

***Matt. 7:21-29***

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you evildoers.’

“Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

And when Jesus finished these saying, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

***The Gospel of the Lord***

## **Reflection Questions**

- 1) **The Context:** This passage appears at the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). The Sermon on the Mount begins with the teachings on the Beatitudes (Blessed are...the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, peacemakers, those who hunger & thirst for righteousness, those who are persecuted for righteousness sake—all the dispositions of the true disciple). This passage ends with reminding us of the choices, and actions of a true disciple of Jesus. In the verses that precede this passage we see Jesus warning against the wide gates and broad roads that lead to destruction and urging them to choose the narrow road that leads to life. He warns against false prophet and how to identify them (e.g. those who do not bear good fruit). Then Jesus warns them that only those who do the will of the Father will enter the Kingdom of heaven (vv 21-23) and those who do not do the will of the Father will experience a great collapse. (See Luke 6: 47-49)
  
- 2) “Not everyone who says to Me; “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in Heaven.” (vs. 21). In this verse, Jesus is making a clear distinction between words and actions. People can honor Jesus with the correct title (Kyrios—meaning Lord, frequently used to refer to a landowner or to God). Jesus is equating Himself with God here and reminding them that the words and the title are not enough; we are called to honor our Lord God with our actions and our lives. It is putting the Father's will into action that creates where the ‘rubber hits the road’. So we naturally find ourselves asking “What is the Father's will? (according to St. Matthew). We see it spelled out in a number of passages: ‘Let your light shine so as to glorify God and draw others to Him’ (5:16); ‘Keep the commandments’ (5:17-20); resolve conflicts (5:21-26); Keep the marriage covenant sacred (5:27-32); Speak honestly “let yes be yes and no be no” (5:34-37); act generously and lovingly towards our neighbors and our enemies (5:38-48); ‘give alms and pray to the Father in secret’ (6:1-6); to forgive (6: 14-15); 8) ‘seek the Kingdom above all else’ (6:24-34), and not to judge others (7:1-5); to show mercy (9:13); to care for the little ones and the lost (18:10-14); to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner

(25:31-46); make disciples of all nations (28:16-20). As we take a look at this list let us pray with it. Where are we falling short? Where do we need God's grace more in our lives in order to enact it? How can we go about identifying and asking for the graces we need in order to live God's will more fully?

- 3) In Verse 22 Jesus says; "Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in Your Name? Did we not drive out demons in Your Name? Did we not do mighty deeds in Your Name? Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you evildoers.'

The phrase 'on that day' is a reference to "the Day of the Lord, the eschatological 'end of time' (see Isaiah 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10, Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3, Joel 1:15, 2:1; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7). Later in this gospel Jesus will give a more lengthy description of what 'that day' looks like. (see Matt. 25:31-43). In Matthew Chp. 25 Jesus reminds His disciples again of what it means to Him to do the Father's will (e.g. reaching out the little ones in need and loving our neighbors as well as our enemies). In verse 22 Jesus seems to be judging even the people who ministered in His Name harshly. What is so bad about prophesying, driving out demons, and doing mighty deeds in His name? Those things in and of themselves are not bad, but if they are not accompanied by reaching out to the poor, the lonely, the sick, the imprisoned, the homeless they are empty. When have we been tempted solely to engage in the more 'glamorous' types of ministry (public preaching, presiding, lecturing, Eucharistic ministry) while neglecting the needs of the most vulnerable (physically, socially, spiritually ...economically) in our midst? Why does Jesus seem to have no patience for those who neglect the needs of the most vulnerable?

- 4) Jesus says; "Depart from me you *evildoers* (literally 'lawless ones') I never knew you." The term "lawless one" here is a Greek word "anomial" (literally 'without law, not acknowledging that the law, God's law, has any bearing on their lives). The 'lawless ones' in that time were those who rejected the Torah as Jesus interpreted it for them. The verb "*knew*" here implies a deep intimate relationship (as between a man and his wife), or between God and Moses (Deut. 34:10). When Jesus says that He never 'knew' these people, He is reminding them that no deep intimacy had ever been shared between them. Had there been a deep intimacy, the person(s) would have shared some of the deepest concerns of Jesus' heart which would be

His heart for the disenfranchised, the most vulnerable. There is a connection between intimacy with Christ (sharing in His deepest concerns- i.e. *knowing* Him) and acknowledging the value of God's Laws. To know is to Love. On this feast of the Sacred Heart, we can ask ourselves; 'do our hearts love what Christ's heart loves, do our hearts weep over what His heart weeps over?' Why? Why not? How has your study of Scripture helped you grow in your love for Jesus and His standards for your life? How has this knowledge and love increased your intimacy with Him? What is the connection for us as Catholic Christians between Christ's standards, knowing Him and being of service to others? How do all of those facets feed off each other and strengthen each other to make us more effective ministers and witnesses of His love in this world?

- 5) In Verses 24-25 Jesus makes the analogy that the person who hears His words and acts on them is like the person who built his house on a rock and when the rains, floods and winds came that house did not fall because of its solid foundation. We who live in the Bay Area know the exact value of a firm foundation and a seismically sound building as we live in a major fault zone. We have each experienced the 'storms' of life as well. What is our foundation (spiritual, emotional, relational moral) that helps us to weather the inevitable 'storms of life'? In what ways has Jesus, the Scripture, the Sacraments, our Church community, Church teaching, our loving relationships been a foundation for you in the midst of life's storms? How are we each called to continually strengthen our foundation in Him? How is that foundation a witness to others who may be struggling amidst the storms of life?
- 6) Then Jesus contrasts the above scenario with the 'foolish person who built his house on sand' and when the storms came and winds blew, the house fell. The word for 'foolish' here is the Greek term "*moros*" from which we get our word "*moron*". The wise man and the foolish one will be facing the same storms, but the end result will be completely different. The word "*moron*" seems like such a harsh term for Jesus to use here, but if we look at the entire context of the story, it seems appropriate. Jesus give people the option of following Him and His Way (founding their lives on Him and His Way) which does not require any particular superhuman strength or intelligence, the simplest child can do it (in fact, the simplest child often accomplishes

this better than we do). When a person chooses to make their foundation something other than Jesus and His Way (e.g. money, status, power, a relationship...or some other idol), Jesus would consider this (choosing to found one's life on idols) very moronic, because the alternative (e.g. following Him) is not only easier but much more secure. What is our foundation? Why? How do we help our children (and anyone else placed in our care) to found their lives on Jesus?

- 7) In the final verse (vs. 29) the gospel writer sets up one more contrast, Jesus teaches as one who has authority, whereas the scribes do not. Jesus' words clearly hold weight and have authority because they are often translated into miraculous action ( Be made clean, take up your mat and walk, let it be done for you according to your faith, your servant is healed). When have we experience the authoritative teaching/ Word of Christ in our lives translating into powerful action? How can we be more in tune with His authority and power in our lives?