

Christ the Rock

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[0 : 00] Please come again with me to Matthew chapter 7 and reading at verse 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.

And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house. But it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. 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.

And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell. And great was the fall of it. The Sermon on the Mount has been described as the greatest sermon ever preached.

Not just because of its divine author and the divine preacher. But also because of its context and structure and flow. You will be familiar I think with the content.

You are familiar with the Beatitudes. The attitudes that describe the character of the Christian. You will know about the instructions in it and how we are to behave.

[1 : 16] You will know about the instructions and how we are to engage in acts of righteousness. Like acts of charity and prayer and fasting.

And not forgetting in this chapter itself the golden rule. So whatever you wish that others would do to you do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.

And notice the way that Jesus expresses that golden rule in a very positive way. Do unto others. From verse 13 of this chapter 7.

Jesus is applying his sermon. He is coming to the end of his sermon and he is applying. He doesn't leave it hanging in mid-eight.

But he presses home his points. And he presses home the sermon onto the minds and consciences of those that are listening to him. And in our thinking this evening we come to the final paragraph of the sermon.

[2 : 15] We come to the final application. He has already spoken about in this chapter. In his application about the broad road. The wide road that leads to destruction. That we are familiar with.

He has spoken about the narrow road that leads to life. He has spoken about the need for integrity of profession. Not everyone who says that calling the Lord, Lord. Will enter the kingdom of heaven. But the one who does the will of my father.

Who is in heaven. And now as he comes to this final ending to the sermon. He presses it home. And he issues a final choice and a final challenge to us.

And he uses the illustration of house building to do that. We have in this paragraph, in this last application, we have two builders building two separate houses.

And we want to look this evening at the manner of their building. The tests that come on the building. And then the results of their building endeavours. But first let us notice that the building that he is speaking about.

[3 : 19] The building is used as a picture of life. Or of lifestyle. And we are all building a building. We are all engaged in this building process.

And as someone else has said, every ambition we cherish. Every thought we think. Every word we speak. Every action we perform. Each one of these.

These are the building blocks of life. And the building blocks of the house that we are building. Each one a brick in the building of your house. In the building of your life.

So let us look at these houses. Let us look now at the manner in which these houses were built. We are told that there are two men. A wise man and a foolish man.

The wise man is obviously a thoughtful man. He takes stock of where he is building. He takes stock of the weather conditions that might occur. He thinks about the kind of structure that he will need.

[4 : 23] And it appears from the illustration that the plot of land available to each man is not in the most desirable of locations. Indeed both plots might be in what we would call a dangerous location.

We are told for instance that there will be storms. And when the rain and the storms come. There is going to be a flooding problem. Now it is possible that they were building in a flood plain.

It is possible that they were even building in one of these wide broad areas of flood plain in the Middle East. When you have sort of river beds. And they are very very dry in the dry season.

But in the rainy season they can flood. And it is not impossible anymore for us to imagine that. We have seen pictures of that on our television. Not just in our own country. But in other countries we see vast areas covered in flood water and houses protruding through them.

It is not impossible for us to imagine at all. The sensible man, this wise man, he takes into account the reality of his situation. And he reckons that he must get a house built with a solid foundation.

[5 : 30] He knows that he must dig down deep through all the sedimentary layers. Deep down until he hits upon rock. And then he can build. The foolish man, it seems to me, he sees only the dream.

He wants the house. He needs the house. And he wants it now. And he gets to work immediately. He doesn't think about the rainy season.

He doesn't bother with a firm foundation. And you know, the illustration is so useful and it's so relevant to us and to our building. We live, do we not, in what might be called not the most desirable of situations.

Our building blocks are not ideal. Let me put it that way. We live in a fallen world. We live in a world that has been cursed by God through the sin of agony.

We earn our meat. We earn our way by the sweat of our brow, the Bible tells us. But more than that, we have fallen sinful natures.

[6 : 43] We have natures that are beguiled by dreams of what we can have here and now. We have natures that are easily enticed, easily beguiled, easily deceived.

The short-term pleasures of sin look so attractive to us and we think, well, if we can just have that, we can enjoy life. But more than that, we live under the shadow of death, don't we?

