

Building our lives upon Jesus and His words.

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[0 : 00] So with it being our first Sunday of the new year, I was thinking a little bit about the year ahead. And I was just thinking a little bit about in the year ahead, what is it that we need to build or continue to build our lives upon?

And really what came to my mind when I was thinking about that question was Jesus and his words. In the year ahead, as we look to what the Lord has for us in 2025, I just want to encourage us to build our lives upon Jesus, to build our lives upon who he is, what he is like, what he has done for us, who we are in him, and what he has told us and what he has shown us.

Let us build our lives upon Jesus and his words. And just with that in mind, I guess that kind of brought me to a parable that we've already been thinking a little bit about this morning.

And that parable is in Matthew chapter 7. Matthew chapter 7, verses 24 to 27. Just out of interest, I'm just wondering how many of us here this morning have been to the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy?

Helen has been. Tom has been. Mom and dad have been. Norma has been. Anyone else? Annie. Of course, Annie's been all over the world.

[1 : 39] She's been everywhere. Well, folks, believe it or not, apparently the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy is eventually going to fall.

Scientists tell us that the time will come when the tower will fall. In fact, a team of scientists travel to the town of Pisa once a year to measure how much more the tower has tilted.

And they tell us that every year, the 180-foot tower tilts about 1 20th of an inch. Well, the tower is 850 years old.

So as far as they can make out, the tower has tilted something like 17 foot since it was first built. Many attempts have been made to try to ease the tilt.

Apparently millions have been spent. But it's very hard to do much about it because the tower has got one fundamental problem. It was built on soft ground.

[2 : 47] In fact, it's interesting, the word Pisa actually means marshland or something to that effect in English. So around Pisa, apparently it's a problem for other construction as well.

The ground is very, very soft. And it's very boggy. So despite all of their best efforts and despite all of their ropes and counterbalances and things like that, they do believe that the tower of Pisa will eventually fall.

And you can see here just how tilted it is. It does look about 17 foot tilted, doesn't it, when we look at it? The leaning tower of Pisa is a reminder of the importance of what something is built on.

Well, in Matthew chapter 7, in verses 24 to 27, Jesus uses a parable to challenge us in relation to what we're building our lives upon.

I just want to read that parable. Jesus said, Everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

[4 : 04] The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundations on the rock.

But everyone who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

You know, I think through these verses, the big question that faces us is this. When it comes to what are we building our lives upon, are we building our lives upon something solid, or are we building our lives on something soft that will just wash away?

When it comes to what we are building our lives upon, are we like a wise builder, or are we like a foolish one? Well, it's interesting.

When we look at this parable, we actually see that the two builders, the wise and the foolish one, actually had a lot in common. They had many things in common.

[5 : 23] Looking at this parable, we see in verses 24 and 26 that both builders build a house. Now, in these two verses, the same Greek word is used for house, and that word is *oikos*, and it is spelt like this, O-I-K-I-A, which means a dwelling house.

Now, I think it's kind of funny. I don't know if the words are connected or not, but I think it's kind of funny how this word sounds like Ikea. And, of course, they have plenty of stuff for dwelling houses. I don't think the words are connected as far as I understand, but Ikea means a dwelling house.

Both of these builders build a dwelling house. You know, it's funny. I was looking online, and when you type in the wise and foolish builder, nearly all of the Sunday school stuff has got this one big palace that's up on top of a rock, and then there's a small little shack that's on the sand.

I think the reality is both builders build the same thing. They both build a dwelling house. And to add to that, both builders finish their houses.

Again, in verses 24 and 26, the word for built is in the past tense, pointing to both builders finishing their dwelling houses.

[6 : 52] So I don't think we can say, looking at this parable, that one builder finished his dwelling house and the other builder didn't, and that's why it fell.

No, both builders finished their dwelling house. So both builders built a dwelling house. Both builders finished their dwelling house.

Both of these builders, on the outside, looking in at them, I think had many, many things in common, except for one crucial thing, what their foundation was built on.

And we see in verses 24 and 26 that one builder, of course, built his house on the rock, and the other builder built his house on the sand. And I think here, at this point in the parable, is really where we start to see the difference between both builders.

The wise builder built his house on rock, which more than likely took more time to lay out. It possibly took more time to dig out.

