

Christian, Build your Life on a Rock-Solid Foundation.

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Tell me, does anyone remember what Mount Olive was getting ready to do 4 years ago today? What major event were we looking forward to in the fall of 2018? Yes, we were about to dedicate to the glory of God are brand-new gymnasium and Early Learning Center. We were marveling at the brand-new classrooms and a gym that was bigger and higher than anything we've had before. But you realize, long before we could have this beautiful building to enjoy, some critical groundwork needed to be laid. If we were going to have a building that would serve us for years to come, where did we have to start? We needed to start with a solid foundation. In fact, maybe you remember what that looked like. Our building project began with the workers digging deep into the ground so that they could pour concrete footings. Those footing served as a rock-solid base for the entire structure. In fact, without those footings—if we would have just laid bricks on the dry ground—the whole structure would have certainly collapsed by now. No, for a building to stand the test of time, it must be built on a solid foundation.

Well, you realize, that principle from the construction industry applies to more than just physical structures. It also applies to human lives. If we want to enjoy a life that stands the test of time, in fact that stands all the way into eternity, we have to answer a fundamental question, namely, what are we building our life on? What will serve as the foundation for everything we say and think and do. Where we end up in life is largely dependent upon what we build our lives on—which is really the point that Jesus makes for us here in our text for today. Jesus' advice to us today is simply this,

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The words we have before us today are basically the closing paragraph of what has been called Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Over the course of three chapters, Matthew 5, 6 and 7, the Evangelist records this discourse that Jesus has with his disciples as they gathered on the side of a mountain. The sermon begins with what are often called the Beatitudes. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” “Blessed are those who mourn,” etc.* From there Jesus goes on to describe how Christians are to live their lives as God's children. In many cases Jesus takes a command from the Old Testament and simply expands on it. He says for example, *“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder’. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment.”* (Matthew 5 21-22). Or *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* (Matthew 5:27). The whole sermon is an expression of God's moral law. Jesus tells us the things that God would have us do and not do as his children. For example, “Do not worry. Do not judge. Do not store up treasures on earth, but rather, treasures in heaven. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.

And maybe the most familiar passage of all, sometimes referred to as the Golden Rule, “*Do to others what you would have them do to you*” (Matthew 7:12)

That's what the Sermon of the Mount is. It's an extended expression of God's will for our lives. In fact, in the second to last paragraph of his sermon, Jesus issues a warning about those who say they are followers of Jesus but are not doing what Jesus commands. Jesus puts it this way. “*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 who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*” (Matthew 7:21-23) Away from me, you evildoers. You realize what that is a reference to, don't you? Jesus is talking about Judgment Day, when Jesus will banish all false believers from his presence forever.

Well, it's against that backdrop of Jesus explaining what God expects of us as believers and pointing out what happens when people only pay lip service to God—it's against that backdrop that Jesus now concludes with this illustration of two different builders, one wise and the other foolish. Now, I'm going to read these words again and as I do I want you to take note of two things. First, what do these two men have in common? How are they the same? And secondly, what makes them different? Where's the contrast in their actions?

Jesus says, ²⁴ “*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.* ²⁵ *The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.* ²⁶ *But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.* ²⁷ *The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.* ”

What did both men have in common? 1. Both built a house. 2. Each house was severely tested from 3 directions: the rain came down, the streams came up, and the wind beat against the house. But that's where we find our first difference. When the wise man's house was hit by the storm, what happened? It did not fall. Whereas, when the foolish man's house was hit by that same bad weather, Jesus says, “*It fell with a great crash.*” And why did that happen? Was it because the foolish man built his house with sticks and straw like the two little pigs while the wise man built his house with bricks and mortar? No, Jesus doesn't say anything about what the houses were built with. They might have looked exactly the same. The difference is found and what they were built on. Jesus says that the wise man's house did not fall *because it had its foundation on the rock.* Literally, we'd say that it had its foundation on bedrock. The foolish man, on the other hand, built his house on sand. So, two different foundations, two very different results.

Now I don't think it's hard to comprehend the illustration that Jesus is using. Even my little grandson figured out pretty quickly that the castle that we built on the beach this summer was not very sturdy. The first big wave that hit it washed it away. That's what happens when you build on sand. The question is, what does Jesus' illustration mean in real life?