Death casts its shadow over our lives. And there's some place in the Bible that speaks about people living under the bondage of death. It casts its shadow.

And some of us, in response to that, we think to ourselves, well, let's make the most of this short time that we have on this earth. Let us eat, drink, and be merry. For tomorrow we die.

Building plots are not ideal. And you know something else from this picture that Jesus presents to us here? On the surface, one house, one life appears pretty much like another.

[7 : 51] If you don't go to extremes, for instance, the majority of people in one particular area, they have an awful lot in common.

We live, for instance, in the same kind of house very often. We go to the same kind of school. We maybe work in the same kind of places.

We use the same currency. We buy our food and our drink in the same places. Same shop. We watch similar TV programs. The builders were building their house.

One wise, one foolish. Both houses appeared pretty much the same. But we're told that there is one notable difference. And perhaps an invisible difference to the untrained eye.

One was building upon a foundation. One was building upon the rock. And you know, so it is in this congregation this evening. There are some here who have heard the words of Jesus.

[8 : 53] Now, I don't just mean the sermon on the mouth. But they have heard the words of Scripture again and again and again. And they've taken these words to heart. And they've applied them to themselves.

They've recognized the hazardous position that they were building in. And they have recognized, for instance, that not only were they living in the shadow of death, but they were living in the shadow of judgment.

And they have decided that the best approach for them has been to sue for mercy. They have looked to God for his forgiveness and for his grace.

They've recognized that there's no good thing in them, no good thing in their flesh. By the grace of God, today they are building their houses, they're building their lives upon the rock.

And we've seen that there's no good thing in our psalms. And we've seen that there's no good thing in our psalms. And the final one has the theme still of the rock in it. And I want to say that that rock that we can draw on from the psalms, and I think is very applicable here, that rock is Jesus Christ himself.

[10:02] And isn't this what Jesus wants us to do as he comes to the conclusion of his sermon? Isn't he saying, that's the wise thing to do is to dig down until you hit rock.

The wise thing to do is to come to me. Because that's what he cries out again and again in scripture. Come to me. There are those this evening who have trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that trust in him to save them from the judgment that is to come.

The Lord of God says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Jesus himself said, he that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out. Why him?

Why him? Perhaps I don't need to explain, but let me. He is the only one who is willing to take you just as you are.

He is the only one who is willing to take you with your sin. He is the only one who is willing to welcome you in your sin. But he is also the only one who is able to deal with that sin effectively.

[11:12] And in fact, he has dealt with sin. He has taken sin. He has carried sin. He has been made sin. And he has offered himself up as a sacrifice for sin and for sinners.

He has been on that cross. And through his death, he has reconciled his people to God. And through his death, he has made it possible for our sins to be forgiven.

And for the guilt of our sins to be taken away so that we can be cleansed from that sin. We can be forgiven. And we can be reconciled to our Father in heaven. So that we can look forward to judgment day.

With an assurance that we will be acceptable. Approved of. That we will be able to walk free from accusation. And free from condemnation.

There are those who have done that. And I am encouraging everyone here to do that. To come to Jesus. To dig down deep. Until they fit the rock that is him.

[12:17] And you know, we are called to come to him. Not just so that we will receive forgiveness. I know that's a first priority. But we come to him because we want him also to change us.

Because we want to know all his blessings. And we come to him so that he actually will make us only. By his power and by his grace. And by his spirit. Every Christian in here this evening will tell you.

That there is one thing they are not happy with. And that is the sinful nature that dwells in them. Because that sinful nature is so easily beguiled. And so easily enticed. And we end up saying things and doing things.

That we regret. There are times when Christians will say of themselves. Wretched man. That I am. What kind of person am I? That I can sin against a holy God.

Can sin against the Savior. Who is my rock. Who has delivered me. But thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. And you remember that he has delivered us.

[13:17] And that he has saved us. Remember there is now no condemnation to them that haven't passed. And why is the picture of the rock so suitable? Because of what rock symbolizes for us.

It symbolizes stability. It symbolizes strength. And you know. Jesus is stable and reliable.

He is faithful. He is trustworthy. You know. You know. It doesn't take us very long. In this life.

