

WALKING WITH JESUS – PART 12

Building on the Rock

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Matthew 7:24-27
Subject:	How Jesus described those who heard his teaching
Complements:	If they did what they heard they were wise If they did not do what they heard they were foolish
Exegetical idea:	Jesus described those who heard his teaching and did what they heard as wise and those who did not do what they heard as foolish
Homiletical idea:	Build on the Rock.
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to be wise and build their lives on Jesus.

Introduction

When Jesus finished his great Sermon on the Mount, the people were amazed! They had never heard anyone preach like that before! Jesus spoke with authority! He was connected with heaven and He taught simple truths that everyone could understand. But more than that, Jesus called for people to act on what they heard. He called them to make a life commitment. He called them to live differently as a result of hearing His sermon.

Last week, I gave an invitation for people to make a decision to enter by the narrow gate. If you heard last week's message, you understand what that meant. Who is the narrow gate? Jesus. What is the will of our Father in heaven? That we believe in Jesus and have eternal life. Is it easy or hard to enter in that narrow gate? Both. Easy, if you come just as you are. Hard if you try to carry all of your baggage with you: your cherished sins and your arrogance and self-righteousness. Jesus said, "Many will try to enter the narrow gate but will not be able to enter in." That's why we need to strive to enter. The verb was αγωνιζομαι. Agonize to enter in. Strive to enter in the narrow gate. Don't let anyone or anything hold you back. That is the way that leads to life!

Several people came up to me after the sermon and handed me response cards. Here are just a few of them. “.....” Someone ought to say “Amen!” out there. Angels sing when people enter in the narrow gate. Angels sing when someone decided to come home to their loving Father in heaven!

We’ve been studying the great Sermon on the Mount together in this series entitled Walking with Jesus. Today, we consider the close of Jesus’ sermon. Jesus just tells a story and imbedded in that story is a powerful appeal.

The story that Jesus told at the end of His great sermon on the mount is probably one of His best-known stories. Children sing a song about this story of Jesus. It goes like this. If you know it, sing along with me: “The wise man built his house upon the rock....”

It is a familiar story to many. But I want us to examine that story more carefully today. So take your copy of the great sermon of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, and let’s start reading from Matthew 7:24. As we read together, listen carefully for similarities and differences.

“.....”

Did you notice some similarities and differences in the story of the two builders? One similarity is that both groups represented by these two builders heard the words of Jesus. To both groups Jesus says “Whoever hears these words of mine.” Jesus is not just talking about His previous sentence. Jesus is referring to the entire contents of His sermon--everything that they had heard. Both builders were represented in the crowd that day. And they had this in common: they had both heard the words of Jesus. And we have also heard the words of Jesus as we have studied this great Sermon on the Mount.

There is a second similarity between the two builders. They both build a house. Now building a house is not accomplished without effort, whether you're talking about a building or a life. It takes effort of one kind or another to build a house. Both verbs are active. The wise man builds his house. The foolish man builds his house. No one built it for them. It doesn't say, "The wise man had his house built. Or the foolish man had his house built." It doesn't tell us whether the houses were well built or poorly built. But the two builders had this in common. They both build a house. We sense that Jesus is talking about more than constructing a building. Jesus is talking about building a life. And both individuals build a house.

There's a third similarity between the two builders. They both have heard the words of Jesus. They both build a house. What else do these two builders have in common? Thirdly, they both experience a time of crisis. Read Matthew 7:25 with me. Just the first part of the verse. "....." Now read Matthew 7:27. Again, we'll just read the first part of the verse. "....." That sounds similar doesn't it? Both builders experienced a time of crisis.

So in this story that Jesus tells at the end of His great Sermon on the Mount, there are three similarities between the two builders. They both have heard the words of Jesus. They both build a house. They both experience a time of crisis. And we can relate to their experience too. We have all gone through our own times of crisis, haven't we? And if we haven't experienced any crisis, we know someone who has. Isn't that the truth?

So we have noticed three similarities in the story that Jesus tells of the two builders. Now let's turn our attention to the differences between the two builders in the story. Before Jesus tells us anything about what these two builders do, He describes them. One is wise. The other is foolish. This is the first difference between the two builders. The word "wise" used in this story

literally means “thoughtful.” It’s not talking about a person with a high IQ, or a person who is highly educated. “Oh that person is wise!” No. This word means thoughtful. This builder is thinking about what he is doing.

