

Ask for 3 volunteers of children and youth. Ask them to form a pyramid. (The children will decide amongst themselves that the biggest ones need to be on the bottom and the smallest on the top.) Ask them why they made this decision. Now put two smaller kids on bottom and a larger one on top and see what happens.

Teach everyone the following song:

The wise man built his house upon the rock
The wise man built his house upon the rock
The wise man built his house upon the rock
And the rain came tumbling down

Oh, the rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
And the wise man's house stood firm.

The foolish man built his house upon the sand
The foolish man built his house upon the sand
The foolish man built his house upon the sand
And the rain came tumbling down

Oh, the rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
And the foolish man's house went "splat!"

So, build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
Build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
Build your house on the Lord Jesus Christ
And the blessings will come down

Last week we learned that the gospel according to Matthew records Jesus preaching what we call the Sermon on the Mount. It is found in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the gospel of Matthew. It is called the Sermon on the Mount because Jesus ascends a tall hill and preaches a sermon to the crowd that is gathered around him. Matthew records Jesus beginning with the Beatitudes where Jesus shares about who is blessed and he ends the sermon with our reading for today.

Today's reading is another of the parables that Jesus tells. Parables are stories that Jesus tells where he uses everyday images to teach deeper meanings. Today we hear a parable about building on sand and rock. We have heard this story read from the Children's Bible but I will also read it again from another translation.

Read Matthew 7:24-29

Many of us have been to beaches along the coast and seen the impact of erosion on houses built next to the ocean. You have seen houses that were built somewhat off the coastline but eventually the ocean starts to creep closer and closer to the houses. Some of us have been to beaches where the oceans have completely surrounded homes and the homes have crumbled into the sea.

Some of us have been to beaches where this process has just begun and everyone knows it is just a matter of time before these homes fall into the ocean. The oceans are rising.

Beach communities try their hardest to prevent this erosion from occurring. Sea walls are built and sand is pumped in. But then communities discover that many of these actions have unintended consequences that impact other events like turtle hatchings and the erosion of other beaches.

Seeing the erosion that occurs at the beach makes it easy to understand why building on sand is not the best place to build a home. Sand is not a foundation that will last a very long time.

Jesus recognized this image and used it to teach a deeper meaning. Jesus shared with his listeners that building on sand is not a smart place to build. Jesus contrasts sand building to rock building. Whereas building on sand is not a strong foundation, Jesus says that building on rock is a strong foundation.

Jesus then compares sand and rock foundations to following him. Jesus says that merely listening to him is not all that there is to following him. Listening must be followed up by our actions. Merely listening is like building on sand. Whereas listening and following and doing is like building on rock.

Max DuPree is a businessman who has written about beliefs and behaviors. DuPree says that you can tell what someone really believes by the way they act. In other words, a person may say, "I believe in truth and it is a core commitment to my life." But then that person may encounter difficult situations and they lie in order to gain an advantage. How we act shows what we really believe.

So now we turn this text onto us. We can all say that we are Christian and that we follow the teaching of Jesus Christ. But to be a follower of Christ means examining how we act. What we do. How we treat others. Claiming Christ as a Savior is one thing. Living a life that is reflective of that belief is something else.

Jesus teaches us in today's lesson to look at our actions and then decide for ourselves if we are building a foundation which is shaky or if we are building a foundation that is strong.

I had a next door neighbor where I used to live that had this real ornate house. She had done a lot of work on the outside décor of the house. The house was a lot bigger than the other houses in the neighborhood. They eventually put that house up for sale and a friend of mine seriously considered buying it. But then they had the house inspected.

What was discovered in the inspection was that the foundation was cracked. The ornate exterior was a covering for an inferior foundation. And from what I observed of the family I would say that this was a pretty good description of what that family was like. Pretty on the outside without much foundation to their lives.

So we have to ask ourselves about our own faith. Are we building our faith on rock or sand? I imagine that most of us would say, "Of course, our faith is built on rock and not on sand." But I invite you to ask some tough questions to yourself as you consider whether or not you are building your faith on rock or sand.

The first question to help us decide what we are building our foundations on is this:

1. What, to you, is worth dying for? What would we sacrifice for? To save our children, our country, to recover a million dollars from the ocean floor? What, to you, is worth dying for?

2. What is worth working for? What is worth dedicating your life to? To become a star? To become a millionaire? To be successful? Is it worthwhile to be a great stay-at-home parent? What is worth working for?

3. What is worth living for? That is, what makes life worth living? What is that thing or things that you must have? Is a good family life meaningless if you never achieve success in your chosen career? Are our toys and computer games more valuable than our personal relationships? What is worth living for?

It is when we come under stress or we face life changes that we see what our foundations are made of. But do we want to wait until it is too late to see what we have built our lives upon?

Jesus invites us to listen to him, follow him, and put that faith into action by the way we live our lives. When we face tough situations and life changes we will find out about our foundation.

So now is the time to build our life on the rock of Christ. AMEN.

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http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=88

<http://www.predigten.uni-goettingen.de/archiv-7/050529-4-e.html>

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