

The Homeless Mind

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[0 : 0 0] The Lord, the giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets, and I believe one holy Catholic and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen. Our God, we ask that every word we speak may come from our hearts, and every word in our hearts may come from you.

And we ask that every word that we hear may come from your heart, and may be engraved on ours.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Turn, if you will, to Matthew chapter 7, and we have to overcome the enormous problem of the fact that we are very familiar with this passage, and therefore might assume that we know what it says.

And I think it says some very surprising and quite embarrassing things. I'm feeling a bit sorry for myself having to tell you about them this morning.

[1 : 4 1] But if we pray God may speak to us, then the way I want to do it, just so we make sure we know that what we're talking about is to turn to 7, verse 21.

And I'm going to read the passage to you, and every so often I'm going to stop. And when I stop, then you pick it up until the next punctuation mark, and then I'll start again.

Can you follow that? So here we go on Matthew, chapter 7. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

That he has the will of my heart, who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many wonders, many mighty works in your name?

And then will I declare to them, I am the Lord, Lord, who is in heaven. I am the Lord, Lord, who is in heaven. You're missing some of the punctuation mark.

[2 : 4 9] Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.

And it fell, and the rain fell, Now this story comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

It brings it all into focus. The Sermon on the Mount, which I would like now briefly to summarize for you, but you'd find it a great help to sit down with it and summarize it for yourself.

So the Sermon on the Mount says, where happiness comes from, only happiness is spelt B-L-E-S-S-E-D, the impact of a little salt in a large carcass, a little light in a huge darkness, the law and the prophets as the irreducible minimum and the ultimate fulfillment, murder, adultery, divorce, and false oaths, and the impact they have on the dissolution of society, the nature of justice, that enemies too are your neighbors and therefore are to be loved, acts of charity are to be secret and private, fasting is to be secret and private, true wealth is incorruptible, anxiety is not to be your daily diet, seeking the kingdom is to be your ultimate priority, generosity, not judgment, is to be your hallmark, to ask, seek, and knock, because there is a God who answers, is to be found, and is to meet you with necessary provision, and you're to bang on the door till he answers.

It tells us that if you can ever be generous, then you are like God who is always generous, you're to find the way, not follow the crowd, the fruit of the tree comes from the root of the tree, and then we come to today, and all those things are, you've listened to for the last many weeks.

[6 : 23] Now, today, you are confronted with this passage, which says, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

And you all know what that means. The interesting thing about it is that we can use the words without, in fact, knowing the person of whom we speak.

Lord, Lord. Lord, Lord. And the surprising consequence of that is that we discover that the one whose name we are using, but whose person we don't know, is one who knows our name, but denies that he knows us.

He's never had opportunity to come to know us. I mean, it's a completely devastating statement. I never knew you, he says.

If we use the words and don't know him, which is, of course, one of the great dangers you get to in coming to church. I mean, it makes coming to church very dangerous indeed, because you learn the words without knowing the person.

[8 : 04] And then it goes on and says something which I find even more devastating, when it says that the appeal goes up.

Did we not prophesy in your name? In your name drive out demons? In your name perform many miracles? Well now, the reason I go to St. John's is because it's where the word is preached, the demons are driven out, and the miracles are performed.

That seems to be the essence of the whole contract, doesn't it? That's what we want to see happen. That's what Jesus himself was involved in doing, in prophesying, in driving out demons, and in performing many miracles.

So why does he say, why do they say, we were involved in prophecy, we were involved in driving out demons, we were involved in miracles that were performed?

Something is apparently missing. There seems, I mean it's, it's, it's, the essence of the problem of getting into the ministry.

[9 : 30] Because when you're in the ministry, the thing you'd like to be known for is preaching, driving out demons, and performing miracles.

And to have a congregation that thinks you can do it is enormously uplifting. And, and, it's, it's very satisfying to your ego.

And, and yet, the answer is, from Jesus, I never knew you. It's amazing, isn't it?

That he says that. I never knew you. I don't, I don't know who you are. But then he goes on to say what, what needs to happen.

