

Sermon Text for August 13, 2023

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Psalm 118:19-25, Matthew 7:24-27

“The wise man built his house upon a rock”

There are five songs that I teach the kids in preschool and those five songs tend to last the whole year: Deep and wide, Father Abraham, This little light of mine, He’s got the whole world in his hands, and the perennial favorite, the wise man built his house upon the rock. And you know the part that the kids absolutely love. The part where they can say SMASH, really loud when the house of the foolish man falls down. They do it with glee and are laughing and I often wonder why are we teaching the kids to be happy when a person dies in their house because of the poor decision making in their lives? It’s a bit twisted, but we sing it consistently.

This parable of the choices of building your house can often get confused with the three little pigs and the wolf who huffs and puffs the blows the house down, but the difference is that this parable deals with what is the house build upon, what is the foundation, not what is the material of the house, what kind of life do we live generally, but rather what is the foundation in our life, what do we base our lives upon? Have you ever thought about that? If you haven’t thought about it then I’m guessing that like we saw last week you are kind of going with the flow and whatever comes your way you react to.

As we said last week, that is a choice, if we choose not to make a choice then we choose to not follow God. We will act and our lives will reflect the foundation that we choose. If do not choose a foundation then our lives will reflect that, one decision made on the fly after another without any rhyme or reason. Both Scriptures that we look at today address the eternal question of what or who is the foundation in our life?

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We continue along in our sermon series on the Gospel of Righteousness, and as we do that then our attention ought to be perked every time that we read in the Bible about righteousness. This morning in our Old Testament lesson there are a couple of times that we read in God’s Word this term righteousness. Look at verses 18 and 19: Open to me the gates of righteousness, this is the gate of the Lord. Sounds a lot like what we heard last week. We know that Jesus calls himself the gate in John 10. This is the gate that we choose, but it is a hard road to choose that gate.

Then in this same psalm we read about this stone that was rejected by the builders, by those who were considered experts in this, and it has become the foundation, the rock upon the

whole rest of the building is built. This is after the author says thank you for answering me, thank you for saving me. This is all terminology and understanding that we use in our own Christian faith.

When the cornerstone is our main stone we can say this is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it, even in the face of all the tragedies and hardships that we face in this life: the death of a child, an uncertain mammogram, a shaky marriage, an extra child thrown in the mix, debt that is uncontrollable, division within the family, an unkempt garden. You name what you are facing, anything at all that you are facing, and when your life is built upon the cornerstone, then and only then, can you not only make your way through it, but you can say this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

When we went to West Virginia there was one man whose house we were working on and we had to build something like a 50 foot ramp and a porch for his house, and you need real good support beams for that. His name was Mose, but the land on which his house stood was all sand and even if you dug the hole for the posts and put concrete down it would still shift and move around, so a local helped us out and he said throw in some good sized rocks in the bottom of your hole then put your post in and then put in the concrete and it should hold a little better. I will make a difference in the long run.

What a difference it is in our lives when we base our lives upon the one who doesn't change and doesn't shift around. We read in Psalm 102:27 "you are the same, and your years have no end." We read in Malachi 3:6 "For I the Lord do not change." Hebrews 13:8 tells us "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever". This is ever changing and shifting world, don't you want to know that your God doesn't change and don't you want your foundation to be that God who never changes?

Let's go to Matthew and this parable speaks directly about the wise man and the foolish man building their house, building their lives around one principle, one foundation upon which everything else relies upon. It is interesting that the word for foolish in Greek is moros from which we get the very unkind word of Moron. We know that it is a fact that it is easier to build on the sand. Anyone who builds at all knows that it is easier to build on sand, it is softer, more comfortable, you can dig without any problem. It is simply easier to work on sand. Just like last week where we read that most people are going to enter the wide gate and the easy road, but that way leads to destruction. We find ourselves there again. To build on sand or to build on rock is a choice. No one forces you to do one or the other, you choose that.

If you choose sand then you are choosing a short term benefit that will eventually lead to ruin and lead to brokenness. Isn't that what happens in most of our bad decisions? We want the benefit of the short term, give me what I can get now, because who knows what's going to happen in the future. The decisions in our lives and in our families that lead to problems are decisions that don't have the future in mind. You build upon sand because it is easier, but you build upon a rock because it leads to life. Building on rock is hard, but it sets you up for a foundation and success in your life.

So, what is this rock and all these metaphors flying around, speak plainly and clearly. Let's look at Matthew 16:18 and an exchange between Jesus and Peter. The disciples are hanging out together and Jesus asks them a question: Who do people say that I am, and who do you say that I am, each disciple gets a shot at an answer. Peter says: You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus affirms Peter, tells him that this is the right answer, and then says: You are Peter, which in Greek means rock, you are petros, and upon this rock, this statement that I am the Messiah, the Son of the living God, I will build my church.

Again Jesus uses the image of building, but this time he is talking about the church which elsewhere in Scripture is called the bride and he says that the church is going to be built on the foundation that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. This is the rock in our lives, Jesus as the Messiah, the son of the living God. When we have that in our sights, then we can't make short term decisions that will impact our lives negatively. When we lose sight of the foundation upon which our lives ought to be built, then we do make decisions that are short term and without wisdom and merit.

Speaking of wisdom, we have a similar verse in the Old Testament. If you turn to Proverbs 24:3-4 we read: By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established. By wisdom or knowledge, and this is referring to knowledge of our Savior, if you know Jesus in your everyday life, then your life will be supported and buttressed every time that a storm or a flood takes place. What tragedy we are seeing today in our country in Maui. Homes burned down to the ground, you can't help but think that this tragedy is something that really isn't covered by these Scriptures right? There is nothing those home owners could do to prevent what happened to their physical houses. Now the recovery begins.

It is in the recovery of a tragedy where we see how our own lives are built on a solid foundation or not. If we are not able to make it through, if we absolutely are not able to put one foot forward one more day, what then is our foundation? Without minimizing the tragedies that we face, we have an assurance that no matter the how hard the rain falls, no matter how high the

floods are, no matter how strong the winds blow and beat on the house, our life will remain intact because our life is founded upon Jesus who is our rock, who never changes, who is never shifting and changing his mind.

There is an important aspect to all of this. If you look at vs.24, when Jesus begins this section, he says that everyone who hears my words and acts on them. It is not enough to hear the words, and know the words, and understand them, and be able to recite them or recite Scripture, you have to act on them. He says something similar in Matthew 12:50 when he describes who his family really is. His mother and his siblings are waiting outside to take him home and he says to the crowd gathered: For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my family. We read something similar in James 1:22-25, let's read all of it – be doers of the Word, and you will be blessed, you will have a foundation that will take you through life.

Jesus in this parable is reminding us that we need to make the decision now on which foundation we are going to build our life. The stupid man chose an easy building site without considering the consequences of his choice. Don't be a moron, it is easy to be a moron, but choose the hard job and build your life upon the rock that never shifts and changes. In this church we are going to do what we are commanded in Deuteronomy 31:12 which says: read all of it.

Our job is to put ourselves in a position where we can hear Jesus' words and then do them which will provide the firm foundation for our lives when the storms hit. May God bless us and keep us as we do this. Amen.