Well, I think you realize that the house represents each man's life. And the storm that hits the house represents more than just the trials and tribulations that occur on this side of the grave. It represents the ultimate trial that every human being will face on the other side of the grave. Jesus is talking about what will happen on Judgment Day. People who, in effect, build their lives on the rock will survive the Final Day. And those build their lives on sand will not.

The question is, who do the people who built their lives on the rock represent? Who are

the people whom Jesus refers to as wise builders? Well, Jesus tells us. He says, *"Anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into it practice just like a wise man who built his house on the rock. There's the key. Notice that both builders heard the words of Jesus. But only one put those words into practice. The other one didn't. That's why Jesus said that one was wise and the other was foolish.*

But now, we need to dig just a little deeper. Exactly what does Jesus mean when he says that one of the men heard his words and put them into practice? What do you think that means? Well, I expect there are a lot of people who would say, "What Jesus means here is that we shouldn't let his words just go in one ear and out the other. We shouldn't say we're going to follow Jesus and then never actually do it. We shouldn't act one way on Sunday morning and then completely different the rest of the week." Or to put it another way, "If we're going to talk the talk, we better walk the walk." God's word can't be something that is stored in the back of our brain, but never applied to our lives. God's word needs to impact what we say and think and do. I mean, isn't that what St. James tells us in chapter 1, verse 22 when he writes, *Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

Obviously, that's a true statement. God doesn't want us to be hypocrites. He wants us to live our lives in way that pleases him. The question is, "Is that what Jesus is teaching here in this text?" When Jesus says when a person hears his words and does not put them into practice, he is like a man who built his house on sand, is he saying that if you and I don't always practice what we preach, then we are doomed? Is he saying that the only way for you and me to survive that Final Storm of life is to make sure we're always doing everything Jesus told us to do?

Actually, no, that's not what Jesus is saying. Think about it. If your eternal salvation or mine depended on us putting into practice everything that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, what do you think your chances of surviving that Final Storm would be? Zero! Remember, the Sermon on the Mount is primarily an expression of God's Law. It's a bunch of God's do's and don'ts. In fact, it's in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus summarizes all of God's commandments. What is the standard that Jesus sets for every human being? Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:48, *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* Not just try to be perfect. But be perfect. If your eternal security and mine is built on how well we put all of God's commandments into practice in our lives, we're all going to crash and burn on Judgment Day.

But fortunately, that's not what Jesus mean when he talks about the one who hears his words and puts them into practice. He's not talking about how well we live our lives. So what is he talking about? Well, the original language here gives us a little help. Literally, Jesus says, "the one who hears my words and does them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock, the house that is not destroyed in the final storm. So, what is the one thing that God would have us do, so that our life is not destroyed on the last day? Well, remember what Jesus said the verse is just before our text? He said, *"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 who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21) So, exactly what is the will of the Father in heaven? Jesus himself answers that question for us when he says in John 6 verse 40, *"My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life."* In other words, when it comes to your standing with God on the Last Day, it will not be about what you have done for him, or how well you've put his words into practice in your life. It will be all about what he has done for you, in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. The grace he has shown you in Christ. The redemption he's won for you in Christ. The faith he's given you in Christ. In fact, do you remember what Jesus told the Jews who asked him

what they needed to do to do the work that God requires? Jesus answered, *“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” (John 6:29)*

My friends, now do you see what Jesus meant by the man who built his house on the rock? It wasn't talking about the person who always practices what he preaches. Or who always lives by the Golden Rule. No, he's talking about the man who built his standing with God on something much more solid, much more certain. What did Saint Paul write to the Corinthians? *No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Christ Jesus. (1 Corinthians 3:11)* Or you think of the words that God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, recorded in 1 Peter 2:6, *See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.*

Let's face it, throughout our lives we're all building a house. A house that will be severely tested on the day of our death. The question is, “What are you going to build your house on? You realize, there's a lot of sand out there. A lot of lies that Satan is going to tempt us to build on. Lies that other people that other people are falling for. (We're going to going to be studying 10 of those lies in Sunday morning Bible class over the next few months.)

But when it comes right down to it, there is only one rock solid foundation to build our lives on for time and for eternity. And that's Jesus. It's his blood and righteousness in our place that is the only thing that guarantees that when our final hour comes, we will not fall with a great crash, but rather we will stand before the throne of God, declared to be holy and blameless in his sight. On that day, God will move our house into His House, the mansion of glory. God keep us in his grace to that blessed end. Amen.