

August 30, 2009

Matthew 7:24-27

We are looking this morning at a classic passage of scripture, and by “classic” I mean one that you will be very familiar with. It’s one that most people can tell you about, you have a children’s song about it that I know I sang when I was a kid. It’s a very visual passage that most people can relate to. So, please turn with me to Matthew 7:24 and we will be looking at the story of the wise and foolish builders.

READ Matthew 7:24-27.

It is important for us to first see where this classic parable is located in scripture. We are at the end of the 7th chapter of Matthew which concludes what has been called Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” (so named because He was preaching on a mountainside) which began at the beginning of chapter 5. I have given you some space to take notes on your sheet in your worship guide and have listed important highlights of The Sermon on the Mount for your reference and will refer to them later in this message. Jesus speaks about what the Kingdom of God on earth looks like for a follower of Christ. He deals with persecution and being the salt and the light. He equates being angry at someone with murder and lusting after someone with adultery. He speaks of divorce, loving your enemies, how to pray, fast and instruction on storing up treasures in heaven rather than on earth where they will not last. He tells his followers not to be consumed with worry, be careful not to judge others because you are full of issues yourself, to seek God for all good things and to be careful of false teachers who may sound spiritual but do not show fruit that is of God. All of this and more is given in this 3 chapter sermon that we could spend a long time preaching on the truth and instruction found in the text.

This sermon is well known because of its wonderful content and truth, but, it is also extremely challenging. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are amazing, but difficult to follow and very often difficult to teach or preach. However, it is at the conclusion of this powerful sermon that Jesus lays out the parable that we are focusing on this morning. So, let’s let look at this text more closely together.

This parable involves two different individuals who are very similar, in very similar situations and yet have extremely different outcomes. One person in this parable is described as a “wise” man and the other is a “foolish” man. Now naturally, I think I speak for most if not all of us, that when we hear a parable like this, we want to be included with the good side. We want to be “wise”. I mean I don’t think anyone here will stand up saying, “Hey, That guy that has his house falling down around him...yeah, that’s me. I want to be that guy.” No. We want to be the one making the right choices and doing the right things. Yeah...you know. “That, that guy there; doing that thing with the house that stands...Yeah, that. That’s me. That’s exactly what I would do.” And growing up as a believer, whenever this passage was taught or mentioned, I always equated myself with the “wise” guy. However, there is definitely more to this than just deciding...“that’s me.”

So, before you make a final judgement on where you are in this story let’s look at the comparison of the two men and see how we end up with a “wise” man and a “foolish” man. In verses 24 and 26 Jesus first let’s us and of course his listeners that were there on the mountainside know who he is addressing this parable to. He says that this parable is like Everyone that hears His words.” Everyone. There is no distinction here in what Jesus is bringing. No distinction in race, economic status, gender, preferences, hobbies, occupations,

ability, Bible study attendee, worship service attendee, those who sing, those who don't. It does not matter, it's you. If you have heard the Word of God taught and preached, you have read it, it's right here. That means this is you. It definitely relates. It has application for everyone in this room right now. You have heard the Word of God so you are a part of the "everyone".

Let's also recognize **the things that need to be heard** are the Words of Christ, His teachings. You don't just have to hear any teaching or have "wise" counsel. You need to hear "Jesus' words." What kind of information do you follow the most in this world? Where do you get your direction? And I don't mean "Where should we get our guidance and leadership from? Everyone of us can throw out the church answer: the Bible, Jesus, God. No, do this. Everyone close your eyes. Look at your life. I mean take a snap shot, a mental picture, a mental video of the past month, 2 months. What do you see? When you look at that, overall, what do you really follow, who or what are you listening to? Lifestyle is always a clearer indicator of where we are than what we say. You may open your eyes now.

If you falter now, at the start, the point of this story and application here is going to be lost to you. If you are seeking to be wise and desire help in standing up under the storms you face, but you're following the latest self help or magazine article instead of the words and truth of Christ, then you are going to be lost in confusion, questions and failures and ask "Why doesn't this work?" You may even blame God in this process because you go to church etc., but you are not listening to His Words. We have to start at the right place, hearing the words of Christ.

So, we know that our story has two men. They are representative of anyone, everyone, or all of us in this room who have heard the words and teachings of Christ. These two men are very similar as far as our story goes. Even though God created us all as distinct, different, and individual; for this story, the men are the same. Both men have heard the Word of God. As far as the outcome of this story, right now, one man does not have an advantage over the other. Same guys, and you or I could be either one.

