



## Matthew: Alive to God's Desire

Week 8, Sermon Preached 2/19/2012

### Matthew 7:24-29

#### Start it

- After an opening prayer and asking someone to read Matthew 7: 24-29, explore several common understandings and definitions for “foolish” and “wise.”
- Using James 3:13-18 (or a favorite Biblical passage of your own), what does Biblical wisdom and foolishness look like?
- Think of one example of both foolish and wise decisions and/or behavior from your own life and share with the group.

#### Study it

- Read James 1:22-25. How do the comparisons that are found in Matthew and James help to “make real and alive” the overarching theme of obedience to God’s commands and one’s present duty, or “the necessity for active obedience that springs from childlike trust”?<sup>1</sup> What do the comparisons tell us about God’s character?
- What is Jesus referring to when he says: “...it fell with a great crash.” (27b)? Do you know examples of this happening? Share. Concerning your example, can you identify any previously studied admonitions in Matthew 5, 6 or 7 that were not put into practice?
- Jesus radicalizes well known Mosaic laws—which his listeners knew were difficult enough to keep. How then are we to keep Jesus’ commands? What is the only basis for the “putting into practice” of these principles? What must we do to establish a personal relationship with God? What then is our responsibility as we seek to mature in the Christian faith?

#### Live it

- The Sermon on the Mount, sometimes referred to as God’s handbook of Christian instruction, can be roughly divided into admonitions to encourage good relationships with God and with others. Divide a paper into two columns, heading them with: “Relationship With God” and “Relationships With Others”. Together, try to find as many instructions (summarize in one or two words) for each column in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 as you can. (Hint: there are 10 or more for each column.)
- After finishing the chart above, write out several admonitions the Holy Spirit lays on your heart. Write them on a card to remind you in the next days and weeks to keep working on them.
- Write out specific steps you will take to implement the admonitions above, and share with one other person (or your group), asking them to hold you accountable.
  - An example of specifics: I’m going to try to spend about 30 minutes in prayer each day by spending 30 min. less on TV/computer.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hein, Rolland. *The Harmony Within: The Spiritual Vision of George MacDonald* (Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1999) 55

- I want to fast one or two meals each week, spending the extra time in Bible study/meditation or prayer. I'll give the extra money to the church, Soup Kitchen, Rescue Mission or ESM.

### **Pray it**

- Some prayer "starters" or thoughts follow. Make sure you take time to pray specifically for each individual's steps in putting into practice the admonitions and instructions from the Sermon on the Mount we've been studying these past weeks.

"Gracious God, You have created us for a unique and special purpose. By your holy design, we have a sacred reason for being here: a divine plan to carry out in the years we are given. Help us appreciate the talents and abilities You have granted us and lead us to use them to complete our life tasks. Give us the courage to realize our dreams, the energy to fulfill your goals and the desire to be your instruments of inspiration and love for others on our journey...

"Fill us with grace and strength to bend our will to Yours in all we say and do. Let our greatest success in life be to make the world a better place because we have been here and leave behind a legacy of love.

"Father all-powerful, Your gifts of love are countless and Your goodness is infinite. We come before You with gratitude for Your kindness. Open our hearts to concern for our brothers and sisters, so that we may share Your gifts in loving service.

"God the creator, redeemer and sanctifier of all who believe and trust in You, bless our [church] in its work for your kingdom here on earth. Strengthen the faith and commitment of its members, deepen the bonds of community and grant to all a spirit of sharing, generosity, and self-sacrifice. We ask this through Christ our Lord."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Prayers for Stewardship Corpus Christi Parish, November 2005