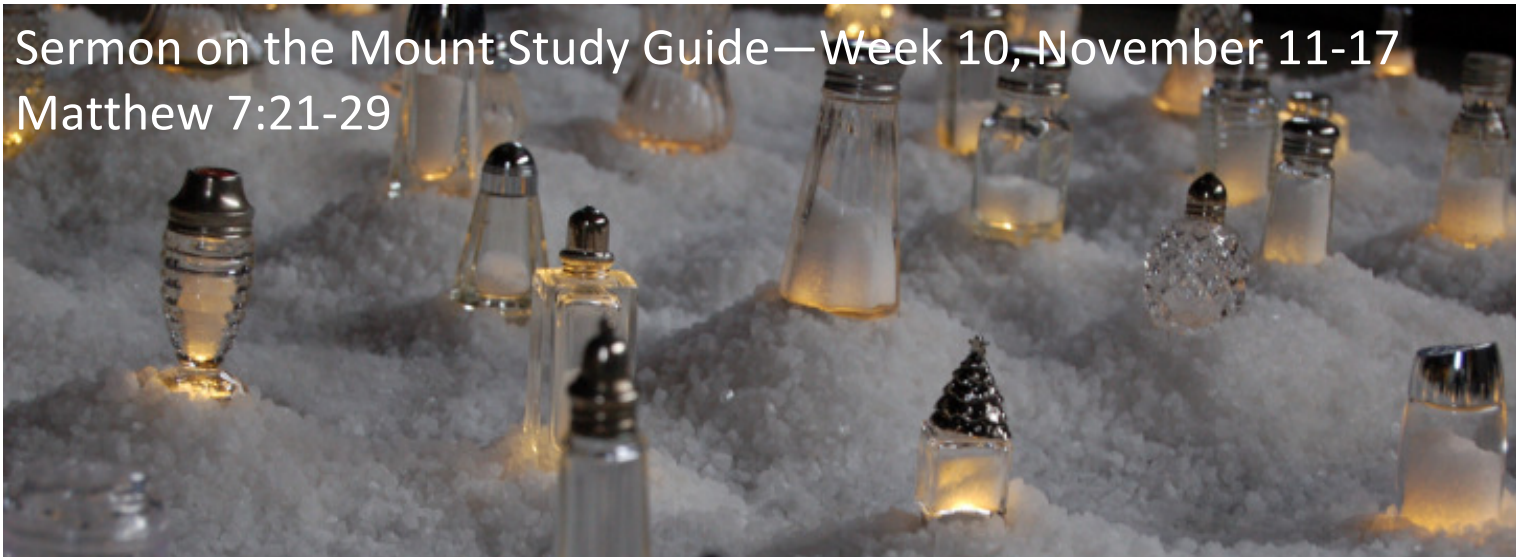


Sermon on the Mount Study Guide—Week 10, November 11-17

Matthew 7:21-29



- I. **“Now, when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.” (Matthew 5:1-2)**
- II. **Opening prayer for Illumination**
- III. **Read Matthew 7:21-29**
- IV. **Stott Study Guide: pp. 49-51**
- V. ***The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 281-373:**

As we looked at last week, Jesus’ final statements in the Sermon on the Mount encourage his listeners towards discipleship and a life of living in obedience to him. The final verses of Matthew 7 expand on this theme, further encouraging us to become his true disciples and build our lives on the rock of his words and teaching.

Reflecting on this, Dallas Willard writes, “The primary objectives for any successful course of training for ‘life on the rock,’ the life that hears and does, are twofold” (321):

- 1) “The first objective is to bring apprentices to the point where they dearly love and constantly delight in that ‘heavenly Father’ made real to earth in Jesus and are quite certain that there is no ‘catch,’ no limit, to the goodness of his intentions or to his power to carry them out” (321).
- 2) “The second primary objective of a curriculum for Christlikeness is to remove our automatic responses against the kingdom of God, to free the apprentices of domination, of ‘enslavement’ (John 8:34; Rom. 6:6), to their old habitual patterns of thought, feeling, and action” (322).

