

Two Houses
Matthew 7:24-27
Halifax: 17 October 2004

Introduction

For over a year now,

- I have been preaching to you from the Sermon on the Mount.
- Today we come to the conclusion of this magnificent sermon!

And now, at the end of this Sermon,

- King Jesus brings before you one great concern!
 - He, the King from Heaven, has spoken the words of this Sermon!
 - He, the Son God,
 - the Lord or Lords and the King of Kings,
 - the One who is exalted above all things,
 - the One before whom you must all stand to be examined and judged....
 - He Himself has spoken and you have heard...
 - And now the great concern is:
 - *What you will do with what King Jesus has said?*
 - *What will you do with all that things that are written in the Sermon on the Mount?*

I. There are only two possible responses to Jesus' sayings...

A. Jesus shows you what they are in v. 24 and v. 26:

1. He says that you will either:
 - a. "Hear these sayings of mine and do them..."
 - or "Hear these saying of mine and not do them."
 - b. You notice that the difference is not between those who hear and those who don't hear...
 - He is not talking here about the person who has nothing to do with Him.
 - Both persons are hearers...
 - They both come to church,
 - They may even both have personal Bible Study and family worship and all the rest...

- But the first man is not a doer!
 - He satisfies Himself with hearing only, but does not do what Christ says.
 - The second man hears and does.

TRANS> The difference is not in hearing and not hearing,

- but in hearing and doing verses hearing and not doing.

2. Note well that there are not three or four different responses, but only two that Jesus is speaks of...

a. Jesus is continuing to present you with only **two** possibilities for covenant people!

- If you are in God's kingdom you will either be blessed or cursed...
- You are headed for either eternal life or eternal death...
- There is no middle ground...

b. This is very consistent with what He has been doing all along in the conclusion to His sermon...

- At this point in His ministry, He is not interested so much in the people who are outside the covenant people,
 - but He is interested in the classes of people within God's kingdom...
 - There are two gates...
 - the wide that leads to destruction and the narrow that leads to life...
 - There are two ways
 - (broad that many people take and the narrow that only a few take)
 - There are two sorts of prophets
 - (false that devour the flock and true prophets that lead them to Christ)
 - There are two sorts of trees
 - (good trees that bear good fruit and bad trees that bear bad fruit.
 - There are two sorts of people who say: "Lord, Lord"
 - (some who enter life, some who are commanded to depart)

TRANS> And so now He shows that these two very different ways are based upon what you do with His sayings when you hear Him.

- You either hear and do them, or else you hear them and do not do them.

B. Now if you think about it, it only makes sense that there are only two ways!

- It all comes down to whether or not you accept Jesus as God!

1. If you really believe that He is the Son of God speaking on earth, then you have to give total allegiance to His word!

a. Here is the voice of the One who called the universe into existence!

1) As long as He was silent, there was nothing apart from Him...

2) As soon as He speaks, all is created!

- He says, "Let there be light" and there is light!

3) He speaks with the most absolute and terrible authority!

- All He has to do is say the word and everything is altered!

- There is none like Him!

b. If you really believe that this One has spoken on earth in the person of Jesus Christ...

- You must respond to His word!

1) When He issues a warning, you are compelled to tremble!

- For example,

- His pronouncement "depart from me" that we looked at in verse 23 is just as powerful and effective as "Let there be light."

- You know that it will not be spoken in vain,

- but as soon as it leaves His lips,

- it will be done to the eternal misery of the damned!

2) And when He issues a command,

- If you see it as the glorious God of all speaking,

- you dare not to challenge it or question it or set it aside!

- The eternal God has spoken!

- You set out immediately to joyfully obey Him!

3) And as for His promises!

- What comfort they bring to you if you know that God has spoken!

- When He says things like...

- “ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.”
 - You immediately start asking and seeking and knocking!
 - Great comfort fills your soul because the mighty Lord of All is on your side!
2. But! If you do not believe that Jesus is God speaking on earth,
- you will have an entirely different response to His Word!
- a. You will look His threats as something that may not ever come to pass...
- You hear them, but Peter tells us that you will be among scoffers...
 - 2 Peter 3:3-4: scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation."
 - His threats may unsettle you a little, but you will dismiss them quickly with false reasoning's....
 - You will latch on to stupid arguments that you hear from others to insulate yourself against them...
 - You will stay stupid things when you hear His word like
 - “What about evolution?”
 - or “What about child poverty in the world?”
- b. And as for His commandments...
- If you do not receive them as coming from God,
 - you will feel at liberty to twist them, revise them, omit them—whatever you want!
 - You will place yourself as the judge over them—
 - You may consider some of them to be very wise or very important;
 - You may rank some of them as good suggestions...
 - You may find that you agree with much of what He says...
 - But you will be the final judge!
 - How entirely different than to receive His commands as the very voice of God speaking to you with all authority in heaven and earth!
- c. And as for His promises—

- You might seek comfort from one or another of them...
 - Perhaps He has something He can do for you, some help for you...
 - But as far as staking your entire life on them and finding complete rest in them...
 - You will never do that until you come to know Jesus as God speaking on earth and receive His word as the very word of God.