Before we begin to realize. That people everywhere. Let us down. Speaking to some young people just recently. About 13 and 14 year olds.

Asking them. If they could trust people. Trying to establish whether they understood the word trust. Anymore. I don't think they. They find it easy to trust people at all.

[14:19] Because all of them were able to say yes. They know what it means to be betrayed. They know what it means to have been let down. By their so called friends. Or by those they come into contact with.

But Jesus. Is faithful. And true. Jesus is the one who always speaks truth. His words are trustworthy.

And he is the one who is able to help us. And willing to help us. In the hour of need. In a way that's. Given what Jesus has been saying throughout this whole sermon.

The hour of need I think is every hour. Of every life. I don't mean that. There are not occasions in our lives. Which are noted.

Because they are particularly stressful. And particularly difficult. But in actual fact. If you think about the sermon that Jesus has spoken. And the kind of things he is recommending.

[15:18] And commanding for us. I would say for myself. That I need his help. Every hour. To put these things into practice. And I'm glad that prayer. Prayer is such a major part of this sermon.

Because. Prayer is so crucial for people. To cry out to God through Jesus Christ. For help. With the assurance. That the Father knows our needs.

Before we ask him. Well the wise one. The wise man. The wise man. The wise man. The wise man. Is the man. Who. Put the words of Jesus. We're told. Into practice.

We need his help. To do. To do that. Because his ways. Are so alien. To us. So. Unnatural. To us. Even if you just think about the Beatitudes.

And you think about. The characteristics of the Christian. He speaks about. About. The. His people being. Poor in spirit.

[16:18] Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. The meek. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. The merciful. The pure in heart. These things are not natural to us.

That's not the kind of thing. That our nature. Esteems. Or highly honors. Or really wants. These things are alien to us. In the flesh. You and I know.

That our nature. Is like. The opposite. We want to be highly esteemed. We. We. We prize. Crime. We prize.

The. The self-possessed individual. The person. Who can make their way through life. By their own strength. We don't prize people who are. Poor.

In spirit. By. Nature. We need. The help. Of God. I speak. Last week in fact. I was speaking to. A young person who.

[17:15] Who. Was telling me about a conversation he had. With one of his classmates. This classmate was beginning to realize. That he had very few friends.

And the advice given. To him. By. By. By a young person speaking to me. Was this. Why don't you act in a friendlier way. Why don't you stop bullying people.

Why don't you stop making cruel fun of people. The boy's response was surprising. He said. I can't help it.

I can't help being a bully. I can't help hurting people. Out of the mouths of days. As they say. He recognized that.

He had no power. To change himself. This is the way that he was. You know. The foolish man is like that boy. But plowing on regardless.

[18:19] Plowing on regardless. Just build the house. Never mind the foundation. Never mind the future. Get on with things. That's the natural man isn't it.

It's the way that we are. The natural man does not perceive the things. Of the spirit of God. And you know the natural man. And the foolish man here. He looks at the wise man.

Doesn't he. As the wise man. Spends time. Drawing up plans. And thinking about the foundation.

The wise man. The foolish man. Looks at the wise man. And says. How foolish.

How stupid. What's the point. In spending that extra money. And building that foundation. What's the point.

In taking the time. Let's just get on with it. Let's get our house built. The manner. Of building. One. Builds a foundation.

[19:19] Builds upon the rock. And the other. It's foolish. But look now. At the test. Verse 25. And the rain fell.

And the floods came. And the winds blew. And beat on that house. But it did not fall. Because it had been founded on the rock. The house of the. Wise man.

Both men build their houses. And like I was saying. At a superficial level. They both. Look pretty much the same. But the fundamental difference.

Wives and the foundations. At the very roots of the structure. But both have took through. The same kind of test. The rain. The floods.

The winds. You know. In the Middle East. As I understand it. They don't do drink. They don't do this fine drizzle. That you have.

[20:15] In the Western Islands. They do dryness. Or they do cloud bursts. And. From the Mediterranean. The winds blow in.

And the. The cloud bursts. Just come on. Time. After time. After time. And very soon. The dry and dusty streets. Begin to run with water.