The other builder is described as *foolish*. At least, that is how the translators of the NKJV translate the Greek word. Other translators use words like “stupid”. You might be interested to know that the Greek word used here is μωρος, related to μωρον, from which we get our English word “moron.” That’s strong language, isn’t it? Again, may I remind you that Jesus isn’t talking about the person’s IQ. He’s not talking about how educated this person is. The first builder is wise, thoughtful, because he hears the words of Jesus and does them. The second builder is foolish, he is a moron, because he hears the words of Jesus and does not do them.

Someone might say, “Jesus is rather arrogant saying that, isn’t He?” “Who does Jesus think He is?” The answer is simple and bold. Jesus not only thinks, He knows that He is the Messiah, He is the Door, He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. To hear His words and do them is wise. To hear His words and not do them is foolish. And that’s the first difference between the two builders in the story that Jesus tells at the end of His great sermon on the mount.

But I want you to notice a second difference between the two builders in this story of Jesus. This second difference could be easily missed if you just quickly read over the story. Do you remember that both builders had this in common: they both experienced a time of crisis. But a careful reading of the text reveals that the intensity of the crisis is different for the two builders. Go back with me to Matthew 7:25 (first part). Speaking about the experience of the wise builder, Jesus says, “.....” Now, speaking about the experience of the foolish builder, in Matthew 7:27 (first part) Jesus says, “.....” You say, “Pastor, those two

phrases are exactly the same in my copy of the sermon of Jesus! And you are correct, if you are talking about the words that the translators of the NKJV used. But there is one significant difference in the Greek. The word translated “beat” on that house in Matthew 7:27 is a different Greek word from the “beat” on that house used in Matthew 7:25. Is that significant? I think so. Jesus could have easily used the identical word. Everything else in that phrase is the same. But the Greek words translated “beat” in Matthew 7:25 and Matthew 7:27 are different.

In both situations, the rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew. The word for “flood” is ποταμος, which is also used to describe a “river.” That’s the word from which we get our English word hippopotamus, river horse. So in both situations the rains descend and the flood comes. Not just a some puddles on the ground, but a river. Perhaps even a raging torrent.

But I want you to notice that this time of crisis is different for the two builders. For the wise builder, the thoughtful builder, the floods and the wind literally “fall upon” his house. Or fall towards his house. It’s a serious situation, but that builder wisely built not just on a rock, but on the rock. The use of the definite article suggests a rock ledge. A rock outcropping. Not just a little rock laying around on the ground. This builder has chosen the higher ground. Are you listening to me today? This wise builder has chosen the higher ground. He built his house upon the rock. And when the time of crisis comes, the floods and the wind “fall upon” his house.

But when the time of crisis comes for the foolish builder, the floods and the wind literally “beat upon his house.” The foolish builder built on sand. In other words, he built in a dried out riverbed. He carelessly built his house in the direct path of trouble. And when the floods came

and the winds blew, his house was in the direct path of the raging torrent. The floods and the winds “beat upon” his house.

Now, I just want to pause for a moment and remind you of an important truth. When you decide to follow Jesus, when you decide to enter by the narrow gate and walk on the way that leads to life, you will still have times of crisis. You will still have times of trouble. Jesus told us that the way is difficult. Sometimes you will experience trouble, oppression, persecution. We learned about that last week. But those times of trouble will impact you differently if you are built upon the Rock. When you stand by the bedside of a dying loved one, it’s still a time of storm, but you have a shelter in the time of storm. When you go through a financial crisis, it’s still a time of storm, but you know that your treasures are laid up in heaven. You have a shelter in the time of storm. We all will face times of crisis in our lives, but the storm will affect you differently when you are built upon the Rock.

So far, we have observed two differences between the two builders in the story that Jesus told at the end of His sermon on the mount. The first difference is that one is wise, thoughtful, and the other is foolish, literally a “moron.” One does what he has heard from the teachings of Jesus and the other does not do what he has heard. Secondly, the intensity of the time of crisis is different for the two builders. They both face a time of crisis, but the intensity is different because the wise man built on the Rock, on higher ground, while the foolish man built on the sand, in the direct path of the raging torrent.

