

“Christ, Our Foundation” [Matthew 7:24; Luke 6:47; Proverbs 1:33] January 20, 2019

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Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock Matt. 7:24

*I show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words and acts on them Lk. 6:47
those who listen to me will be secure .. Pvbs. 1:33*

Today I want to talk about one of my favourite parables. I hope you remember what a parable is? Parents and grandparents especially have had the repeated and delightful experience of having children come to us and say, *tell me a story*. The simple stories are told repeatedly and frequently because of the insistence of the children. In most case they are well remembered and often, never forgotten. Some are so well remembered that we tell them from one generation to the next. Most have both a story and a point. ie: *Jack and Jill went up the hill: Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold*; the symbolism of, *the cow jumped over the moon*; and perhaps, more recently, *green eggs and ham*; and my personal favourite, *the little engine thought he could*. Story telling is a great way to teach and it was Jesus’ favourite way to teach and if we know nothing about him except that he was the teller of the parables found in the Gospels, we would still have to claim him as the world’s greatest teacher. His stories which we call parables were most intriguing, interesting and instructive as well as comprehensive. He used common everyday well know facts of life to make clear the way of salvation, the necessity and procedures of Godly and upright living, and the essential principles of His kingdom.

Matthew 13:34, *He did not speak to them without a parable*. In the parallel story that we read this morning from Matthew and Luke, Jesus asks the people, *Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Good truth is important but Jesus is declaring here that it will be of no avail unless properly heeded. The parable is commonly referred to as *The parable of the two house builders*. Many have not listed this as a parable or listened to it as a parable. It is the conclusion of the world’s greatest sermon, *The Sermon on the Mount*. When we study this we find Jesus is calling the people to hear His words and to respond to them. He presents these two builders to us as representing the two classes or conditions of humanity, those who take Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and live by faith in Him, and on the other hand, those who live outwardly on the sparks of their own kindling, refusing and or neglecting Jesus as Messiah, Saviour and Lord.

A few years ago I read a story of Winchester Cathedral. It is a large solid looking building, typical of many of the great cathedrals and abbeys in Britain and Europe. You are familiar with either pictures or movies of them. In 1905 Winchester Cathedral was found to have developed some major cracks and sinking that had started to cause concern for the safety of the structure. To find out what was wrong, the engineers had to dig to the footing to see if there had been any change in the geological formation. To their surprise they dug down into swampy ground and found the foundation of the great cathedral resting on rotting tree trunks. (This was a situation here in Cornwall a few years ago with a church building not far from our sanctuary). They could not explain why the structure had not fallen down hundreds of years before. Just as a cathedral or any other building cannot stand indefinitely without a proper foundation, just so we cannot be approved by God and cannot stand the storms of time and the judgment without a God prepared foundation. In order to emphasize this truth, Jesus tells a story about two men, one wise and the other foolish. Each built a house. One used sand for a foundation while the other built his house upon a rock foundation. They both had a common need, namely a house. There was a personal responsibility with both men to have a house, a place of shelter, something that we all need. Jesus is teaching here that each person needs a shelter for the soul. The tempest and the storm of God’s wrath is surely going to descend upon sin. Everyone is a sinner, *for all have fallen short of the glory of God*. It is therefore important that each one build his house on Christ the sure and eternal foundation. Jesus speaking to Nicodemus said, *he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*. [Jn 3:36].

In Christ there is a place where all can build a spiritual house and experience an adequate refuge for the soul. If you will build your house upon Christ it will provide you a place where you can have fellowship with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. John in his Epistle has stated it beautifully, *this will also result in a delightful and enriching fellowship with one another*. No association is higher, more delightful, strengthening and encouraging than that of Christian fellowship.

Jesus declares that because the person is wise, they know they need a firm foundation. Therefore they dig until they strike the rock. They have no faith in the sand. They know they need the support of the rock. They make a response to Jesus' words, *without me you can do nothing*. [Jn 15:5]. Since the Fall of Adam, mankind is outside the glory of God and is in need of forgiveness. Jesus' words to us are, *no one cometh to the Father but through me*. And the rest of the testimony, *I am the way, the truth and the life*. [Jn 14:6]. Paul in Acts 4:12 gives witness to the good news when he says, *neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*.

