

# The Wise and Foolish Builders

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[ 0 : 00 ] I think this message, this parable, enshrined in a small little Baptist tin church on the council estate where I grew up.

That's the first where I heard this. But the thing that sticks in my mind is the 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 rains came tumbling down. You know it. And the rains 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 house on the rock 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. The rain came down and the floods came up. The rain came down and the floods came up.

[ 1 : 04 ] The rain came down and the floods came up and the house on the sand fell. Well done. It's a great kid's song enshrined in Christian tradition.

And as I was reflecting on this Sunday, because the wise man built his house upon the rock, I'd like to suggest that in me, as part of a confession, there is something a little bit smug in me because I like to think of myself on the rock.

And to view what we see from our own rock, wherever we may be, the sadness and deep sadness of those that have built on sandy soil.

A little bit of smugness in me thinks, well, I'm okay. But that's not so good, is it? I'd like to suggest that often we miss, me included, that we're too hasty sometimes in this story to rush in and maybe suggest here on a Sunday morning, we've confessed our sin, we've lived a Christian life as far as we knew.

But what does that do for the person who is building on the sandy soil? Where are we in a place to be able to reach out, to be able to help, to be able to help them from a secure place in which we are?

[ 2 : 46 ] Because many of us, you know, as a children, you think, what a silly man, you know, building there. But we look back and we reflect at times, and I certainly do in my life, where I haven't built on God's word.

And where I need to build more and more on God's word, and where I need to understand more about grace and serving. Because when the storm came, he realized, and it's not until the storm comes.

And Jesus was clear about that when he said to them, you know, and many of us will know, many of us will know those who all it takes was their, we thought their faith was as strong as anything, and all it takes is the slightest storm of life.

And suddenly it crumbles. Where was it built on? Where were the people around them to secure, to help them, to uphold them at those times?

Maybe something in there about being church, that we are strong there to support the community and others in each other when we need that strength.

[ 3 : 54 ] faith. Because I realized that, where was he investing? It took a long time to build on that rock.

It probably took longer. It took longer to build, and there is no quick fix to faith in the Christian life and serving.

And I don't know whether you've experienced that. I certainly have. You know, I learn more and more, day by day, that the Lord's showing me, bit by bit, about what it means to live and serve out the gospel.

And this is what Jesus was saying to them, right at the beginning. Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice, ouch!

I know the word, but Lord, show me in this moment how I put your word into practice. How do I do that? How do I encourage other people to show them this rock on which we are building, this strong foundation?

[ 5 : 00 ] How do we do that? And we all have tears, we all have thoughts this morning, maybe for those that are close to us, that we just long to see to come into a firmer foundation.

And that will often be through us. It'll be for them not giving up as Jesus didn't on those as he sent out his disciples.

And here in this reading, I want to stress this morning, you know, we've, it's part of God's architectural plan, actually, that we should build strongly on his word.

You see, I don't know what you were like at growing, at putting furniture together. I remember years ago, we had MFI furniture.

Do you remember that? My Furniture Incomplete? It was called, there was always something missing from the box. But we moved on to Ikea, and I, Mandy will tell you stories of the early days of Ikea where, as gentlemen, I don't know whether you're like me, there's something about not reading the instructions properly.

[ 6 : 12 ] What is it about a manual that we don't get that idea about reading a manual? We just want to open the box, and we want to get stuck in. And I think this morning, Jesus was talking to people who knew the manual, but really hadn't got to putting things together properly.

And it lives as a living testimony for me. My Ikea furniture in the early days, of Mandy reminding me of the drawer that never runs properly, of the door that never closes quite as it should, of having enough left over to build a coffee table.

I have learnt in my wisdom in my old age that it's a good idea to look at the manual. And now, I'm probably verging on probably more of my autistic side, where I have to lay everything out and count everything now.

So I know I have everything as I start. And it's amazing how much better the furniture actually is for looking at there. And as Mandy will tell you, the furniture is a lot better than me having looked at it as it is.

There is something about the manual, and Jesus is saying, yeah, the manual is great, but it's how we use it. Who hears these words and puts them into practice, it wasn't luck that this house stood firm in the storm.