But there’s a third difference between the two builders in the story that Jesus told at the end of His great Sermon on the Mount. And this difference is the most obvious. The final outcome is different for the two builders. For the wise builder, the thoughtful builder, his house

did not fall. Why? Because it was so well constructed? No. His house did not fall because it was founded on the Rock. An unbeliever might scoff when a believer is killed by a drunk driver. “It didn’t help him to believe in Jesus!” But what that unbeliever doesn’t understand is this: even though that believer was killed, even though that believer now sleeps in Jesus, his house did not fall. He is founded on the Rock. And the promise of Jesus will be fulfilled: “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life and I will raise Him up at the last day.” That believer’s house will stand! Why? Because he built on the Rock!

Conversely, the foolish builder’s house will fall. Read again with me from Matthew 7:27. “.....” Did you notice that the foolish man’s house doesn’t just fall? It is a great fall. The word is *μεγαλη*--a mega fall. A total collapse. A complete demolition. The message is clear: when the house is not built on the Rock, that house will not stand. It will fall, and its fall will be great.

When we teach our children to sing “The wise man built his house upon the rock...” we also need to teach them what that means. We need to teach our children that building a house on the rock means building our lives on Jesus. Building our house on the rock means listening to Jesus and doing what He says. And His most important appeal to us, the will of our Father in heaven, is that we would enter by the narrow gate, we would believe in Jesus and have eternal life with Him.

One of the first preachers that I heard when I came to America as a young man was a preacher named Ron Halvorsen. I had never heard anyone preach like that before! And I haven’t heard many preach like that since! Ron Halvorsen shared his testimony, From Gangs to

God. Ron grew up in Brooklyn, New York. He fought in a gang. He saw violence on the streets. One day, Ron decided to skip school at his vocational high school. But he had a problem. Where could he go where the truant officer wouldn't find him? Then he had a great idea. He would go to a Christian school, Greater New York Academy, and visit a friend from his neighborhood. Ron convinced another friend, Ritchie, to skip school and go with him. Ron arrived at Greater New York Academy wearing his leather jacket, a cigarette dangling between his lips, and a switchblade in his right-hand pocket. That week the students were having a week of prayer. Ron was shocked. A week of prayer! He didn't even pray for a few minutes and they were having a week of prayer! Ron and his friend Ritchie slipped in to the back row of the chapel and tried to look cool. The preacher was a man named Pastor Keymer. He was talking about Jesus. They heard that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

At the end of that week, Ron and his friend Ritchie skipped school again and came back to Greater New York Academy. That day, the preacher gave an invitation for students to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. He invited them to enter by the narrow gate and walk on the way that leads to life. Ron felt conviction in his heart. He had lived a life of fighting. A life of crime. A life of sin. But Ron sensed the calling of the Holy Spirit to be born again, to make a choice to build a whole new life on the Rock, Jesus Christ.

Ron stood to his feet, turned to his friend Ritchie and said, "Why don't you give your heart to Christ too?" "No, Ronnie, I can't" Ritchie said. "There's just too much too it!" Ritchie stayed in his seat that day. He chose not to enter by the narrow gate. He chose not to accept

Jesus as His personal Savior. He chose not to build his house on the Rock. “There’s just too much to it,” Ritchie said.

Ron entered the narrow gate that day. He chose to build his house on the Rock. He went on to become a preacher of the Gospel! He has walked on the way that leads to life for the past 50 years. Thousands of people have learned about Jesus as a result of Ron’s testimony. Both of Ron’s children are preachers! Ron never regrets his decision to enter in by the narrow gate. He never regrets his decision to build his house upon the Rock.

Ritchie chose to build his house on sand. He ended up in prison, serving a life sentence for murder. He built his house on sand, and his house fell. And great was its fall.

And so Jesus concludes His great Sermon on the Mount with an appeal. No organ is playing. No song is sung. He just tells a story, about two builders. And the appeal is clear: Build on the Rock. Build on the Rock. Build on the Rock.

Wherever you are today, whether here on campus, or joining us via our media ministry, I appeal to you today to build on the Rock.