

Are You a Wise Man or a Fool?

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Please open your Bibles to the end of Matthew 7. Matthew 7. It's a significant moment in the life of our church as we do so because we come to the final passage in the Sermon on the Mount. This is the 63rd message, 63rd and final message I might say, of our survey of our exposition of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, and as is fitting at the end of such a great sermon from our Lord, he brings us face-to-face with the contrast between the reality of eternal hope and eternal destruction. We are faced with the ultimate outcome of life and eternity in the passage that we are going to see here this morning.

Now, just by way of review before we get to the actual text that we're going to look at, Jesus has warned us in verses 21 through 23 about the danger of false conversion and the awful consequence of entering into judgment not having truly been saved. Look at verse 21 with me. This is from the past few weeks that we've looked at this. Jesus says,

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.
22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Against that backdrop which came in the broader backdrop of his warnings against false teachers, which came in the broader backdrop of his warning that the way to heaven is narrow and the gate to eternal life is small, against that backdrop Jesus now concludes his sermon with a warning against the consequences of false faith and he does that so that we would appreciate the momentous issues that are at stake, and that we would take heed to the well-being of our own eternal souls. He has warned us about false conversion and now we enter into the final four verses of his sermon there in verse 24.

Look at it with me. This will be our text for this morning. He says,

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed

against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall."

He's obviously laying forth a comprehensive contrast of the reactions to his message. Some hear, believe and act on his words and they survive the final judgment, everyone else is doomed. He has laid it out for us completely and what he is doing here is he is giving us an illustration, these four verses are a great illustration of what it will be like at the end of the age and he is giving us this illustration to warn us to take him seriously. We'll be moving on from this passage and this will be my last time to say this for quite a while, maybe, but Jesus has been teaching for keeps. He is telling us this illustration, this contrast of the storm and the house that stands and the house that falls, he's giving it to us to instruct us and to warn us that this is of great consequence and, therefore, you must take it seriously. Everything is at stake with what you do with his words. Notice how he ties it to the hearing and the doing of his word here in verse 24. This is the whole point. This is the pivot point. This is the climax. This is the conclusion of it all. He says in verse 24, "everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them," joined together, verse 26, "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them." There are those who hear and receive it in their hearts. There are those where the words reach their ears but they stop their ears, they turn it off and they turn it away and say, "I will not have this King reign over me," and Jesus says there are consequences to that.

You know, beloved, the level of accountability that you all have from hearing these words from Scripture, hearing them explained, the consequences are great. The book of Hebrews says how much greater judgment will he deserve who has tread over the blood of Christ, who has heard the Gospel and refused to respond. There is great accountability to this and that is the point that Jesus is driving home here in what we see here today. He is describing, he is using as an illustration the typical storms that would occur in the local climate back then. There would be high winds and torrential rains that would produce sudden rivers in the previously dry ravines. The water carries away most everything in its path and this is a common feature of the climate and everyone knows it and wise men account for that in the way they construct their buildings. Foolish people do not. And he is taking that familiar picture that would have been in the minds of those who heard him at the time in order to do this: he's not teaching meteorology here, he is teaching about God's judgment. He is teaching about things of eternal consequence with what he says here and he says there are consequences to the way that you respond to what you have heard me say, these words of mine, he who hears them and acts upon them go one direction, he who hears them and does not act upon them goes another direction, and he intends this to be comprehensive, to understand that there is no third group. There is the one group, there is the other group and there is no remainder, and he starts with those who go to heaven, he finishes the illustration with those that go to hell in judgment. Let's look at this contrast through this lens, let's look, first of all, at the wisdom that leads to heaven. The wisdom that leads to heaven, and what he does here is he shows that it is the wise man and the wise man alone who passes through judgment into eternal life.

Look at verses 24 and 25 with me again. In some ways, this is a very inviting passage to study, to look at, because the storytelling of it is compelling and easy to understand, and it helps us to see that the issues of judgment are not complex, it's just that we make them complex by our refusal to hear. Look at verse 24 with me. Jesus says,

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."