The Interpreter's Bible, calls attention to this passage for all who want to call themselves, "Christians", for those who would call Him, *kupios* or *rabbi*, *great teacher*, it is clear that Jesus is saying that it is absurd to address someone as, *my teacher*, if you pay no attention to their teaching or, presume that the teacher knows nothing. We are being told in this teaching that our foundation will have to be in Christ, the Son of God, humanity's only Saviour.

The wise man of the lesson was not satisfied to just find the rock. He went on to build. There are many contemporary Christians who believe in Christ as the Son of God and believe that He is humanity's only Saviour. They declare that they have trusted Him but seem to go no further. They seem indifferent to the building programme. They rest on the foundation., they do not build upon it. They profess to be baptised in the body of Christ, some say they are saved, but their lives do not reveal the structure of faith. II Peter 1: 5-10 presents a pointed message along this line. He says: *And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, Godliness, and to Godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall*.

The wise person who has personally accepted Christ as Saviour and then builds upon the rock will find that when the floods of temptation, trial, test and even the final judgment come, they have something that stands. Christ will not fail such a person. The life built upon Christ will be as the Eternal Throne. Christ has given us the promise that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against the church or the person who builds on His rock.

The other person in the parable is the foolish one. Luke says he is the one who heareth and doeth not. Jesus says he is like the man who builds on the sand without a foundation so that the house falls in the storm. This fits many of the masses of religious people. They hear the Bible, they act out their godliness in various ways as it is convenient. They are baptised with water, they come to the Lord's table from time to time, they get married in the House of God but they have only the appearance. They build a house without a foundation. They refuse the way of the Bible, of repentance, confession and restitution. They offer to God as little as possible of their lives or their time or their talents or their gifts. It is a sad picture when you think of the multitudes who are trusting their own works, their own ideas of church and its forms and ceremonies or liturgy. Much of it may appear nice and beautiful in the sight of others, they are *wolves in sheep's clothing*, without Christ as the foundation. The Bible, God's Word, clearly declares that it will all be dashed to eternal destruction. *And then I will profess unto them: I never knew you. Depart from me you that work iniquity* [Matt 25]. The foolish man no doubt recognized the value and perhaps even the need of building on the rock. But he made himself believe the need of something more important - that he could get by without it - or he could get away with it, may not forever, but at least for now. He is like those who have been spoiled through false philosophy and vain deceit, the easy way out; the good life; live now, no one will know; you owe it to yourself; this is the only life your going to have, live it now, you don't need the hassle. The words of the prophet are true for us today, *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes*. [Is 5:21].

The scribes and the Pharisees built their own religious pillars and when the veil in the temple was ripped in two, they discovered that their religious foundations were set in sand. Because we cannot save ourselves, we need Christ to save us. Paul's testimony must become ours: *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.* [1 Cor 3:11]. Many continue to say, even in our community, that it makes no difference if you believe in a Jesus who told stories 2,000+ years ago; they say it makes no difference if you worship with God's family; go to church, etc. Jesus said that there is a difference between the one who obeys and the one who does not obey. He said that to follow Him means stability, security and eternal hope. To reject Him brings disintegration, destruction and disaster. It is little wonder that Matthew adds the words, *When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished. He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.* This parable is one of the boldest claims Jesus ever made. It is simply *follow Me and your life will weather the storm. Deny me, refuse me, neglect me and it will be an inevitable disaster.* Within the passage we read is v. 21 - 23: *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. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and do many deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you: go away from me, you evildoers.'* I doubt that there one person here who does not wish or hope or desire eternal life. I commend to you today the only and sure foundation which is Jesus Christ who is Lord and Saviour of all. For with His blood he has freed us. And in the words of that beautiful song, *Put your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee.* Amen.