[8 : 06] But the foolish builder built his house on sand, which probably was the easier option for the there and then.

He just built on whatever was in front of him. It seems that he didn't take time to dig anything out. Well, when the rainy season came, when the wet and the stormy season came, both houses had very different fates.

In verse 25, we first see what happened when the storm hit the house built on rock. The rain came down and the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house.

Yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock. No matter what, you know, rain or wind hit this man's dwelling house, it did not fall.

It did not collapse. It remained standing because it had its foundations on the rock. When I was looking at this parable, I came across this story.

[9 : 19] In 1989, a massive earthquake hit the city of San Francisco. And it was 6.9 on the Richter scale, which apparently is a fairly strong earthquake.

And much damage was done. And sadly, some lives were lost. I think there were 69 lives lost. But it's reported that many, many more lives would have been lost if the Golden Gate Bridge had collapsed.

The Golden Gate Bridge is apparently always fairly busy with cars and people walking. I think you can walk up both sides of it as kind of a bit for pedestrians. Well, if this bridge had collapsed, many more lives would have been lost.

Because however busy it normally is, it was especially busy on this day. Because when this earthquake hit, on this very day in San Francisco was Game Tree in the World Series of Baseball.

So on this day, the bridge was absolutely packed with tourists and people who were traveling into San Francisco. But the bridge, right throughout the earthquake, remained undamaged.

[10 : 40] And they say it's because the foundation of the bridge rests on towers that are embedded in this rock underneath the bay.

And in whatever way it was standing on this rock, it did not collapse and there was no damage on the bridge. So I think we can say that the Golden Gate Bridge in 89, just like this wise man's house in this parable, did not crash, it did not fall in the time of testing because its foundations were built on the rock.

Well, now in verse 27, we see what happened to the house that was built on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

And it's interesting that after this storm, Jesus did not say that the house was left a little bit unbalanced, or the house was left a little bit tilted. Now, Jesus said that this house fell with a great crash.

So even though, I think on the outside, looking in at these two builders, they had a lot in common, we can really see why Jesus called one of them wise and the other foolish.

[12:06] As I said at the start, Jesus gives us this parable to challenge us in relation to what are we building our lives upon.

As I said, on the outside, we might look very similar to everyone else. We might look similar to the person down the road. But what is it that we are building our lives upon?

Are we building our lives on a rock? Or are we building our lives on something soft that will just wash away? Well, I think if truth be told, we would probably say we all want to build our lives on something solid.

I think we would all probably say we all want to build our lives on something solid that will last forever and ever. Well, just in closing, the good news is, the great news is that Jesus tells us in this parable how we can build our lives on something solid.

He tells us how we can build our lives on something that will last forever and ever. In verses 24 and 26, Jesus tells us the difference between the wise and foolish in life.

[13:22] And I think there really is only two categories in life. There really is only the wise and the foolish. There isn't a third builder that was kind of halfway in between.

When it comes to what we're building our lives upon, each one of us were either wise or foolish. And Jesus tells us the difference between the wise and the foolish in this life.

Everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. But verse 26, everyone who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

Both builders hear the words of Jesus. But what makes the difference between the wise and the foolish in life is what they do with the words of Jesus after they hear them.

The wise, they hear the words of Jesus. They take them on board. They listen to them. They put them into action. They build their lives on them.

[14:41] And therefore, they're building their lives on something solid, on something that will last forever and ever. But the foolish, the foolish, they hear the words of Jesus.

They hear them and in some sort of a way, they let them go. They hear about Jesus, but they do not follow him. Instead, in reality, they build their lives on their own ideas, on their own ways, or we could say the ways of the world.

And these things simply will not last. They will not last in the time of testing. So, folks, in the year ahead, as we go into 2025, I just want to encourage each one of us to build our lives upon Jesus. Build our lives upon his words. Let us build our lives upon him who will never let us down. He will hold us firm in the time of testing.

And he will last forever. Let us build our lives upon him. We're going to sing another song. And, of course, we have to sing this one.

[16:05] My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly trust in Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. And I suppose it's my prayer for us as we head into this new year that may these words be true, truly true of each one of us.

May we build our lives upon Christ. All other ground is sinking sand. Let's worship him together. Let's worship him together.