Now, I want you to see a very important word right at the start there and it's the word "therefore." Do you see it there right at the start of verse 24, "Therefore"? Jesus is linking his conclusion of his sermon to everything that he had just been saying that we've talked about so often in the past several weeks, and I know that the text for those of you that have been with us is fairly well outlined in your mind so we can approach it this way. What Jesus is saying is this, with this word "therefore," he says, "Because the gate to heaven is narrow, because false teachers abound who lead people astray, because self-deception is such a threat, therefore in light of all of those things, whoever acts on my words that I am saying now can be considered in this manner. The way is narrow, false teachers abound, you are prone to self-deception, therefore in light of all of those risks, in light of all of those pitfalls, spiritually speaking, in light of all of those things, therefore the one who listens to me and acts on what I say can be considered a wise man." That's the connection there. The wise man is someone who is sensible. He has his wits about him. He is thinking rightly about life in light of the coming of judgment. That's the sense of the matter. He is wise. He is prudent. He is thinking properly about what is to come and he plans for it.

Within the context of his illustration, Jesus says, "The wise man who is building a house recognizes that storms will come in the future even if it's dry and safe right now, and therefore he goes to the trouble, he goes to the effort to build the house that he wants to dig down and to lay it on a foundation of rock that will not be moved. He excavates and gets to the bedrock and he grounds his house upon it because he knows that even though it's not raining right now, even though there are no storms in the vicinity at this moment, he knows that they are coming. He doesn't know when they will come but he knows that it is the nature of life that these storms will come and pound upon what he has built, and therefore looking ahead, he does the hard thing now so that he's able to survive when the storm comes later." And the illustration that Jesus is making about judgment shows how a prudent person should respond to his words and the simplicity of the illustration and the obvious nature of the terms of the illustration show us compellingly how we ought to factor eternal judgment into our thoughts about our present existence. Everybody, every one of us would understand, especially living in an area like ours that is prone to flooding from the Ohio River, every one of us understands, "Well, it's not flooding now but there is a long pattern of fact that flooding will come." So we have floodplains and we make plans for it because we know that eventually that river is going to overflow and so we

protect ourselves from what we know will come at an uncertain time, by acting prudently when there is no immediate danger at stake. That's all so obvious, isn't it? We all get that even if we don't know how to swing a hammer. We get the fact that you plan for future flooding.

Now, Jesus is using that picture to show how a wise man, how a prudent person should respond to his words. Jesus isn't teaching us about construction here, is he? That is not his point. He is not concerned about lumber and concrete and mortar in what he is saying here, is he? He is using that to picture something else of far greater consequence and what he is saying is this: he's saying that the nature of God's judgment can be compared to the certainty of a storm that comes. That storm will hit everything in its path and in like manner, God's judgment will fall upon everyone in his path which includes all of you, which includes all of humanity. There is no one who escapes the storm of God's judgment, the question is do you come through it safe or not, and what he's saying is a wise man recognizes the danger of that coming judgment and he plans for it by acting upon Jesus' words now while he can before it's too late. He hears the word of Christ and he obeys. He hears the call to repent and he responds and forsakes sin and comes to Christ. He hears the promise of eternal life offered to him when his sincere repentant faith is put in Christ alone, and he says, "I want that eternal life. I'm a sinner. I need rescue. I need redemption. I'll come to Christ now even though it costs me in the meantime. I compare the cost of taking up my cross to follow Christ, I compare that to the coming of judgment and I say that is no price to pay. There is no real cost in that because it secures me through judgment that is certain to come." And Jesus says, "A man who hears me earnestly and comes to me by faith and lives in response to what I have said, that's the wise man." And we know from the context of the earlier things that he said, there aren't many of them around. There ain't many wise men in the world. There aren't many wise men in the broader people that claim to know Christ, even. He had just said that, "There are many who will say to me, 'Lord, Lord.'" So you see, despite all of the efforts of so many modern churches to entertain their flock, if you are thinking rightly about it you say, "This is nothing to laugh about. This is not given to us to entertain us as another segment of a long line of our ability to entertain ourselves to death. This is not for our amusement, this is for our eternal well-being." Jesus says this to wake us up out of our slumber, to alert us to the coming danger, and he has made it plain that not many will hear the call but it will be their own fault because he has taught clearly and made it plain.