[ 7 : 36 ] It was about some graft that had gone into it. It was about prayer. It was about thought. We know in our own lives, and we, each of us, will have a story of what that storm looks like for each of us.

For what that storm may look like at the moment, for what the storms look like in our lives. For maybe storms that came and how we weathered that storm with the Lord and how we thought maybe at the time, my goodness, this is going to crumble.

This is all going to fall apart, but it stood firm. Even the wind battering it. But we stood firm, and our faith stood firm. And I think this is a scripture that not only is to inform, but it's to encourage.

Because to love, the greatest commandment that Jesus had already taught them was to say, to know that God is there for you.

To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, with all your strength. The greatest commandment. The second is this, to love your neighbor as yourself. And I don't know about you, I could stand on my rock and my heart will break as yours did for when you see lives crumble for those who haven't built or didn't make wise decisions.

[ 8 : 56 ] For things that were done and said, for things that, for I want to be in that position to reach out from a place of strength and security to save.

This scripture seems a cut and dried parable for Sunday schoolers. For me, it brings me to my knees.

Matthew records how Jesus teaches us about judging others. Before this, if you go home and read in Matthew's gospel, it's about asking, seeking and knocking. It's about the narrow gate.

It's about false prophets. It's about true and false prophets. Not everybody who calls me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Ouch! That is a hard verse. That one puts me on the ropes because effectively, here we are, people like the boxer, we can find ourselves on those ropes.

[10:00] Everybody who hears these words and puts them into practice, that is the rock. put it into practice day by day. Lord, help me to do that and give me grace to do that.

It's about making sure that our brothers and sisters have got the opportunity to be saved. Going on from the story on the plane, the beauty was, is the guy I sat next to was, had worked in Germany, sorry, in Jersey for ages and we had this great conversation about his homeland, about where he'd come from, how he'd worked there and about how he'd jettisoned his faith when he was 16.

We had a great conversation. I'd love to tell you that I prayed for him and he came to faith there and then. It would be my airline testimony. Everybody has one. I just have a train one.

But we had this great conversation. It was a double blessing. But again, the strength of us being on the rock, whatever our rock looks like. And I'd want to encourage you this week to think about what that rock looks like for us.

Is it in prayer? Is it in people that we bring around us? Is it in a growth group? Is it in our Bible study every day? Is it in our experience?

[11:23] Whatever way it is for us, what is that rock that when the wind comes, not just for us but for others, we can reach out? And I'm really sorry that this is a bit tough talking today because it really is.

It's not an easy scripture. It's one that as childhood we think is cut and dried but it's tough. But I know where I would rather stand when the wind comes. And I'd rather know where I'd have people with me.

They say one of the number one funeral songs at the moment is Frank Sinatra's I Did It My Way. Isn't that interesting? How people want to choose a song as we say our farewells of saying I did it my way rather than I did it with you, Lord.

We did it together. And sometimes it's about their life, their choice, their future, their choices and their salvation. But I want to encourage us today that from the place we are, not a lofty high place, that we would look down on people and say, oh, look at my rock.

[12:38] Isn't this wonderful? It's all sewn up. Come and join me. But so often the rock is the place in the storm of life that we cling to as we reach out to others and bring them in.

If that is a picture for you this morning, I pray you'd hold on to it because that is my picture of life in this story. Of not soothed looking out the window, at the rain coming down, at my brother and sister failing.

But to hold fast to that rock, knowing that it's firm, his grip in my hand, that he will never let me go as I reach out to seek, to save, to bring my brothers and sisters to that rock.

I pray for us this picture this morning would be strong. I don't think God is going to ask me of the things I did to achieve in building my own salvation. I'm sure he's going to ask me, what was it like when I was holding your hand as you were reaching out to other people to bring them in to me?

In this time of slippery sand, in this time of where our country is, of stories we're hearing all over the world, I pray that each and every one of us would know that rock of security to enable us to do what the Lord is calling us to do.

[14:04] I pray that God will bless you in that. I pray that he would strengthen those rootings, that where we feel that may be weak, that he will strengthen those places for us, that he would give us that ability that when the storms come, not just for us but for our brothers and sisters, we would know that hand that holds us to bring others to safety, to salvation, and to know him.

And the people said amen. Amen. Amen. Bless you.