

## Building Our Lives on a Strong Foundation

### Matt. 7:24-27

As I read this passage it reminded me of a story I read some time ago. It was the firsthand account of a family that lived on Long Island when the hurricane of 1938 unexpectedly hit the shore with devastating force. This family's house was near the shore and as the wind and waves pummeled their home they didn't know if they would make it. At one point they watched in horror as their neighbor's home was lifted off its foundation and the entire house was swept out to sea, their neighbors never to be seen again.

The reason the hurricane cost so many lives is that no one was expecting it or prepared for it. Weather forecasting was far less advanced than it is today, and weathermen were calling for a breezy but otherwise beautiful day. Only one weatherman, a rookie named Charles Pierce, predicted that the hurricane would slam into the eastern seaboard, but his conclusions were overruled by the celebrity chief forecaster Charles Mitchell and the public was never warned about the possibility of the hurricane hitting the coast.

Jesus closes this incredible sermon with a weather warning: there are storms coming. There are winds and waves coming. But there is a way that we can be prepared for those storms; there is a choice we can make that can enable us to weather the storms that will inevitably come into all our lives. Jesus warns us to build our lives on a strong foundation. Let's pray and ask God's blessing on this time in His word.

Jesus is contrasting two men and two choices. One man chooses to build his house on a strong foundation of rock. The other man chooses to build his house on the shifting foundation of sand. Now we can make the mistake of thinking that Jesus is contrasting Christians with non-Christians here, but that's not his point. He is contrasting Christians with professing Christians. He is contrasting those who *hear* Jesus' words, like them, respect them, believe them in a generic sense, but don't act on them with those who hear Jesus' words and practice them, apply them, obey them.

There's only one small word that separates these two men: the word is *do*. Both men hear Jesus' words, one of them *does* them and that choice, hearing *and* doing, builds a foundation for his life that will stand the worst of storms. The other man hears and doesn't act on what he hears, and that's like building on sand. The question this asks of us is: are we hearers, building our lives on sand? Or are we doers, building our lives on the rock?

And here's what we need to see: Jesus isn't giving us a threat here, anymore than Charles Pierce was threatening the east coast when he predicted the hurricane would hit them. He was warning them, and Jesus is warning us. And so let's unpack this parable so we can hear and apply the warning it contains to our lives.

#### 1. Everyone of us is building a life

The meaning of this parable is clear: the homes these men build represent their lives. We are all building a life. With the choices we make every day, with the things we choose to think about, the things we choose to believe and to disbelieve, the actions we choose to take, and the actions we choose not to

take, it all adds up to the life we are building.

I was hit by a quote from Eric Mason at the men's meeting we had: Talking about how we teach our kids, he said, *The world says to let them find who they are. God's word tells us to teach them who to be.* Life isn't something that we find, it's not something that happens to us, life is something we build. Who we become isn't something we discover, it's something we choose. God wants us to make wise choices, our flesh drives us to make foolish choices.

Everyone of us is building a life. Jesus says that the most important part of our lives isn't our lives, it's what we're building our lives on. It's the foundation underneath our lives. And the reason is because...

## **2. The storms of life will inevitably hit all our lives**

No one, Christian, professing Christian, non-Christian, no one is exempt from storms entering our lives. Years ago, Pat Robertson stirred up quite a bit of controversy when he said that God steered Hurricane Gloria away from his ministry in Virginia Beach because he prayed. Hurricane Gloria hit land further up the Mid-Atlantic coast, killing eight people and causing \$900 million in damage. A lot of people were offended at the implication that God cared more about Pat Robertson's ministry than all those people who suffered from the storm. The truth is, some storms will hit our lives and some storms will miss our lives- just like everyone else. God doesn't promise to steer every storm away from his followers. What He does promise is that if we build our lives on His word, no matter how bad the storm gets, our lives will stand.

As a church family we have recently witnessed a heartbreaking, but God-glorifying example of this in the lives of Derrick and Lindsay Wagoner, who lost their precious four month old Judah last week. It is one of the hardest storms any parent could ever endure, and the winds and rain and floods have rocked their house ferociously, but by the grace of God they are standing strong because their lives are built solidly on Christ. God doesn't promise to steer every storm away from our lives, but He does promise that when our lives are built on Christ, we will make it through the storm.

## **3. We build our lives on Christ when we *hear* and *do* God's word**

In Luke 6 Jesus describes the building process in a little more detail.

*<sup>47</sup> Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: <sup>48</sup> he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock...<sup>49</sup> But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."*

Before the wise man builds the house, he dug deep and laid the foundation on rock. That's a lot of extra hard work! The foolish man saved himself a lot of work - no digging, no rock, no foundation. Building our lives on Christ is more than hearing and believing his words. We don't start building our lives on him until we do the work of doing what he says.

But there is a danger of building on a wrong foundation here, the foundation of legalism. Legalism is very "do" oriented. God loves us and is pleased with us because we "do" certain things and don't "do" certain

things. God loves me because I go to church...tithe...read my bible...and because I don't cuss...don't watch R rated movies...don't smoke...