What can we say about this wise man that Jesus describes? And keep in mind that the whole intent of what he's saying here is for us to reflect upon our own lives, our own hearts, to see whether we fit this pattern or not. Beloved, let me say this, I say it in love, but Jesus is not giving this instruction to you out of his word this morning so that you can evaluate your spouse, so that you can evaluate your child, or that you can evaluate your mom or dad, or you can think about it and apply it to somebody else. This is all about you personally. This is you face-to-face with the one that you will one day stand before in a time of judgment. What Jesus says is that the wise man is someone who actually repents and believes. He actually ceases to do evil and learns to do good. He genuinely responds in a way that affects and redirects the course of his life. This is not an intellectual assent that says, "Yes, I believe those things about Jesus," but never filters down to the way that

the man views sin or the way that he responds to it; it never filters down to a point where he genuinely loves God's word enough to actually pick it up and read it.

It never filters down like that for the fool. The wise man isn't like that. He embraces it and this becomes his life, "Christ, my life. Christ, my love. Christ, my hope." And there becomes this dominating passion, there becomes this dominating sense that Christ is so elevated in the man's heart that he sees nothing else of value by comparison. He says, "Christ is my pearl of great price and if I have him, I have all no matter what I lose on earth. If I were to not have Christ, I would have nothing." There is that exclusivity of direction and focus in his heart and life. To put it in the terms of kingdom terminology, he comes and recognizes Christ as King, gladly bows before him and speaking metaphorically we could say, he kisses the scepter of his rule and says, "I embrace that as my own. Lord Jesus, you are my King. You are the one I love and I will follow you. I will hear your word and I will respond in belief and in trust and in obedience, and if I fall short, as I surely will, I will do so with a broken heart, not with a hardheaded resistance to your correction." That's the mark of the wise man.

What's the outcome for him? Look at verse 25, "the rain fell," an illustration of judgment, "the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house." You get a picture of a building torrent, don't you? It's like there is this acceleration of intensity and severity. You see the storm coming, you see it developing and then swoosh, on the house it falls, and what does it leave in its aftermath? Jesus looks at the wise man and says even though all of that slammed against his house, "it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock." His advance prudence, his willingness to take seriously the danger and to act upon it and to prepare for it in advance, made it so that he survived that storm without harm. It's a wonderful picture of the wonderful shelter that we have in Christ, that even though there is a certain judgment that is coming, that those of us who belong to Christ, that take our shelter in him, our spiritual refuge in him, that trust in him and his righteousness alone for our redemption, that he has us covered, he has us safe, and when the certainty of God's judgment comes, it will not singe a hair on our head. So great is the love and the protection and the security that Christ has for his own. This is sweet and precious and Jesus starts there in talking about the outcome. When he says it did not fall, the house did not fall, he means this wise man will pass through God's judgment safely because he had heard the word of Christ, he believed and he acted upon it.

His belief in Christ was real. Christ will shield him. He has found the wisdom that leads to heaven. Wouldn't you want to be there? Wouldn't you want to be in a house that stood in a storm? I have friends that lived through – we all have friends, the Creloff's and the Trofimuk's and others that lived through that recent hurricane that hit the Tampa Bay area just last year, sheltered down in their home and their home stood the test of a hurricane. Well, a much greater hurricane is coming upon every life, a hurricane of judgment, of relentless power from a wrathful God, and Christ here before that judgment comes graciously offers salvation and refuge to everyone who will come to him and believe and he says, "If you are wise, you will heed my words and come to me for deliverance so that you will pass safely through that judgment." The consequences are eternal. Christ has shown us what the wise man does, he hears and he acts upon it.

Well, by contrast let's look at the foolishness that leads to hell. Point 2: the foolishness that leads to hell, and by contrast to the wise man that Jesus commends, this foolish man meets with unspeakably great ruin. Look at verse 26,

26 "Everyone [no exceptions] who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.
27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall."