TRANS> Yes, there are two radically different responses to God's word that Jesus wants you to see...

- Either you hear His sayings and do them...
- or you hear His sayings and do not do them.

C. But the truth is, everyone who hears the word of God **ought** to know that it is God who speaks.

1. The word of God is self attesting...

- A person who rejects it as the word of God only does so because he is corrupt and ruined...
 - because there is something wrong with him...
- If he were not ruined by sin, he would surely recognise his creator's voice.

2. John marvels at the reception that Jesus got when He came into the world...

- It is remarkable that we could not recognise the One who made us and gives us life!
 - John 1:10-11: He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
- We would all recognise Him if there were not something terribly wrong with us.
 - It is a proof of our total depravity that, as the apostle says,
 - "the nature man receives not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to Him."
 - That is why Jesus said:
 - John 3:3: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
 - We are blind until God's Spirit opens our eyes and makes us alive...

- He must open our hearts to receive the word the way He opened Lydia's heart...
- Then we are like the Samaritans who came to hear Jesus and believed when they heard Him speak, for they testified:
 - John 4:42: Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

TRANS> But even though it is true that we will not believe until God's Spirit opens our hearts, it is nevertheless true that we **ought** to believe!

- In fact, Jesus gives you a parable in Matthew 7:24 because:

II. **King Jesus wants you to see that you are an absolute fool if you hear His sayings and do not do them.**

A. He compares you with a man who builds a house on the sand!

1. Jesus is presenting something here that no sane person would ever do!
 - a. This is something like the woman who was driving the camper and put it on cruise control, then went to the back to use the wash room.
 - Or like the firing squad that stands in a circle instead of in a line!
 - b. Jesus is talking about a person that is acting completely outside of reason...
 - The word **wise** that Jesus uses here to speak of the wise man is a word that could be translated **sensible** or **reasonable**.
 - He is not talking about a man of unusual intelligence compared to man who "didn't make the wisest decision"...
 - The wise man here does nothing more than what any sensible and sane person would do.
2. Both men are building a house in a place where storms come through on a regular basis...
 - a. It is a place where it would be a very strange thing if there were **not** any storms...
 - It would be like assuming that it won't get cold enough in Halifax this winter for you to need antifreeze in your car—
 - You will just use water for coolant.
 - A storm of the kind Jesus describes here was as likely to come through the place where these guys were building their houses as freezing temperatures are likely to come to Halifax this winter.

- b. But the moron in this illustration (the Greek is *andri mwrw*) goes to all the labour and expense of building a house...
 - but he builds it without a foundation that will be able to handle an ordinary rain storm!
 - He is actually building a house that will wash away!
 - It was absolutely ludicrous!

- c. There is the old bonehead out there plugging away on his house...
 - 1) There he is, hauling heavy materials in the hot sun,
 - spending all his hard earned savings to buy materials and pay servants to help him...
 - all for something that is going to utterly collapse as soon as the rainy season comes!

 - 2) There he is, talking to a sensible friend who sees what he is doing—
 - His friend says,
 - “Hey Charlie, what are you doing? Don’t you know you need to build that house on the rock? How do you expect that thing to stand when the rainy season comes?”
 - And Charlie says, “What makes you think the rainy season is going to come? It hasn’t rained for two months! Why should I bother with digging down to the rock when I can build this thing on the sand? You are just a pessimist! I know what I am doing!”
 - And even though Charlie is a little shaken by all this, he shakes off the thought and goes on with his project.
 - He wants it to work out because he said so.

B. Now I am sure you can see what Jesus is getting at here!

- 1. He is showing you that it is **totally unreasonable, absolute folly**, for you hear His words and not do them!
 - You don’t have to be a person of super intelligence or insight to follow Jesus!
 - It is the only reasonable thing to do.

- 2. Just think about this!
 - a. If the Son of God has truly come into the world to save us from our sins!
 - And if He has told us that we will be blessed if we will but humble ourselves and look to Him for that salvation...