And in our story, these men do exactly the same thing. Both men build houses...and from how Jesus gives us this story, we can assume that both of these houses are also pretty much the same: same material, same structure, same house – at least as far as dealing with the storm that is to come. Nothing about the house itself will help it endure the storm. This is very important to understand, because our focus will be on what helps the wise man endure the storm.

Both men have the materials they need to build their homes. In the same way, we have heard the Word of God; both men have the resources right there at their disposal; Most people in this room have been taught the Word of God most of their lives. Both men have exactly what they need. We have the truth of Living God and have accumulated all of this knowledge. Most people in this room can speak truth and have knowledge of the scriptures. Which means right now, most everyone in this room looks the same. From right here, looking out, you look the same. You have all participated in, and have been participating in worship services. You have heard the Word of God. So, you're the same.

Now, we see differences begin to emerge as we continue through verses 24 and 26. One man builds a house on the rock (representing those who put the words of Christ into practice) and the other builds his house on the sand (representing those who choose not to put the words of Christ into practice.) The question that arises for these two men is, "What do you do with what

you have?” And for us, “What do we do with what we have – with these teachings, this truth of Christ?” What do we do with these words we have heard?

One man represents wise choices; the other man represents foolish choices. One laid a solid foundation that would hold through anything. The other laid a very soft, uneasy, moving foundation that would not stand. As we seek to figure out which man we are, we have to compare what each one represents to what we do with the words of Christ.

If you look at Luke 6:48, we see a parallel account of this same parable. It says that⁴⁸He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. Here we see that building a house on a foundation of rock included digging down deep into the earth, reaching the rock, and building on this foundation. This man worked hard to see to it that his house was secure and able to withstand the storms that may come. This required him to be patient, diligent and a hard worker. He did not seek a quick fix or the latest things to come along. He chose to purposely plan and work hard to do what was required.

One who is putting into practice the words of Christ is very much the same. He is purposeful in seeing that what he has been told is implemented in his life. He is actively living the words of Christ. He is seeking to live out the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount that we touched on at the beginning of this message. This takes time, effort and attention. It takes practice because no one is perfect and all of us definitely have a lot of bad habits and sin in our lives to deal with. But that is part of this process of implementing the teachings and truth of Christ into your life. Attentively getting ones life where it needs to be through the work of Christ.

And don't forget that this is not just another diet plan, counseling session, book to read or the latest infomercial to help get your life in order and out of a jam. In the same way that the wise man built his house on a rock solid foundation, then so is a person living out the words of Christ building a solid foundation in his life.

The foolish man on the other hand has a house without a solid foundation. It is not anchored into the ground, it is on soft sand and it is not going to take a whole lot to bring it down. This represents one who has heard the word of God but has chosen to not receive it and live it out in his life. Oh, his life is following something, and he is definitely influenced by others, but it is just not properly based in the Word of God. You see we are talking about foundational things here. Things you can stand on, trust in and not falter. If one decides to follow the latest trend, or false religions and gods, then they are just floating in the wind and are not firm to withstand all that is to come.

And this is important because what comes next in verses 25 and 27, comes to both houses. Neither was spared from the severity of the storm. And notice that Jesus uses the same language for each: “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house.” So they both faced the same storm, but only one survived. The other, as Jesus described it, “fell with a great crash.”

The storm was certainly what destroyed one of the houses. The house could not withstand the power and effects of the storm as it ate away at the house's foundation. Since the house was not well founded, water was able to mess with the sand underneath the house and make it unstable. The wind and rain were able to blow and beat against it and affect its structure.

The other house, however, was not affected by the storm. The rain came hard against it, the wind blew, the water came up on the foundation...but it did not budge. It was firm, strong, and able to withstand the storm.

The awesome thing about someone who puts into practice the words of Christ is that they are not affected by the surrounding storms. They withstand whatever is thrown at them. For a house, we are talking about forces of nature – winds, rain, ground that does not hold. For a person we are talking about whatever comes against someone in this world: Temptation, stress, irritating people, aggressive people, confusion, distraction, failure to achieve, false sense of hope or direction and sin such as worry or greed. These things will come. Basically Jesus is saying: Live in me and according to my words and you will be on a solid foundation. You will stand firm and nothing will take you down. And the bad that comes, and by the way, it will definitely come. Jesus says in Matt 5:45: He (God) causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Struggles, pain and suffering are inevitable. It depends on your foundation as to how you endure them.