And he says that, the essential business is to be one, look in verse 24, who hears these words of mine and puts them and puts them into practice.

[10 : 42] And this is your, you see, it's, it's not your doing, but it's your responding to what Jesus is doing when he speaks to you. And he's just finished three chapters of speaking words to you.

And he says, your essential business is to put them into practice. And if you do that, you can be likened to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

This summer on Main Island, they shot a movie and in order to build a movie, to shoot the movie, they built several old, old houses and put them in.

They were, as you know, they were only facades, they were only a movie set, but spiritually, there is a danger that we live in a movie set.

Houses that have no foundation, whatever. They have all you need in terms of appearance, but they have no foundation, whatever. And the assumption is that the storms won't come.

[11 : 54] And they do come. And they are quite graphically described. The rain comes down, the streams come up, and the wind blows hard.

These storms come into our lives. None of us escape them. And they're very difficult, but they're impossible if you have no foundation.

I mean, you are simply blown away that's all there is to it. You have no foundation. I had a great moment of inspiration yesterday when I read the Globe and Mail.

It's full of inspiration. There was a long article on the rolling stones. and it's a sort of interesting contrast to this parable that we have built a society on rolling stones, you know, that have no permanence at all.

And the amazing story of their popularity for 25 years is unbelievable. But they also are the hallmark of our society, that our society is that we live in movie-set houses based on rolling stones.

[13 : 24] You can throw that out if you want, but it just seemed a good idea to try and express a contrast in our own day. Our society is at that great moment in our whole culture where we don't need a queen, we don't need a country, we don't need law and order, we certainly don't need families, we don't need marriage.

Childbearing is an unfortunate interference with our sexual fulfillment. We want to break all the bonds that tie us to traditions that we no longer accept.

law is merely the instrument of the powerful who are simply out to protect their assets. You can spell that with or without a T.

The truth is only your personal right to lie. That's all we consider truth to be.

the only values which we become militant about are that you're not to smoke, you're not to own a gun, and you're not to go through red lights. But otherwise, you want to be as free as possible.

[14 : 54] We also consider it very important to take the New Testament teaching of rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's, and you better have it done by midnight on April the 30th.

But if it comes to rendering to God, well, that's purely optional. So, what does it mean to build your house on the rock?

Luke's Gospel adds to it the picture of a man who dug down deep and laid the foundations of his house on a rock?

It's a picture of really getting down to what is at the basis of our society. Do you know, Dr. Spock has written a new book, which is called A Better World for Our Children, and Dr.

Spock laments the loss of good old-fashioned values. He blames this change on materialism, competitiveness, and loss of religious values.

[16 : 22] Now, there is a, it says of him that he espouses values so traditional that they could have been culled from the Republican Party platform.

And we're hearing quite a lot about that now, how let's get back to traditional values. But I don't think that's what Jesus is saying.

I mean, I still think that basically what people who say that are doing are really talking about values, and values are a very deceptive word.

Values, as a word, is very deceptive. It's sort of like the Canadian dollar. It goes up and down fairly regularly. It's kind of like, values, I think, are the interior decorating of our houses.

But Jesus isn't talking about how to do your interior decorating. He's talking about how to establish the foundation on which the whole thing is built.

[17 : 30] And there are many people who, espousing values, are telling us how our lives should be decorated from an interior point of view.

But nobody will identify the fact that unless it's built on the rock, when the rains come and the floods come and the wind blows, the whole thing will be blown away.

And that's, in a sense, why there is such a reaction against values, because they seem to have no permanence. And we seem to have no choice except to build our house on the shifting values of our culture and of our society.

We build on those shifting values and don't find out where the rock is. And I think that that's what's happened in our society, is that there is no rock, and anybody who appeals to getting back to traditional values is, in a sense, whistling in the dark, because our society has pretty well come to the conclusion that the whole of human civilization is built on a bog, and is about to sink into the bog, that there is little possibility that we will survive it, that ultimately that there will be meaning.

and so in a sense, you see, it's great good news that Jesus says that there is a rock on which our houses are to be built.