That word "foolish" is an interesting word in the original language. If I can put it this way, it's a fun word within its own sense, and here's what I mean by that: the Greek word that is translated "foolish" here is the same word that gives us our English word "moron." The fool here is a moron. He is acting foolishly, and in a more precise technical sense, this word refers to an absence of common wisdom in providing for your own security. There is an absence of common wisdom, of basic common sense that Jesus is describing here. He says this is what the fool looks like. This is moronic what he's describing here and it describes the foolishness, the utter senility of hearing these words and not responding to them, and Jesus shows what the outcome is and what it is that marks this fool.

This fool is in a hurry to build his house. He wants quick results and he doesn't calculate the future into his construction, and so he neglects time-tested basic principles of building a building and just throws something together so that he can get on with life. Do you know what's frightening about this? There is so much that is frightening about it. One of the things that is frightening about that is this: his house stands for a while. It stands side-by-side to the one that is built rightly. You could look at them side-by-side in the moment and not necessarily detect any difference between them, and so he's in his house and he congratulates himself that he hasn't gone to all the trouble that those others have gone to and yet he has his house, but here's the thing, my friends, here's the thing: he has a false sense of security. It is not what it seems to be because eventually there is a price to pay. The same storm came upon his house as well but the result was different. The foundation is swept away and the house falls in a mighty crash that leaves a somber silence in its wake. You know what it's like after a big storm has moved through, right, and all of the strong booming thunder and then the storm has passed through and there is a silence in its wake? Multiply that by a thousand and you have a sense of what Jesus is describing here. The boom of collapse and then there is this holy hush in its wake.

What should we learn from this foolish man? Well, in outer appearances he looks like the wise man. His house looks the same but beneath the appearances there is a fundamental difference. Let me remind you of something from verse 21 to inform our context and understanding here. Look up just a moment to verse 21 where Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Jesus is describing the same kind of dynamic in that verse here. You have two groups of people, both of whom are professing Christ as Lord. One is the obedient Christian, the other has only been giving him lipservice all

along. Here's where the immense capacity for deception resides, beloved: outwardly looking the same. Outwardly giving the same verbal profession of faith but inside it's different. Inside it's not the humble man. It's not the man who mourns over sin. It's not the peacemaker described in the Beatitudes at the beginning of chapter 5. Inside where man does not see, it's something different. This foolish man professes Christ but does not obey him and, therefore, he does not truly love Christ at all. He does not truly belong to him.

What did Jesus say in John 15? Finish the sentence for me, "If you love Me, you will keep My... commandments. If you love Me, you will obey, you will respond." You will not simply give a token verbal affirmation that you don't mean, there is not room for this fundamental hypocrisy of lips that confess his name but a life that utterly rejects his Lordship. Jesus will have none of the sham, even though the sham works in outward appearances before men for a time, even for years.

This man does not love Christ. He does not truly hunger and thirst for righteousness. Christ is not the supreme love of his heart. Jesus says that man is a fool and he can be recognized by his refusal to obey. This is the man who can live in sin without compunction of conscience. This is the man who can reject his word, who can be a chameleon, who can be with the people of God on a Sunday morning but is equally comfortable at the bar on Friday night. And you see, beloved, from our human perspective, let's take a mental walk on the beach for just a moment and look before the storm at the two houses that are there. Just in the natural course of our natural appearances, we look at that and say those houses are just alike. Jesus says import that into the spiritual realm and realize that lives can look the same on the outside but it's the inner foundational construction that makes the difference. Men may not see the difference now, but this fool's hypocrisy will be exposed in judgment. J. C. Ryle said this about the fool and what it is that marks him, he says about this fool, and I quote, "He never really breaks off from sin and casts aside the spirit of the world. He never really lays hold on Christ. He never really takes up the cross. He is a hearer of truth but nothing more. A faith which costs us nothing and consists in nothing but hearing sermons will always prove at last to be a useless thing."

