

Preacher: Vicar Tim Redfield Date: May 25, 2008 Text: Matthew 7:15-29

Theme: Build on the Rock of Christ

When a person builds a house, it is very important to lay a proper foundation. This is as true today as it was in the time of Christ. If something is wrong with the foundation then any number of problems can occur with the home. If the foundation is not well constructed then the building will not be secure and many accidents or even injuries can result. However, if the foundation is strong and sturdy, then the building will remain strong for many years to come. In our text today, Jesus uses this picture to illustrate his point. He reminds us that it is important to have a strong spiritual foundation. God encourages us to Build on the Rock of Christ. The reason for this is that without him, without Christ, we will fall. However, with him, our faith stands firm.

Part 1: without him, we will fall

This sermon text is the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains Christian living. As he reaches the end of the sermon, he reminds his listeners that the true way to heaven is through faith in him. He tells them that faith displays itself through actions. He shows this by contrasting two spiritual houses. One house he describes as being built on rock, the other he describes as being built on sand. As we examine these two houses, ask yourself this: which spiritual house does my faith-life resemble?

First, let's take a look at the faith described as someone who built a house on sand. Jesus declared that this faith hears his words but does not put them into practice. This faith does not take the Word of God to heart and therefore is spiritually weak. Do we ever display a faith like this? Are there times that we merely sit in the pew and do not really absorb the truths that are coming our way? Sure, we might hear some of the truths that are proclaimed. We might hear that Jesus saved us from our sins but perhaps that translates into a license to commit more sins. We might even hear that God loves us, but then we may get upset by the fact that God also hates sinners. The message of the Bible doesn't always impact us in a way that leads us to change our lives in order to serve Jesus.

During moments of weak faith we sometimes shift back and forth like a house built on sand. Sometimes the promises of God are quickly forgotten in our hearts. We desire to follow the Lord, but the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature overcome our desire to do good. Then our spiritual foundation remains weak and we do not stay focused on Jesus. Even if we do good things, those good activities are probably done for the wrong reasons. More often than not, the house built on sand focuses on things other than Christ, that is why it remains weak, that is why it is in danger.

Jesus tells us that this house is not going to stand when storms come. A weak faith has trouble dealing with spiritual storms. When false prophets come, do we ever give in to their false ideas? Sometimes we have trouble recognizing what is from God and what is from the devil and the sinful world. When moral filth comes into our lives, we don't always recognize it as evil and sinful. It is easy to be influenced by all the sins of this world. When TV programs present living together before marriage as a normal activity, is our conscience bothered? When our society presents evolution as the only truth about the world, do we stand up for the truth? When "spiritual" people claim that all people will go to heaven, do we act like we agree through our silence? Even though the bad fruits, the false teachings of this world are staring us in the face, we don't always stay away from or openly reject those bad fruits.

Being influenced by false teachings can make it difficult to deal with problems in this life. Difficulties such as death or cancer or unemployment should be opportunities to turn to God for help and comfort. We should turn to God in prayer and pick up our Bibles. On the contrary how often don't we turn to doctors or psychiatrists or unemployment agencies without also consulting our Savior? We might not look to God because of the false idea that God is angry with us and that is why calamity came into our lives. Do we turn our backs on God when things get tough?

The House built on the sand eventually falls. A faith characterized by the attitude that has been described cannot stand spiritually. The walls of this spiritual house will fall when spiritual storms assault it. Since this kind of faith is not firmly founded on Christ, it does not have the strength to stand up under the temptations and problems of this life. If a weak faith is not strengthened, then it is in danger of falling. This kind of person is in serious danger of an eternity in hell.

Many people do not realize the dire situation of a weak faith life. Jesus reminds us that many are unaware of their weakness. On the Day of Judgment people will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and

in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" (7:22) These people thought that their works were earning them special favor before God but they never really knew him, they did not know that faith in Christ saves. Jesus will tell them, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (7:23)

We never want to hear those words from Jesus. We do not want to hear that he never knew us. As we were looking at the house built on sand, did you see yourself sharing any of those qualities or sins? We can recognize the times that we do not put Jesus' words into practice. Our lives can become just as polluted by the sinful world as the next person. We sometimes forget to turn to God when we really need him. Many times our faith experiences weakness and we give into temptations. The difference between the two houses is that the faith built on the rock is firmly founded on the forgiveness of Christ. Christ warns us of the dangers of the house built on sand and then he reminds us of the blessings of the house built on the rock. Even though we do fall into sins, Christ brings us to repentance and we look to our forgiveness. Christ makes sure that we are built on the rock.

Part 2: with him, our faith stands firm

Let's take a closer look at the house built on the rock and see how our faith can remain built on Christ. Jesus tells us that the person who hears his words and puts them into practice is like a man who built his house on the rock. This kind of person takes God's Word to heart and makes it part of his life. Christians who truly listen to what God's Word says grow in their life of sanctification. As we grow in our faith, we repent of the times that we sinned out of weakness and we come back to the Word for strength. We follow the encouragement of our lesson from Deuteronomy. We fix God's Word in our hearts and minds (Deut 11:18). We teach God's Word to our children and talk to them about it (Deut 11:19). Perhaps we even have art in our houses with Bible passages or we have our favorite Bible verse that we meditate on when we have troubles. God's Word is the foundation for our lives.

With God's Word at the center of our lives, we are continually pointed to Christ. All of God's Word focuses on Jesus as our strong foundation. His perfect obedience motivates us to live lives of obedience. Thankful that he was our substitute, we want to serve others. Paul reminds us that our sins were freely taken away. Even though "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), we "are justified freely through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). This free redemption motivates us to do good to others. Because we are forgiven, we want others to know their forgiveness.

Christ's forgiveness makes us able to withstand the spiritual storms of this life. We put Jesus words into practice by recognizing the false teachers and their bad fruit. Their bad fruit, their false doctrine is evident when we compare it with God's Word. Unlike the false religions, we realize that there is nothing that we do to be saved. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. God's Word shows us that sin is a real problem in this world. There is much sinful activity going on. Sin is celebrated and encouraged in our society. As Christians we recognize the sins of our world. We point them out so that people can know their sin and then hopefully also know their Savior.

When we have problems in our lives, we know where to turn. When grandma is sick in the hospital, we make sure that God's Word is brought to her. When dad loses his job, we keep coming to church, trusting that God does work things out according to his plan and for the good of his believers. When life's problems come our way, we realize the importance of hearing the comfort of God's Word.

Being founded on Christ keeps us firm in our faith. Our Savior works in us so that we can withstand temptations and problems. He sends his Holy Spirit into our hearts to keep us strong until we reach our heavenly home. If we tried to rely on ourselves, we would have the same end as the house built on the sand. Because we are built on Christ, we are as secure as the house built on the rock.

Conclusion

It is very comforting to know that we are built upon the rock of Christ. This gives us a sense of security as we think about our future. We know that no matter what happens in this life, heaven is waiting for us. With Christ as our foundation, we will be able to stand firm under the assaults of Satan. We will be protected from the spiritual storms of this life. What an incredible blessing it is to know that our Lord Jesus is always there for us to guard and keep us as we endure through our lives on this earth. When we keep God's Word as our foundation, we will not become corrupted by false teaching. When we keep Jesus at the center of our lives, we will put his words into practice. When we build on the rock of Christ, we will remain firm until we reach heaven.