The spiritual disciplines of the Christian life are tested methods that believers have been using for centuries in order to free themselves from the “enslavement” of “their old habitual patterns of thought, feeling, and action.” Willard writes this about them:

The main task is, by engaging in ways of using the body differently, to disrupt and conquer habits of thought, feeling, and action that govern our lives as if we or someone other than God were God and as if his kingdom were irrelevant or inaccessible to us. Once this is done—or more accurately, hand in hand with doing it—we shift to the positive. Appropriate disciplines for developing *new* habits, kingdom habits, are practiced. The ultimate effect of this part of the curriculum is to make our body a reliable ally and resource for the spiritual life. (354)

But learning to use such disciplines to build our “houses on the rock,” is no easy task. Such spiritual progress often only comes by way of a practiced rhythm or plan of pursuing these disciplines. Using that kind of “rhythm of life” can help us avoid turning the disciplines into mere deeds of righteousness and instead rely on them as “wise counsels on how to live with Jesus in his kingdom (364). As Willard rightly points out, then, “Each of us must face the question What is *my* plan for doing that?” (364). As we seek to answer that question, we gain a picture of how to live more fully as disciples of Jesus and as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

VI. Questions of 1st Importance:

1. Questions for the Text

- i. In the Greek text, the double use of the vocative “Lord, Lord” in verses 21 and 22 was normally used with lots of emotion or emphasis. The point here, then, is that even a very emotional or sincere confession of Jesus as Lord is not enough to warrant inclusion in the Kingdom of God if one isn’t living according to the will of the Father. How does this inform our understanding of discipleship? What does it say about salvation?
- ii. Jesus makes it clear in verses 24-27 that his words must be put into action. What is the relationship between faith and action? If we’re saved by faith alone, why do our actions matter? How does our faith in Jesus change how we live and who we are as people of God?
- iii. After the Sermon ends, chapter 7 concludes with the following words: “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” Do we feel the same way? What about this teaching is amazing? What is the authority that Jesus has?

2. Questions for the World

- i. Regarding discipleship in North American churches, Willard writes, “Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church. It is not the much discussed moral failures, financial abuses, or the amazing general similarity between Christians and non-Christians. These are only effects of the underlying problem. The fundamental negative reality among Christian believers now is their failure to be constantly learning how to live their lives in The Kingdom Among Us. And it is an *accepted* reality. The division of professing Christians into those for whom it is a matter of whole-life devotion to God and those who maintain a consumer, or client, relationship to the church has now been an accepted reality for over fifteen hundred years” (DC, 301). Do we agree with this characterization of discipleship in the church? Why or why not? Is it true of our experiences in our own churches? How can such a situation be turned around?
- ii. Related to the last quotation, Willard writes, “The consumer Christian is one who utilizes the grace of God for forgiveness and the services of the church for special occasions, but does not give his or her life and innermost thoughts, feelings, and intentions over to the kingdom of the heavens. Such Christians are not inwardly transformed and not committed to it” (342). Have we ever been consumer Christians? What North American practices or mindsets have led to consumer Christianity? Rejection of authority? Church hopping? Relativization of truth? What might function as a corrective to consumer Christianity?

VII. Questions of 2nd Importance:

1. Questions for the Text

- i. Many theologians characterize Hell as the absence of God or removal from his presence. Do verses 21-23 offer us further understanding of this?
- ii. If Jesus’ words and teaching are the rock on which the wise man builds his house, what would the sand be on which the foolish man builds?

2. Questions for the World

- i. What are we building our houses on? Sand? Or are we building on the rock of Jesus?
- ii. Do we take this sermon seriously? Does Jesus seem as one with authority to us? How do his words change our lives?

VIII. If so desired, watch Monday’s chapel on this week’s text at:

IX. Recommended Spiritual Discipline for this week: Study