- If we would but hear the gospel of the kingdom that He preaches and respond to it as any sensible person would...
 - we will be eternally blessed by His Almighty power—
 - we will have His divine energy directed toward our eternal happiness—
 - What kind of fool is it that walks away from these words?
 - He is an absolute moron!

b. There he is,

- working away to build a family...
- labouring away in his career to be the best...
- seeking diligently to educate himself and develop his mind...
- striving to develop a circle of good friends...
- endeavouring to enjoy his life...
- and even giving himself to religious devotion to gain peace and security.

- There he is, giving all he's got to build his life—
 - all on the sand!
 - Apparently, he never allows himself to stop and think about what he is doing!
 - Because it is so common, we don't always see how foolish it is!
 - Perhaps even more, we don't see because our faith is weak!

 - He may even be a very industrious, very intelligent fellow!
 - He may even be able to build a house that is twice as impressive and twice as big as his friend who is building on the rock...
 - but everything he is giving himself to is destined to come crashing down when the storm comes because he has built everything on the sand!

TRANS> Brothers and sisters, Jesus has spoken and you are an absolute fool if you don't do what He says!

C. Don't play games about this!

1. It is stupid to act like the storm will never come!

a. You are all going to die!

- Is there not enough evidence to show everyone that this is so?

- Yet, most people are like those people we read about in Isaiah 28 who made a covenant with death...
- They have come up with some sort of plan about what death will be like and by their own authority they feel secure!
- They say, “We will go to a better place.”
 - or , “It will be the end of my pain.”
- It’s all just wishful thinking!
 - On what basis do they thus comfort themselves?
 - I say, it is nothing about a foundation of sand!
 - It will not support them when they day comes!

TRANS> Don’t act like the storm will not come—

- You are all going to die!
 - And not only that...but the Bible says...
 - Heb 9:27: it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
- b. You are all going to stand before God to be judged!
- And let me tell you that all your sandy foundations will utterly fail you in that day!
- 1) We looked at this when we looked at the broad gate...
- If you are a moralist, it will do you no good to say:
 - “I tried to be a good person and to love others.”
 - If you a sentimentalist, it will do you no good to say:
 - “I believe that God is love and would never send anybody to hell.”
 - If you are a ritualist, it will do you no good to say:
 - “I was baptised and went to church and said my prayers...”
 - If you are a doctrinalist, it will do you no good to say:
 - “I knew the catechism and rejected all the heresies.”
 - If you are an Enthusiast, it will do you no good to say:
 - “I have spoke in tongues, and performed all sorts of miracles...”
 - If you are an Experientialist, it will do you no good to say,

- “I made a decision asked Christ to come into my heart when I was five.”
- 2) The storm is going to come and if your house is not built firmly on the Saviour, it will not stand in that day!
- c. And some of you may not even make it to the judgement before the storm destroys your little house on the sand...
- If you are not building on His words, your house may be destroyed before you even meet death!
 - With the direction our society is going, we could very well see severe persecution in Canada...
 - And if we do, there will be many who are in the church today who will deny Christ because they built their house on the sand.
 - And not only that, but there are also many Christians who show that they are on the sand when temptation comes knocking at their door!
 - Some of you young people—if you are not truly building on Christ, you will run off into fornication or covetousness or some other sin.
 - Temptations can draw you away from Christ if you not building your house on Him today.
 - Your house will fall, and great will be its fall!
2. Don't kid yourself that simply hearing Jesus is enough!
- You must also obey Him!
 - Don't content yourself merely to hear His word if you are not also putting it into practice...
 - His words are not given to you just so you can admire them...
 - They are given to you so that you can obey them!
 - You must hear His sayings and do them or your house will collapse.

III. What does it mean to hear and do Jesus' sayings?

A. First, let me say what it does not mean.

- It does not mean sinless perfection in this life.
1. This whole sermon teaches us that the blessed man is the one who is poor in spirit and the one who becomes a beggar.
 2. The Bible says that no one attains perfection in this life.

- As long as we are here on earth we will have to pray “Forgive us our debts and we forgive our debtors.
- We will have to ask and seek and knock...

B. But now let me tell you what it does mean to hear and do Jesus’ sayings.

1. It means that you appropriate His words.

- You take them into your very being so that they become part of you.
- By God’s grace you are united with His word so that His word abides in you or lives in you and you in Him.
- It is a tremendous thing!

