

"Life from The Ground Up" Matthew 7:24-29

Wednesday 9/11/19 – Jeff Lyle

Every preacher knows that how a sermon is concluded can have a major impact on the listeners. Many books have been written that instruct the preacher how to "draw the net" so that the listener knows what to do with what they have heard. Jesus finishes up His most famous and longest sermon with a crystal-clear illustration that enables His audience to understand just how much is riding on their response to the Sermon on the Mount. Each one of us has the call to examine our own heart and to discern how our lives are presently aligned with what Jesus has said throughout this sermon. His final words serve as both an invitation and a warning to us. It is no small matter what we decide. Jesus is telling us that how we respond is a matter of eternal life or eternal death. He brings the entire sermon to a pointed end when He calls us to examine the foundation upon which we are presently building our lives.

I. Jesus Introduces Two People (24,26)

A. A wise & faithful person (24) - "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

Jesus is now going to contrast two different responses to His message. He characterizes these potential responses as belonging to two different types of people: a wise person and a foolish person. Beginning with the wise person, we see three things that Jesus indicates about him/her:

1. This person listens to the words of Jesus - "Everyone then who hears these words of mine..."
2. This person believes the wisdom of Jesus - We know this person believes because of what follows: **obedience**
3. He obeys the will of Jesus - "...and does them..." The old saying is true, namely, that we only truly believe what we align with. The bible leaves no room for a definition of faith/trust/belief that does not contain the element of alignment and obedience. The wise man acted upon what He believed was true - so will all who have authentic, growing faith in Jesus and His teachings.

B. A wayward & foolish person (26) - "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand."

What is interesting is that the foolish person heard the exact same words as did the wise person. The content to which he/she must respond is no different than the content that the wise person responds to.

1. This person also listens to the words of Jesus - "And everyone who hears these words of mine..."

2. This person may or may not believe the wisdom of Jesus' message. If he/she does not believe, he/she is proud and self-deceived. If he/she believes what Jesus teaches, but disobeys His teaching, he/she is a rebel against God.
3. This person disobeys the will of Jesus - "...and does not do them..." This is the key piece of evidence that Jesus will use to reveal whether a person has built/is building their life upon the rock of His truth or the unstable, shifting sand of their own thoughts and beliefs. What we obey is the truest indicator of what owns our highest allegiance.

II. Jesus Explores Two Philosophies

A. A dependable foundation for life- "...a wise man who built his house upon a rock..."

This foundation is simple but strong: Faith in and loyalty to Jesus Christ and His revealed truth. Jesus is using a construction metaphor to communicate the way we wisely build our own lives in the Kingdom. Clearly, this illustrates our individual salvation in that the foundation of a building determines the durability of that building, just as the foundation of our salvation determines the endurance of that salvation. Jesus himself (and His teachings) are represented by the rock, the solid, reliable foundation. Everything that our life becomes in the Kingdom is anchored in Jesus and His teachings. We must build wisely upon it in ways that are consistent with the foundation. Jesus declares that those who build their lives upon Him and His teachings are wise.

B. A deceptive foundation for life - "...a foolish man who built his house upon the sand..."

Contrasted with the wise person who builds his/her life upon Jesus and His teachings is the foolish person who builds a life upon...anything else. This shifting-sand foundation is both unworthy and unreliable. Anything that holds our confidence other than Jesus Christ and His revealed truth will be exposed soon enough as a false foundation that leads to instability and ruin.

III. Jesus Introduces One Storm (25, 27)

A. Storms come through events you can't control - "And the rain fell..."

B. Storms bring fears you can't escape - "...and the floods came..."

C. Storms materialize problems you did not anticipate - "...and the winds blew..."

D. Storms expose weakness you had not acknowledged - "...and beat on that house..."

Both the wise person and the foolish person are portrayed as having to go through large, powerful storms. Being a wise person does not immunize us from the storms of life. The reality that all of us will give a final account to God for what we believed and how we lived is the greatest potential storm we might face. Jesus is referencing both that encounter with God and all the other "lesser storms" that we will face as we live the life of faith. Storms

have a way of exposing the condition of our life-foundations. Storms cannot be controlled as heavy circumstantial rains begin to drench us. At times, those heavy rains from the sky become rising and rushing floodwaters on the ground. Troubles arise and threaten to overcome us. Add to the rain and floodwaters the powerful, threatening winds of unanticipated problems, and we find ourselves outmatched by the circumstances of life. It is essential to note that Jesus declares that storms will find both types of people. The storms He references reveal the foundation of our lives as we will now see.

IV. Jesus Examines Two Potentials

- A. A triumphant potential - The house of the wise man "...did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."**
- B. A tragic potential - The house of the foolish man "...fell: and great was the fall of it."**
- C. "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."**

One thing is clear within the Sermon on the Mount: Jesus does not play to the crowds. He does not try to be diplomatic or soft on the ears of His audience. Jesus Christ preaches intentionally and intensely. The Son of God is never worried about making His audience uncomfortable with what he shares. It would seem that He highly honors them by telling them the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The honor is seen in that He empowers them to make an informed decision about what they hear. In His last lesson, Jesus speaks of the only two potentials for any who are deciding what to do with what they have heard from Him. If they believe and align with Him and His message, their lives will be anchored in Him, the rock, and they will endure past all of the storms of life and all the way through the final judgment. If they choose to decline His offer of Himself and His teachings, then they have chosen to establish their lives and eternity on a faulty foundation. The result for those people will be a great and eternal fall. They will be doomed by their unbelief and refusal of Jesus. This is the choice which He has presented to all those who hear Him for the last 2,000 years. Believe Him, and you will live. Refuse to believe, and you will continue in death.

Almost as a footnote, we are told a little of how His original audience felt about Him and His message on the hillside. Unlike the scribes and other religious leaders, Jesus taught with authority and did not base His messages on the teachings of the rabbis who came before Him. The listeners found themselves stunned, perhaps even rattled, at how this teacher from Nazareth spoke with unapologetic authority. We are not told who believed and who did not believe. Eternity will reveal that mystery to us. What we are told is that nobody who heard His words were able to pretend that nothing significant had been said. Jesus had delivered them a sermon that would change the entire trajectory of human history. Everyone had to decide what to do.

And so must we.