jesus. Jeremias says: “The Sermon on the Mount closes with the Final Judgement.”
- *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 194

Many of the teachings of Jesus *seem* wrong, even too hard, but the world will not be overcome by human power. It will take divine love, not criticism. It requires mercy and grace. It will take a quality-built life lived out everyday as a witness. If we follow Jesus' instructions, we will not only "be blessed," but we will be a blessing to others. Jesus is the only safe foundation upon which we can build. I hope you are a person of wisdom, today.