2. Let me see if I can explain what it means to hear and do Jesus sayings.

- First, to hear and do means that you see that what Jesus says is what ought to be done.
- Then you see that it is what you ought to do.
- Then you see that you do not do what He says (because you face it honestly) and you are pained by that.
- Then you cry to Him to help you do it and He does help you and you begin to change.

3. This is how you build on the rock...

- You actually get what He says into the very fabric of your life...
- There is way to much hearing without doing in our lives...
 - Some of you have your personal quiet time,
 - you may even memorise verses...
 - you may read Christian books...
 - you may hear lots of sermons and talk about Christ with others...
 - You may have regular family worship....
- But none of this will help you one bit if you are only hearing and not doing!
 - You must build your life on God’s word!
 - You need to come to it with hunger to ingest it and have it fill your life,
 - have it change your thinking.
 - Day after day, week after week, month after month, you are to be nourished up in Christ’s words....
 - This is what it means to be built upon the rock!
 - Hearing and doing the word of Christ will put roots deep into Him that cannot be pulled up.

IV. And when you do, you will become absolutely invincible!

A. No matter what the weather, your house will not fall because it will be founded upon Christ and He cannot fall.

1. Those torrents and the winds and the rains of persecution and temptation will still come.
 - a. They will beat against you with all their force and try to shake you loose.
 - They may even make your house rock and shake on its foundation...
 - But they will be able to make you fall.
 - b. There will be sorrow and bereavement sickness,
 - Your own trusted brothers will betray you and disappoint you,
 - False teachers will try to draw you away after themselves with enticing words of man's wisdom...
 - c. All these forces will come against you, but if you are founded upon the rock,
 - You will not fall!
 - "It did not fall because it was founded upon the rock."
2. Do you see how invincible those founded on the rock are?
 - a. Look at the apostles when they stood before the Jews and were told not to speak in Jesus name!
 - There they are, boldly and deliberately testifying to their enemies who had placed them in chains...
 - There they are, the ones with no money and no power and no arms making their enemies tremble!
 - How can it be that the ones with the wealth and the authority are trembling before the ones with none of these things?
 - It is because they are founded upon the rock!
 - b. And there is Herod, persecuting John the Baptist and cutting off his head...
 - Yet, who is filled with terror and fear?
 - It is not John...
 - He has gone on to glory.
 - He has confessed the good confession...
 - But it is Herod who trembles!
 - It is Herod who has terrors on his palace bed that John has risen again!

- It is Herod, the one with the riches and the power to order John's death that feels powerless and helpless...
 - And it is John who is safe and secure.
- c. Then you see Daniel.
- There he is, torn away from his parents a young age and taken captive and brought into the courts of a pagan king to serve!
 - And yet, who is that is found desperate and grouping, terrified by his dreams and helpless...
 - It is not Daniel, the young captive boy, for he was founded on the rock—
 - but it is Nebuchadnezzar, for his kingdom was built on the sand!
 - The kingdom of Babylon will soon crash to the ground,
 - but the kingdom of righteousness continues forever!
 - The kingdoms of men will rise and fall, for they are vanity,
 - the kingdom of Jesus Christ endures forever.
- d. And there is Job...
- Even the forces of hell are unleashed against him!
 - But what is Job's life really about?
 - Is it about houses and lands and children and reputation and honour?
 - No, Job has these things and he uses these things...
 - But when they are all stripped away, Job's life is about serving God and bringing glory to Him.
 - His life is about doing the will of God and about finding His joy in Him alone.
 - And because this is what Job's life is about,
 - He loses nothing when these things are taken away!
 - Instead, he sees the glory of God and honour of God and the beauty of God such as he has never seen it before!
 - This is what his life is about and this is what he finds in the end!
 - The restoration of his houses and lands and children and honour is only a by product...

- The great thing He receives, He actually receives through the trial...
- It is through the trial that He comes to confess...
 - Job 42:5-6: I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes.

TRANS> Don't you see brothers and sisters!

- If you are living your life according to Jesus words, your whole purpose is to see the glory of God and to serve Him as God!
 - No swords, no temptation, no trial, no authority can ever take that away from you if that is what your life is built upon...
 - This is the eternal life that Jesus gives to all who come to Him.
 - The torrents and winds and the waves come with all their force,
 - but the house stands firm because it is founded upon the rock.
 - It cannot be removed.
3. You don't suddenly become strong when the day of trouble comes...
- Jesus is calling you to build your house on Him now!
 - Do not wait until it is too late as so many have done throughout the ages!
 - The roots must be established deep now...
 - And they are established by receiving the word of Christ so that it transforms your soul and changes you from day to day...
 - so that your mind is renewed and your life is reformed to do the will of God.