I was really taken by the words Jesus chose in verse 27 when the foolish man's house fell. He says that it "fell with a great crash." A great fall describes the circumstances and the outcome of the foolish man's decision. It also describes the result of those who choose to rely on a host of other methods and answers instead of God alone. The result is not pretty. Whenever we rely on and follow humanity's ways of dealing with life, things always get messed up. We think, "Hey this sounds good...or "I need this to take care of my problems," and things seem good for a short time and then they always end up in a huge mess.

Wise man. Foolish man. I said in the beginning that as a kid I always equated myself with the wise man. Maybe you do the same. Maybe because you have a knowledge of God that you have accumulated through the years. Or perhaps because you go through the "religious functions" that you have been following for who knows how long you feel that you are the wise man. But please, this morning don't miss this important requirement of being a disciple of Christ – **We have to hear his words and put them into practice.** It is great to be in a Sunday school class, to attend a worship service. It's great to be a member of Fairway Baptist Church, or any other Bible believing church in this town. But Jesus never says here that doing those things gives you a firm foundation. He never said to be member of a church, to attend a worship service or go to Sunday school. He said, "Hear my words, and put them into practice." Now if you follow His words, become a believer in Christ and **then** do these Christian things as a part of your Christian walk, that's great. They are very helpful in becoming a solid Christian that can withstand all attacks that come.

But if you expect that going through the motions of some religious institution is going to make you strong when the hard times arrive. Wake up...because Jesus makes it clear– It is not going to happen. Whether you connect yourself with the latest thing on the net, a new congregation or a tradition that has been around for hundreds of years; you will endure a great fall. And I believe this hits home here at Fairway, as well as many other churches, however we may not see the poor foundation until a storm comes. That's right. Some of you are so good at going through the motions and hiding what is really there that people don't know the truth. But the storms will come. They will come. And you may be saying all the right words, going through the motions that you have always been taught to do...and it will not matter, because there will be a great fall because you do not have a solid foundation.

One last thing on this passage that I need to bring out before I close. Many will say that we should not question someone's salvation because of how they act. That it will make a person paranoid and cause them to consistently think that they are not believers. Well, when you look at the verses immediately before this passage in Matthew, Jesus talks about false prophets, recognizing a believer by their fruit, and that just because you go through the motions and say 'Lord, Lord' does not mean you are a believer. And in Luke 6:46 he does the same thing. Jesus says; ⁴⁶"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? And then He goes on to tell this great parable.

Don't miss this connection. By hearing the words of Christ and not practicing them – you are identifying yourself as a foolish person who will not only face a great fall here in life on this earth, but more important, will face a great fall for eternity. You will be separated from all your friends and loved ones who truly know Christ and lived a life for Him and you will be forever separated from Jesus. The same Jesus you may be crying out to as Lord and crying to for help, but the great crash will have come and it will be to late.

Putting into practice the words of Christ is what saves you. Hear that again. Putting into practice the words of Christ is what saves you. Now "listen - don't hear that statement and turn me off because it sounds so wrong on the surface - I don't want you to leave today only hearing that sentence and then telling Pastor Brett when he gets back that I preached we were saved by doing works - that's not what we are seeing in this text today - we are seeing that we are saved by doing what Jesus says - **which includes** believing in Jesus by grace through faith for salvation but it also includes not stopping there, and going on to follow the rest of Jesus' words in the same way - by grace through faith."

Jesus said that He is the way, the truth and the life. He said to believe in Him and to love Him. Becoming a believer, a follower of Christ, being saved by grace through faith is part of putting into practice the words of Christ. And if you do that, He is your Lord and Savior. If you do not do that, you do not know Him as your Lord and Savior.

My friend, who are you today? Are you wise and seeking to follow the words of Christ and practice them in your life without loopholes or exceptions? Do you know the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in your life so that in Him you can withstand all storms and attacks which come your way? Are you walking with Him with a blessed peace and assurance because of His awesome presence and power in your life?

Or are you foolish? Living a false life. A façade that says I can handle the storms. If asked you may be quick to say "I go to church, or "I was baptized" or you can talk church talk with the best of them, but in reality you are only using this as a security blanket; an insurance policy. And maybe you have everyone fooled. If someone were to ask your mom or dad perhaps they would be quick to say, "Oh yeah she went forward when she was 8 or he comes to church with us almost every Sunday, so he's okay. And everything is "great," until the storms of life come and what you have built does not stand, it does not support you and fails to give you the security you thought you had. Or you leave this life and go before Christ and He says...I don't know you, **I never knew you.**

The Lord God is gracious, kind, longsuffering, waiting - wanting all to come to Him. But if you have not given yourself to Him, your life shows it and you are not His. 2 Corinthians 2:13 says ⁵Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

Which represents you today? The wise man or the foolish man?