

## Foundations - Matthew 7:24-29

Choices – we all must make choices every day. Some choices will affect us for a long time, some are not so important. This week I had to decide between vanilla ice cream and sea-salt caramel ice cream! Not such a big decision and it really did not matter too much in the end which one I chose.

But some decisions are far more important. Thirty-five years ago tomorrow I stood before a pastor in a church, facing the most beautiful woman in the world. That day I chose to make Lise my wife, and I pledged my love to her for richer or poorer, in sickness and health until death alone parted us. That is a big and important decision, and I made a very good choice!

For the past twenty weeks we have been studying the Sermon on the Mount. Each week we would look at a short passage and first try to understand what Jesus was saying, and then we sought the Holy Spirit's guidance on how that teaching applies to our lives today. We discovered that following Jesus is not always easy, but always rewarding. We have seen how there is always a choice to make, to follow Jesus or go our own way.

Today we have come to the end of the sermon. Jesus leaves us with one last parable – the story of two builders. One is a wise builder and the other is a foolish builder. I know we have all heard this story so many times we almost know it by heart, but we cannot study the Sermon on the Mount and miss this conclusion by Jesus.

Listen carefully to what Jesus says:

- Read text –

So the parable is about two builders. Now Jesus would know a thing or two about building houses. He was a trained carpenter. As far as we know this is what he did to support himself, and possibly the family, before the Heavenly Father told him it was time to start his preaching ministry. So when he talks about building houses, he knows what he is talking about.

Now there have always been good builders and bad builders. When Lise and I lived in Kelowna, we watched two new houses being built across the street from the house we were renting. They were beautiful houses, though we wondered about them being built so close to the edge of the bank. Just as the houses were completed we had a dump of rain on the city, and guess what happened? The houses started to slide down the hill! They did not have proper footings, and the soil they were built on had been dumped there several years earlier, and really was not a part of the hill. Before those houses fell on the houses at the bottom of the hill they had to be torn down and destroyed. I do not think I would hire that builder to build me a house!

Note Jesus does not compare the workmanship on the house itself – but he looks at something more important: the footings. What is the house built on?

The wise man, Jesus says, will build his house on a firm foundation – on the rock. Where there is little rock near the surface engineers make construction companies pour footings, basically

making their own rock foundation. In places like Nanaimo where builders often have to blast rock away to prepare a site for construction, it is easy to get a strong foundation for the building of almost any structure. If you go into the crawl space under the sanctuary of our church building you will notice the floor is uneven, and the crawl space ceiling gets lower and lower as you walk into the room. Why? Because the church is built on a large rock before it was affordable to blast or drill rock out. I do not think this building is going anywhere!

Of course this story is not just about good building practices – it is about how we live our lives. Jesus wants us to be wise with our lives, and make sure we have a solid foundation. Jesus wants us to build our lives on a rock.

In Psalm 40:1-4 we read about the rock.

Psalm 40:1-4, "I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods."

Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust. The Apostle Paul will narrow this down even more in his first letter to the Corinthians saying:

<sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

We are being called to put our faith in Jesus, to choose to be a Christian. Jesus came to be our Saviour, and through his death and resurrection he has provided a way to be rescued from sin, spiritual death and the power of Satan. Jesus offers salvation to us as a free gift, available to all who would receive it. So how do we receive God's free gift of salvation offered through Christ Jesus? We repent of our sin, ask Jesus to forgive us and to come into our lives. The moment we pray to receive the gift of Jesus and the salvation he alone can provide, we are born again into the family of God. The Holy Spirit begins His amazing work of shaping our lives so they reflect more and more the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit can fill us with the power to say "No" to sin, and "yes" to God. He can cleanse our hearts and fill us with love for others instead of love for self. Yes, he can make us a holy people...

And this is what Jesus wants for everyone who hears his words.

Notice that Jesus says the person wise enough to build on the rock will do two things:

- Listen to the words of Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New International Version\*](#). (1984). (1 Co 3:11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

- Put Jesus' words in to practice

Now every day we have to choose what we will fill our minds with: God's Word or the noise from this world. I am wondering if Christians are spending more time listening to COVID news or to the Good News? It usually is not hard to spot those caught up in the media's presentation of the pandemic: there is fear, anxiety, depression, sadness and many other negative emotions. Those who still let the Bible be their guide find hope and joy despite the challenges of these days.

