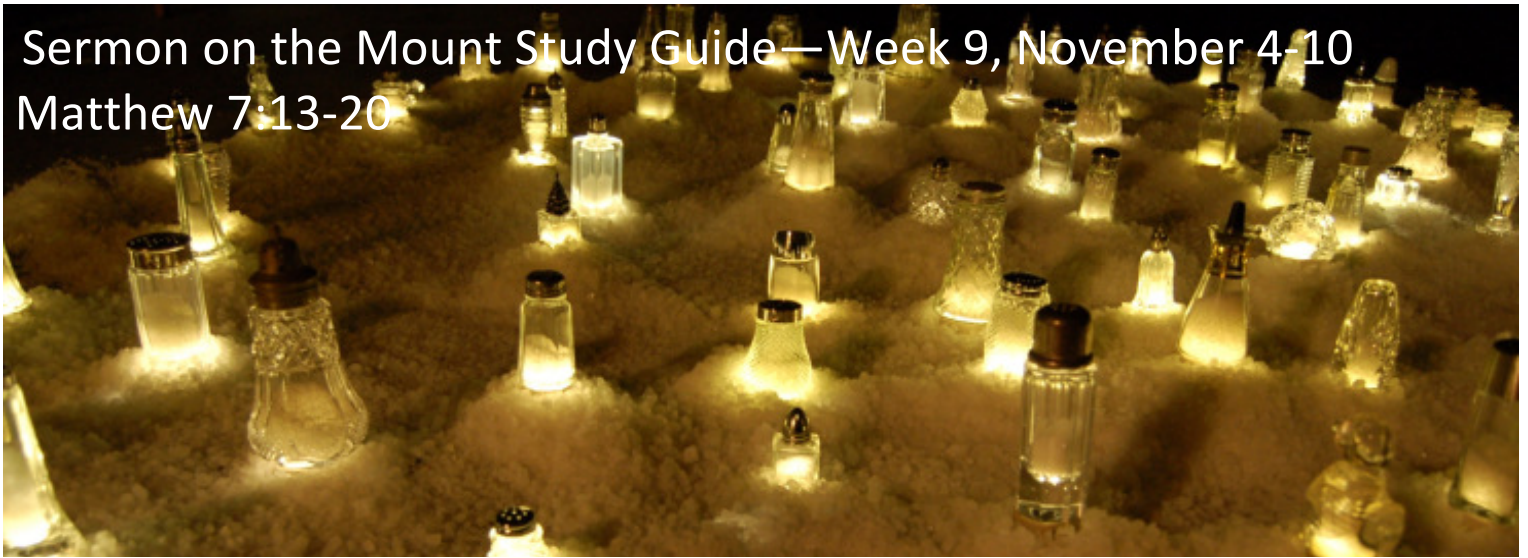


Sermon on the Mount Study Guide—Week 9, November 4-10

Matthew 7:13-20



- 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 7:13-20
- IV. Stott Study Guide: pp. 45-48
- V. *The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 273-280:

As we will see this week and next, Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount by charging his listeners with the task of routinely and heartily obeying all that he’s said. As Dallas Willard candidly quips, “No doubt [Jesus] understood ahead of time that every imaginable way would be tried to avoid simply doing the things he said and knew to be best, and now we see from history and all around us that it has been so” (274).

So, the question becomes, how are we supposed to follow and obey what Jesus lays out in Matthew 5-7? Willard answers that it’s not enough to simply listen to Jesus’ Sermon or “follow” him. Instead, we need to become his disciples. As Willard writes,

Plainly, in the eyes of Jesus there is no good reason for not doing what he said to do, for he only tells us to do what is best. In one situation he asks his students, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say (Luke 6:46). Just try picturing yourself standing before him and explaining why you did not do what he said was best. Now it may be that there are cases in which this would be appropriate. And certainly we can count on his understanding. But it will not do as a general posture in a life of confidence in him. He has made a way for us into easy and happy obedience—really, into personal fulfillment. And that way is apprenticeship to him. It is Christian “discipleship.” His gospel is a *gospel for life and Christian discipleship*. (273, emphasis Willard’s)

And so we enter the Kingdom of God through the narrow gate of obedience to Jesus, and we strive to produce fruit in keeping with what a true disciple of Jesus would exhibit. Now, as we’ve already seen in Matthew 6:1-8 and 16-18, we don’t display the fruit of our discipleship in some gaudy spectacle in the hope that it’ll gain us points with other people. Rather, we strive to produce fruit in keeping with our identity as citizens of our Father’s kingdom so that we may glorify God and testify to the fact that his reign has already begun.

It is out of that place of humble discipleship, then, that we invite others into the Kingdom as well, in turn discipling them just as Christ himself has discipled us. Learning from Jesus our savior, we become able to lead others to the narrow gate as well, teaching them how to grow ever more fully as members of God’s kingdom.

For a further introduction to this and next week’s studies, please read “The Narrow Way and Good Tree” on pp. 273-276 of *The Divine Conspiracy*.

VI. Questions of 1st Importance:

1. Questions for the Text

- i. Willard asserts that, “The narrow gate is not, as so often assumed, doctrinal correctness. The narrow gate is obedience—and the confidence in Jesus necessary to it. We can see that it is not doctrinal correctness because many people who cannot even understand the correct doctrines nevertheless place their full faith in him. Moreover, we find many people who seem to be very correct doctrinally but have hearts full of hatred and unforgiveness” (*DC*, 275). How does this reading of the text inform our understanding of what Jesus is trying to say here? Does this seem right to us? Given the general scope of the Sermon on the Mount, why does it seem better to say that Jesus is after obedience more than doctrinal correctness?
- ii. Willard describes the wide gate as “simply doing whatever I want to do” (*DC*, 275). Does this seem like a good understanding of what Jesus is teaching here? Why or why not? How does this relate to a discipleship? Given this reading of the text, what does discipleship to Jesus look like?
- iii. Willard characterizes the wolves in sheep’s clothing as those who try to fake discipleship by outward deeds (*DC*, 275). How is this different from the true discipleship that Jesus is talking about in this text?
- iv. What is the “good fruit” we are supposed to bear? Willard states that like the narrow gate, the good fruit is also a reference to obedience to Jesus. Do we agree with this reading? Why or why not?

2. Questions for the World

- i. In what ways have we turned from the narrow gate in our own lives and instead done whatever we want to? What kind of fruit did it bear?
- ii. Do we find obedience to Jesus hard? Why?
- iii. How are we supposed to treat false prophets when we come across them—those bearing bad fruit? What else has Jesus said in the Sermon that might help us answer that question?

VII. Questions of 2nd Importance:

1. Questions for the Text

- i. Verses 13-14 sound a bit like work’s righteousness. Given Willard’s insistence that Jesus never sets up another legalism in the Sermon on the Mount, how would we respond to someone who says that these verses preach salvation by works?
- ii. Jesus tells us in verses 16-20 that we’ll be able to recognize false prophets by their “bad fruit.” Is this easy for us to do, though? Why or why not?

2. Questions for the World

- i. What does discipleship look like in our lives? How do we understand this idea of discipleship to Jesus in the 21st century?
- ii. What kinds of actions further our pursuit of discipleship to Jesus? Have we found such things helpful in pursuing a life of discipleship to Jesus? Why or why not?

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

IX. Recommended Spiritual Discipline for this week: Confession