And all these channels. That are designed for the water. They get filled up. And any river beds. Like we've been saying earlier. They just fill up. Very very quickly. And floods. The water.

Of course. Is just. Just. Teamed with water. If I can put it that way. And so it is. You know.

Sometimes. In life. For many. Although not all anymore.

For many. When you were young. Youth was the best day. The school days were the best days of your life. Reports are telling us now. That children in the UK. Are not happy.

[21 : 11] More unhappy than they've ever been. And suffering because of the selfishness. Of their parents. And of an older generation. But still. Most of us can say. Well. Youth is the best time.

To look back. And say. These days were days of pleasure. And of joy. But there are days. That are stormy days. And days come upon us.

And just like in the Mediterranean area. They come upon us. Very very quickly perhaps. You know. The Bible speaks about such. Such trials. And such experiences. You think about Job.

You all know the story. I'm sure. How Job was. Was tested beyond. What would normally be. Be considered. Bearable. In such a short space of time.

The evil one is able to. To take away. All his possessions. And then. To touch his family. To take away his children. And then. To be able to affect his health.

[22 : 11] A test. A test of Job's faith. A righteous man. Another righteous man. Was Abraham. Whom God tested. We're told. In Genesis 22.

To give up his son. To sacrifice Isaac. This beloved son. We think about 1 Peter. And we think about how Peter. Was writing to people. Who were going through trials.

Of their faith. And Peter saying to them. These things are known to God. These things. These things are there. These things are important. To test and prove your faith.

To display and prove. Indeed. That you have faith. That you have faith. That you have faith. That you have faith. But there are other. More normal difficulties. That befall us all. Storms that come. Upon us. Just in the normal run of events. We might say. Although everything is under. God's control. Failure for instance. A consciousness of failure.

[23 : 08] Failure to achieve. Failure perhaps. To have a nice life. As you look around. And see others. Perhaps doing better than you. The failure to get a promotion. That perhaps.

You wanted. Failure to pass exams. Sometimes that. That pressure of failure. Leading to midlife crisis. For some. Think about the economic difficulties.

And the economic storms. That people are going to be going through. In these days. How many homes here this evening. Not knowing. Where the next meal is coming from. Not knowing. What cash they have available.

If they have any at all. I'm not sure if it was 50 people a day. Or 50 people a week. That are being declared bankrupt. In Scotland. In these days. I think it was 50 people a day.

What I discovered recently was. It costs money. To be declared bankrupt. You've got to pay a fee. It would appear to be declared bankrupt. And some people can't even afford. To have themselves declared bankrupt.

[24 : 09] Or what about relationships? What about the problems. In the home. The problems with the marriage. Problems with children. The storms come.

The winds blow. How difficult it can be. You think about all your TV programs. All your soap. That perhaps you watch. Mostly they're about relationships. What about bereavement.

The ending. Of relationship on the earth. What a trial that can be to many. How it brings people up short. And how it makes people think.

About an eternal end. And perhaps. There are those who grieve this evening. I don't want to upset anybody. But. I want to say this. Do you have a foundation. That will stand.

When the storms. Blow. And when the floods. Develop. Though your house stand. And again. Let me take you to judgment day.

[25 : 07] Because. It's. It's a day that's quickly approaching. It is appointed for men. Once to die. But after this. The judgment. Is it not the greatest storm.

Known to man. Is it not. Does the Bible not tell us. In Revelation. That it's going to be preceded. By all manner of cosmic events.

Hide us. Hide us from the face of him. Who sits on the throne. And from the wrath of the Lamb. Will your house stand on that day.

Will it stand on that day. When all your words. And all your deeds. Are replayed before your eyes. Will your house stand up.

Before the scrutiny. Of a holy God. What a test. The wise man.

[26 : 04] The wise man. Thought about the storms. That were coming. The foolish man. Just plowed on. Regardless. I must come to.

A conclusion. The result. The result. The two houses. Two manners of building.

Test. The wise man. The wise man. But only one house. The wise man. And as you know. It's the house of the wise man. What do you see of the foolish one?