[19 : 28] No matter what we do with the edifice that's above, and no matter how we decorate it, he says, you've got to build on the foundation.

foundation, and when he talks about the foundation, what he's talking about is this. Sure, we live in a country called Canada, a province called British Columbia, a city called Vancouver, but the rock is to be in touch with the reality of the kingdom of God.

All those other things are ultimately, historically, highly transitory, and we are to be built on, the rock is the kingdom.

There are five billion people and more on this planet, but the rock reality is that they all bear, no matter how defaced, God.

They all bear the image of God. There is a longing to find meaning in our lives, and we resort to all sorts of illusions and facades, all sorts of interior decorating schemes to try and build meaning into our lives, things.

[21 : 03] But Jesus makes it clear that the only possible meaning is that we come in touch with the sovereign will of God, that meaning is impossible without that.

There's a great mystery to the existence of God, and we can imagine all sorts of things about him, but we don't encounter the rock reality of our God until we encounter the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is who God is, and apart from Jesus Christ, God is an indefinable floating essence that all people speculate about, but nobody encounters.

There is the sad and inevitable reality of death, but death itself dies at the cross of Jesus Christ.

That's where death is finally dealt with, and its power stripped from it. There is the incomprehensible mystery of the possibility of life beyond death, and all we really know is that Jesus Christ on the third day rose from the dead, and he said, I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

[22 : 50] you see, in that, you come up against rock reality, so that in our society, you can imagine a million artists spending the whole of their lives working with stone, paint, steel, music, words, to try and articulate the ultimate mystery of human existence, of which the annunciation, the birth, life, teaching, trial, and death of Jesus Christ, his resurrection, and ascension, is the ultimate work of art.

It is the only work of art, of which it can be said, it is finished. And so, Jesus brings this sermon on the mount, to this crashing conclusion, that unless you find the rock, and build on that, you have nothing that won't be blown away.

unless you find the rock, if you live with illusions and facades, if you live on rolling stones, then it won't go anywhere.

You remember that this is the story of the foolish builder, the foolish man who built his house on the sands, and the wise man who built his house upon the rock.

Remember, Jesus told another parable about the five wise and the five foolish virgins. And there's a kind of parallel between them, because the foolish virgins, as it were, became so preoccupied with the business of the night, that they weren't ready when the bridegroom came.

[25 : 16] And if you look in this passage, which is in verse 22, Jesus talks about that day.

Many will say to me, on that day, which brings us up against the reality of what that day will reveal.

That day undoubtedly refers to the judgment which falls upon our lives, and how grand and glorious the edifice, the appearance of our house is, unless it's based on the salvation which God has effected for us in the rock, who is the person Jesus Christ, of whom we spoke in the creed just as the sermon began, that he is the one, and on him, alone, in the shifting sands of our world and of our cultures, on him alone is the rock to be found.

Paul says it, there is no other foundation than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. And that's how the sermon ends, with a strong appeal that says the essential business of our lives is to get our foundations on the rock.

I don't know if we're pushing scripture too hard. If you look at Jesus' words when he speaks to his disciples and says, I will come back and, you know, that I go to prepare a place for you in my father's house are many mansions.

[27 : 27] Well, perhaps that's the ultimate house of our dwelling. But the foundation of it is laid now on the rock which is Christ Jesus.

And we can listen to the doctor's box of this world tell us. We need to get back to traditional values. What that essentially means is that we need to get down to the rock.

And that rock is Jesus Christ. And other than that, there is no foundation. There isn't any other foundation that will stand up against the storms that will batter our lives, the storms that will come upon us, drenching rain and overwhelming floods and irresistible wind that destroys and destroys and destroys everything but the foundation which is ours in Christ Jesus.

and that's where we are. That's what we're doing here this morning is making sure that anything we're building at the moment that isn't on the foundation which is Christ Jesus is essentially a waste of time.

And that on that day, even though it's hard to say prophecies, casting out demons, working miracles, those things are all important in their way, but unless you are rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, if you don't know Jesus, Jesus, imagine him saying, I never knew you.

[29 : 53] Amen.