Jesus isn't calling us to a legalistic religion of "do's" and "don'ts" here. I was talking to someone this week and he said "I don't want to go back to a religion where I'm constantly trying to keep the rules - walking with God can't be that complicated", and I said "I agree with you!" The Bible isn't a book of rules. It's the story of God's love for fallen mankind, and His redemptive work that climaxed in Jesus giving his life on the cross to save us from our sins.

The Pharisees perfected keeping religious rules but Jesus tells us that we need to be far more righteous than they were or we'll never see heaven. Righteousness doesn't come from keeping rules, it comes from having a relationship with Christ.

In John 6:29 Jesus said, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."* The first thing and most important thing God wants us to *do* is to believe in Jesus. That's not just an intellectual nod to him, that's coming to him in faith and trusting in him as our Lord and Savior. When we do that sincerely, God forgives us of all our guilt and adopts us as His sons and daughters (relationship).

*Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. John 14:21-24 (ESV)*

This is all relationship - loving Jesus, the Father loving us, and their coming and making their home with us. And as God, through the Person of the Holy Spirit, makes His home with us and in us, he begins to change our hearts so that we *want* to obey the Lord. It's obedience that flows from love, not rules.

When that happens the word of God becomes our heavenly Father talking to us, leading us, guiding us, telling us how we ought to live in order to be within His boundaries of blessing. God our Father teaches us who we are to be.

Doing his word means *engaging* and *applying his word to our lives*. We can't be content to hear his word and think that's enough. We need to actively engage with God's word - what is He speaking to me through this? Does my life line up with His word? How do I apply this to my life? Engaging and applying means asking the Holy Spirit to speak to us through God's word and then seeking to obey what He shows us.

- When we want to hurt someone who has hurt us, will we do what Jesus says and love them?
- When we want to hold on to our bitterness against someone, will we do what Jesus says and forgive them?
- When we want to cross the boundaries that God has set for sexual purity, will we do what Jesus says and wait for marriage? Or remain faithful in marriage?
- When our culture applies a lot of pressure to deny things that the Bible clearly says are true, will we resist building our lives on the shifting sand of the culture and do what Jesus says and build on the unchanging truth of his word?

**The choice before us**

A couple weeks ago I pointed out that Jesus closes his sermon with a series of choices: the choice between the narrow road and the broad road, the choice between allowing influences in our lives that produce good fruit and influences that produce bad fruit, and now the choice between building on the rock or on the sand.

The sermon on the mount presents the values and heart of the kingdom of God and then calls for us to choose: will we hear it and walk away unchanged or will we do what Jesus says? We have that choice. We can ignore God's word - and for a long time our lives may not look any different than those who do His word. The two homes look the same for a long time. Rains come and both homes look the same. Winds come and both homes look the same. Life happens and both homes look the same. It's not until calamity hits - that's what Jesus is describing, this isn't a gentle summer storm this is a devastating storm - winds, rains, floods - it's not until calamity strikes that the homes are tested.

Building our lives on Christ is done little by little, day by day, choice by choice. You can't say, "I'll wait until a storm hits and then I'll work on my foundation." It's impossible to build the foundation then. We prepare for the storms before the storms.

The Bible tells us that one of the qualities of wisdom is having the ability to look beyond the moment and see what's coming down the road. The prudent sees danger, not when it's upon him or her, but when it's still far off, and they avoid it. The Hebrews had a word for it: the *acharit*, the *final end*. Psalm 73 describes the honest struggle a believer is having because he's trying to serve God but his life is full of problems and afflictions and then he looks at the wicked - those who are openly scoffing at God and doing all the evil they want and, guess what? Their lives are carefree and they are prospering. What's up with that? The psalmist says, man, I almost abandoned my faith, I was ready to throw in the towel on this obeying God thing, but then he got alone in God's house and he saw something that radically changed his perspective: he looked a little closer at the prospering, seemingly blessed, lives of the wicked and he says, "then I saw their final end." He saw what was coming and he no longer envied them. He saw their *acharit*.

Jesus is talking about the *acharit* of these two homes. One stands. One falls. And he leaves us with a choice. Which will we build? This isn't meant as a threat, it's meant as a warning. Storms will come. Some storms will come at us, and some storms will come *from* us. I was watching the movie Everest recently, which is based on the ill fated summit attempt in 1996 when an unexpected storm hit two expedition groups and 8 people died. At one point when one of the expedition leaders, Rob Hall, was told that the approaching storm was several days away, he answered, "This mountain makes its own weather." That's true in our lives too. Storms don't just come at us - often they come from us. Our sin makes its own weather. Often the winds and floods that destroy our homes are storms of our own making. How many people live with deep regret over decisions and choices that tore their lives apart?

The 700 people who died in the 1938 hurricane had no warning - no one told them to run to safety, no one warned them to be prepared. But Jesus, in love, warns us. There's only one foundation that is strong enough to hold our lives us through every storm. Jesus Christ. When we build our lives on hearing and doing Jesus' word, we are building a life that will stand. Let's hear his warning and not just be hearers of his word, but let's make every effort to be doers of his word.

Sermon on the Mount  
Allen Snapp  
Grace Community Church  
Dec 4, 2016

**Pray**

**Closing song: Cornerstone**