B. But the greatest benefit comes at the end—

1. It comes when the very thing that the grace of God has taught you to live for and to seek becomes yours in full possession!
2. It comes when you the voice of that One whose voice called the universe into existence say to you:
 - Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
 - I say!
 - As soon as those words leave His lips, the power of heaven and earth will respond and it will be done!
 - Your house will stand because it was founded upon the rock.

Just over a year ago (on September 21 to be exact)

- I began preaching to you from our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.

In that introductory Sermon,

- I reminded you that Matthew, in His gospel, presents Jesus as the promised Messiah.
 - He focuses on Him in particular as the King of the Jews.
 - He is the Son of God who came from Heaven to establish a righteous kingdom in a sinful world.
 - He came to save His people from their sins.
- This sermon which we call the Sermon on the Mount is an example of the kind of preaching that Jesus did when He went from city to city in Galilee.
 - You might call it the manifesto of King Jesus!
 - It is here that He tells us what is expected of those who would find blessing in God's kingdom!

And we have found as we have studied this sermon that what He expects is just what you would expect for a righteous kingdom made up of nothing but sinful subjects who have been redeemed!

- There is to be a brokenness about them because of their sin.
 - They are to come to Him with joyful eagerness to obtain the righteousness that alone is able to give.
 - They are to come with a longing and desire to be filled up with the life that He comes to give them!
 - to have His righteousness permeate every fibre of their being!
- They are to come to Him and say,
 - Oh Lord Jesus! Give to us what you command!
 - Make us what you want us to be!
 - Take our ruined, defiled, sinful souls and make us holy and righteous!
- You would not expect Him to call them to come with their heads lifted high!
 - All saturated with pride and full of themselves!
 - That's not what you would expect sinners to do when they come to a holy and righteous Saviour who has come to save them from their sins!
 - You would expect them to come asking and seeking and knocking.

- And I have shown you that as Jesus comes to the close of His magnificent sermon,
 - He gives a magnificent promise to all who come to Him as beggars!
 - Ask, and you will receive,
 - Seek and you will find,
 - Knock, and it will be opened to you.
- No better words could be heard by a broken sinner than these!
 - King Jesus has made a way for you!
 - Come to Him and you will have everything!

Now you might think that Jesus would have just left it with that!

- Surely, every sinner who heard this wonderful news would come running to Jesus with joyful thanksgiving!
 - That would be the only reasonable thing to do... the only sensible thing to do...
 - But Jesus knows what we are like...
 - He knows how deceptive and twisted our hearts are!

And so He urges us to be sure that we don't come to Him in some superficial way...

- Some way that avoids dealing with who we are as sinners and who He is as Saviour...

In Matthew 7:13-14,

- He warns us that only a few of those who come into His kingdom will find life in His kingdom!
 - Most people who call themselves Christians come in by the broad gate that leads to destruction instead of the narrow gate that leads to life.
 - He Himself is the narrow gate that leads to life...
 - but most come into the church by the wide gate of self effort:
 - There is the moralist who says,
 - "I will go to heaven because I try to be a good person and to love others."
 - There is the sentimentalist who says,
 - "I will go to heaven because God is love and would never send anybody to hell."
 - There is the ritualist who says,
 - "I will go to heaven because I was baptised and go to church and say my prayers..."

- There is the doctrinalist who says,
 - “I will go to heaven because I know the catechism and have rejected all the heresies.”
- There is the Enthusiast who says,
 - “I will go to heaven because I have spoken in tongues performed miracles, and because God speaks to me all the time.”
- There is the Experientialist who says,
 - “I will go to heaven because I made a decision and asked Christ to come into my heart.”
- All these are ways of destruction unless they come to Jesus as sinners to be made righteous by Him.

And to make the danger even greater,

- Jesus warns us that there are false prophets to lead us into all these false ways!
 - In verse 15 He tells us to beware for them...
 - And if we are—if we are truly concerned about coming to God...
 - We will not listen to these prophets—
 - We will know them by their fruits.

And then He goes on to warn you further in verse 21 that you must not rely on your profession of faith!

- You must not rely on what you have done...
 - On the last day you cannot plead:
 - “But Lord, I have spoken your word to people”—
 - It doesn’t even matter if you were a prophet!
 - Nor can you plead
 - “But Lord, I have fought spiritual battles for you in your kingdom...
 - It doesn’t matter if you even cast out devils in His name...
 - Nor can you plead
 - “But Lord, look at all the good works I have done for you!”
 - You must come to Him as a beggar, looking to what He has done, not to what you have done.