The fool, this moron, has been warned. He has been warned of an incalculable risk to his eternal well-being. Just like the fool who built his house on the sand knew from experience that floods come, "Then why are you building on something that's not going to last, you fool," they say as he builds his house. And he rejects the warning. He rejects the instruction. He refuses to hear and he goes about his merry way seeing only what is in front of him today. Beloved, in the course of your soul, is that you, I have to ask you? Is your concern about Christ and Scripture and spiritual life simply limited to what it can do for you today without any thought of the judgment to come? Has it ever occurred to you that you are going to stand before God in a fierce judgment to the point that you fled to a loving invitation of the Gospel of Christ to come and find your full salvation in him? Or are you just like the multitudes, the masses, living from day to day, content to have a sermonette for Christianettes, tickling your ears, stroking your ego, helping you to know how to pursue your passion in life without any regard for what Scripture says will be

God's holy fierce wrath on sin? Only you can answer that question. I can't answer it for you.

But the foolish man has been warned of this risk and he fails to respond. He lives for the moment and in the end he reaps eternal judgment. He will miss salvation eternally and be crushed in utter destruction. Jesus holds out the promise to the wise man who has taken refuge by faith in him and says, "Take heart. I will protect you. I will uphold you. I will be your fortress. I will be your shield. I will be your strength in judgment." And if you are the wise man who has responded to Christ and put your faith in him, this passage holds no fear to you because he says that house stands. It's the fools that need to be afraid here.

What would Jesus have us take away from this as we pivot into the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount? The similarity of the houses shows us that there are similarities between true and false Christians, true and false members of the kingdom. Think with me for a moment here. The wise man and the foolish man, they operated in the same sphere, right? They were in the same locality using the same materials. True and false Christians, same sphere, hearing the same sermons. They both want to go to heaven. They both believe they are safe but they are vastly different with vastly different eternities ahead of them. The wise man, truly devoted to Christ. The wise man, loves Christ enough to obey him. The wise man, takes future judgment seriously. The wise man, subordinates his life truly to Christ. The foolish man, however, is fatally different. The fool may show up on Sunday, maybe he will, maybe he won't, it depends on what game is on. He may show up on Sunday, he may have the name of Jesus on his lips, but one of the ways that you can mark the fool over time, week after week, month after month, year after year, there is no change. There is no growth. There is no greater conformity to the image of Christ. Do you know why there is no growth in the fool? Do you know why there is no growth in some members of the church ever? It's because there is no life in them. If there is life in a plant, it will grow. If there is life in the soul, it will grow.

This fool chooses his own desires over the commands of Christ. How can you recognize this fool? Hear me closely, hear me carefully: this fool has no real interest in the spiritual transformation that Jesus describes throughout the Sermon on the Mount. He has no real interest in mourning over sin, of poverty of spirit. He has no real interest in being a light for Christ in the world. He has no real interest in manifesting a personal righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. He has no real interest in dealing with his inner sins of anger and lust as long as the outward appearance is okay and no one suspects what's really going on in his heart. The fool likes to play the part of the hypocrite. He likes to call attention to himself when he gives, when he fasts, when he prays. The fool has his own agenda in prayer. By the way, if you haven't noticed, we're just doing a summary of the Sermon on the Mount from chapter 5, 6 and 7. The fool, the hypocrite, the one who is dead, if he prays at all can be marked by what used to mark my prayer life before I was a Christian, "God, give me this. God, help me that. God, I want this." Utterly devoid of any sense of giving honor to Christ in prayer, any sense of submission to the will of God in prayer, any sense of preferring his kingdom over our little earthly fiefdom here in life. Utterly devoid of any sense of dependence, "Give us this day our daily bread." The fool is marked by an utter absence of confession of sin,

"Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors." The fool is utterly unconcerned for any aspect of holiness, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." We could talk about fasting. The wise man is marked by a trust, "God, I trust you enough to subordinate my anxiety and my sense of loss to the greater reality that you are my heavenly Father and that's enough for me." And more recently we have gone through chapter 7. You see, what you must understand as you contemplate what Christ is teaching here, what you must understand in the teaching of Christ here is this: is that this is the conclusion of everything that he said in 5, 6 and 7, so that you see the sweep of what he is saying. The fullness of it comes when he says, "You've acted on my words." You look at the totality of this sermon and say, "This is what I am responding to."