Verse 26. And everyone who hears these words of mine. And does not do them. Will be like a foolish man. Who built his house in the sand. And the rain fell. And the floods came.

The wind blew. And beat against that house. And it fell. And great. Was the fall. Off. What a warning.

[27 : 09] Reminded me. Of Psalm 37. I have seen the wicked. In great power. Spreading himself. Like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away.

And lo he was not. I sought him. But he could not be found. He was gone. And I asked myself. And I asked you to think. Where did he go? Where do they go? These wicked people. And I hesitate to call anybody wicked.

The Bible calls people wicked. Where do they go? These great people. Well I heard a sermon. Recently. From a minister.

On this island. And he spoke about. Darkness. And he said. It's possible to go into. A situation.

[28 : 09] Like into a tunnel. In a hillside. Where it's completely dark. And he'd heard about such things. As a young man. And he wanted to experiment. For himself. But. When it's completely dark.

You can't see anything. And he went into one of these. Dark tunnels. And he held his hand. Out in front of him. And he studied. And put his hand up to be. And it was so dark. He could not see his hand.

Where have they gone? They've gone to outer darkness. And it's terribly.

And it's terribly. Terribly sad. And what's sadder still for me. Is this. It seems to me. That there are some. Here this evening.

Who are making. Their own choice. And they're choosing. Not to be wise. And they're choosing. Not to heed. The words of Jesus.

[29 : 12] And not to heed the warning. And with their eyes open. Almost. Or. With people seeking. To open their eyes. They're resisting. The words of Jesus.

And they're refusing. To build their houses. Upon rock. And they're saying. I'm just going to continue. Doing what I'm doing. Because as far as I'm concerned. I've got it right.

And they might build a great house. And they might have a great life. As we consider a great life.

And they themselves. Might say. They have great lives. I remember speaking.

In fact. It's become. Quite commonplace for me now. To have spoken to. Elderly people. And I've discovered. Two. Discovered one thing. Those people.

Who I would describe as wise. And those people. Who have put their faith. In Jesus Christ. As they get older. You know what they do? They don't want to look back. They want to look forward. But I find that.

[30 : 06] Older people. Who are not building their house. Upon the rock. That is Jesus Christ. They never want to look forward. They're always looking back. And they're always wanting to talk. About the experiences they had.

When they're young. And they'll talk. And they'll joke. And they'll be very jovial. Of all the things that's happened. In the past. And wish that they could go back. Well. I don't want to go back. I don't want to go back.

Into. To. To my past. But I can see in my past. Occasions of sin. I can see occasions. Of failure. I can see occasions. Of.

I don't want to be brought up again. I'm not going to pretend. They're not there. But I can look forward. And in Jesus Christ. Look forward. To all the blessings. That God has for his people. But what about you?

Are you looking forward? Or looking back? Are you able to say. That you're building your house. Upon the rock? Or are you.

[31 : 04] Looking ahead. Hearing what I'm saying. But not. Allowing it. To press into your consciousness. Not allowing it. To dent your armor. Listen to what. Psalm 37 was saying.

I looked for him. I looked for this great person. But he could not be found. And that he's gone. And he's gone to the place. Of outer darkness.

Where there's. No fellowship. Where there's no friendship. Where there's no love. Where there's. Where there's. Nothing but wailing. And gnashing of teeth. Where conscience continually.

Knowledge. Where conscience continually. Remind you. Of the mistakes. That you made. And the times you rebelled. Against God. And refused. To listen to him. But you.

It's terrible. For me. It's terribly. Terrible. I owe so much to this congregation. I have great memories of being here. Learned so much here.

[32 : 02] Was impressed so much. Impressed upon me. Here. Where there. Understand? No to God. No. Yes. There are people. Who are saying.

No. To God. No. To Jesus. And who refuse. To build their houses. Upon the rest. that is to this will happen.

I want to say to you, be wise. Be wise. Listen to what Jesus is saying. He's presenting a challenge to you, presenting a choice to you.

And I'm saying, dig down. Keep digging until you hit the rock of Egypt and build your own life upon Jesus Christ. Listen to his words.

The rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat against that house, and it fell. And great was the fall of it. May God bless you.

[33 : 01] Let's pray.