Jesus was glad for the many people who gathered around him, but were they willing to really hear what he was saying, or were they simply sticking around waiting for more bread and fish, or maybe a miracle or two. When the pastor is preaching, are we really listening or are we following someone on our phone? When we are studying the Bible, are we listening to God, or waiting for a chance to tell our story? Whose music do we listen to: the world's or God's?

Jesus challenges his followers to really listen to what he is saying. Sometimes Lise will tell me something and though I hear the words, I really do not hear what she is saying. She may say, "Let's have hamburgers for supper." And I will say, "yeah, okay." A few minutes later I will come to her and say, "I think we should have hamburgers for supper." She will just look at me and say, "I just said that! You weren't really listening!"

And we can do that to God's Word as well. We skim through a chapter so we can say we did our devotions. Or we can only read our Bibles when Pastor says each Sunday, "Let's turn to such and such a passage..." Or we may only read what other people say about God's Word. Though those books may be helpful, Jesus wants you to hear him directly. Read your Bibles, pray and listen for the voice of Jesus.

But listening is not enough. Jesus then goes on to say we must practice what Jesus says. Jesus gave so much direction in the Sermon on the Mount on how to live. He speaks of "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." He speaks of "forgiving," and refusing to "discriminate." He spoke about praying and about doing good to those around us. He spoke about not harming others, and being people of our word: integrity!

We can talk about those themes all we like. We can read books on those themes. We can recite the verses word for word in four different translations but that is not good enough, at least according to Jesus. We must put into practice what we have learned.

After we spoke on loving our enemies, Lise and I tried to identify who that might be. Though we could not find anyone we would call our enemy, we did have a household of people next door who we did not know, and did not always appreciate. They would have all night parties, often on Saturday nights, which would keep us awake all night. So I started to pray more for them, I tried to be kind, smile and say hello if they were outside, and cut their grass and take out their trash cans if it needed to be done. We actually got a few hellos, and thanks yous after that! Now, however, they have moved away, just when God was teaching me to put his word into practice!

Jesus is talking about obedience, and obeying God's Word is not always received well by the world around us. But obedience is what keeps us safe from the attacks of Satan.

One day a newspaper wrote an article about the rigorous training the navy put their recruits through. They demanded obedience above everything else. Many wrote back to the paper stating how they felt the navy was too harsh.

So a man who had been an officer wrote in and said obedience is necessary for the safety and protection of the sailors. He told of a day when he was on a vessel pulling a much larger ship through very rough water. Suddenly the officer in charge commanded, "Down!" Every person on that vessel immediately went flat on his stomach. Good thing, because the cable attached to the larger vessel they were towing snapped and it whipped back over that deck like an angry snake, and if it had hit any of the sailors, they would have been severely hurt or killed. Obedience saved their lives.

What about the foolish man who built on sand? That was something that could easily happen where Jesus lived, for there were many valleys that seemed great sites to build during the dry season, but when the rains came they were channels the water ran down. Any house built on the sand in those valleys would be washed away. Of course, people who were lazy, who did not want to put much effort into their project, they may still build on the sand, but some day they would pay a high price. The foolish builder was not listening for God's voice in his life, and chose instead to build on the teachings of people, the philosophies of this world.

Both the wise builder and the foolish builder would experience storms in life. Jesus tells of rain coming down, streams rising and winds beating against the house. Some suggest that this represents three sources of troubles in our lives:

Rain comes from above (testing from God), floods come from below (temptations from Satan) and the wind comes across and it beats against us in all directions (the trials of life).<sup>2</sup>

This may or may not be, but we know that today we face the COVID pandemic. Tomorrow it may be something else. Jesus warned that signs of his coming would take the form of pestilence and wars and famines and earthquakes. The question is, are we ready for the storms?

Have you built your life on sand – the values and thoughts of this world? Science and Psychology and business are all good and have their place, but is your life built on these things or the Word of God? The teachings of the world will fail you – they are not always right. God's Word will never fail you.

We started this message by saying life is made up of choices. It is for you to decide if you will build your life on faith in Jesus, the rock, or on the things of the world, the sand. Only you can make that choice, but it is a choice that has eternal consequences. The wise man, or the foolish man. Which are you?

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<sup>2</sup> **The Sermon On The Mount (Part 22)** Contributed by [Derrick Tuper](#) on Feb 24, 2020, Sermon Central.com