You see, beloved, in light of the fullness of Jesus' sermon here, you could say this: no one can truly claim the name of Christ with any sense of confidence if – listen to every word carefully – he is not interested in the righteousness of the kingdom. Jesus said seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. The question becomes, then, whether the wise man and the fool are distinguished by ultimately in their inner man, their desire for the righteousness of which Christ has been teaching in Matthew 5, 6 and 7.

So we ask you whether that has any place in your affections and priorities? Judgment is coming with greater force than we can imagine. True Christians will be safe. I am not concerned about coming judgment for my own soul because I know that Christ will be faithful to his promise to keep me. Death holds no fear. Judgment holds no fear. Not because I don't deserve judgment, I deserve a heap of it, but Christ has paid the price. Christ has absorbed the judgment and everyone whose faith is in Christ will be safe. Those who play games, those who are not interested in heart transformation, will not, no matter what else they say with their mouth. So it's on that sobering note, my friends, that Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount. Throughout the colossal greatness of this sermon he has shown us our spiritual bankruptcy and pointed us to himself as the only way of salvation.

How did the audience of his day respond? Well, look at verses 28 and 29.

28 When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; 29 for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew tells us that the audience that heard Jesus speak this sermon, they were thunderstruck at his authority. He was speaking to them as one with sovereign prerogative, with power, and elsewhere in Scripture it is repeatedly affirmed that the people who heard Jesus speak repeatedly said, "We have never heard a man speak like this man speaks." They saw authority. They saw divine power, divine truth. They had heard it and they knew it and so they were amazed. But do you know what Matthew doesn't tell us? Matthew's description of the crowd leaves a very crucial question unanswered: he doesn't say whether they acted on it. He doesn't say whether they obeyed it. He quotes Christ saying, "He who hears My words and acts on them, wise man. He

who hears and does not act on them, fool." But he doesn't describe the audience in those terms. He simply says they were amazed. We don't know how they responded. You know, you can admire preaching, you can admire eloquent teachers of God's word and still be in unbelief. The open question of Matthew's narrative ultimately forces the issue to you. Don't worry about the crowd, worry about your own soul.

Beloved, through God's word to the best of the feeble ability of the man who stands before you preaching God's word, you have seen the authority of Christ. He calls you to repent. He calls you to repent with a faith that trusts him alone for the forgiveness of sin. He calls you to joyfully respond to him in life obedience. We have sung today, "Come thou, Almighty King. Jesus will reign wherever the sun does its successive journey's run." We've sung that. I'm grateful for the singing but compared to whether your heart is in line with those words, the vocal quality of the music is quite secondary. Jesus calls you to move beyond hearing to doing and now you have to answer. Answer well, my friends, because one day the winds of judgment are going to blow hard and only in Christ will you stand the test. In unfathomable love and grace and mercy and patience, God has brought you to a place in your life today where these issues have been made plain before you, and in that same love and grace and patience and mercy, Christ invites you to come. In light of the certainty of the finality of judgment, he comes and graciously says, "I will deliver you from it all. Come to me and find your salvation and I'll freely give it," he says, in essence. Beloved, it's only in Christ that your life will stand the test. Do you know him? Have you come to him in this manner of trusting, repentant, obedient faith? Answer well, my friends. Answer well this final question as the final aspect of the final sermon that we'll have on the Sermon on the Mount. Answer the question well: are you a wise man or a fool?

Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father, you warn us of judgment in order to bring us to grace. I pray for your grace to be at work in every heart that's here. I pray that the glory and the magnificence of Christ would rise greatly in the hearts of each one and that true Christians who have wisely given their life to Christ would find themselves strengthened and encouraged by the assurance that their life will not collapse in judgment. Father, for the hypocrites that are with us, the ones who are self-deceived, show grace to them as well. Stir in their hearts an awareness of concern that leads them quickly to Christ to be saved. Give them the assurance, the understanding that Christ will receive them right now without condition, without any kind of life improvement; that this Christ receives sinners and he receives them gladly. Help them, O God. Bless them. May all under the sound of my voice be found in the end to be the wise man and not the fool. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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