

"Building on the Rock"

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. It's good to see you all here. I'm glad you've joined us. I think most of you are alive. Actually, everyone, because all the little ones just went away.

We're alive in 2018 when Hurricane Michael hit Mexico Beach, Florida as the epicenter of where the eye made landfall. If you don't remember this hurricane, it was a little top of the eye of the tropical depression that people didn't think was going to do very much. And then in 24 hours, it grew from a category one to a category four hurricane with 162 mile an hour sustained winds and a storm surge of nine to 14 feet above ground level.

The town of Mexico Beach was almost completely obliterated. Video images afterwards showed slab after slab of shallow concrete foundations with literally nothing on it except sand and shells, except for the house of Russell King and his nephew, LeBron Lackey.

They had lived through storms earlier. And when they built this home, their dream house, they called it the sand palace. They drove 40-foot piles through the sand to the bedrock underneath in order to anchor their house. And their house above all withstood. The winds blew, the rains fell, the floods rose, and yet this house sustained. Oh, there was some peripheral damage. There was a staircase that went up to the elevated first floor that had been designed to break away from the house without destroying it in high winds. And so that was gone. They had to get up into the house with a ladder.

But the house stood firm. Laying good foundations is important for any building. You could imagine the Tower of Pisa or the Millennium Tower in San Francisco as examples of what happens when you don't lay good foundations.

[2 : 3 1] But laying a foundation when you have storms is even more important. And this is true, obviously, not only with buildings, houses, homes, skyscrapers, but it's true for our lives as well. Because in fact, we are all builders. We are all building a life.

One way or the other. Our lives are like houses. And we may be using different materials. We may be looking at different things. There are all sorts of aspects to the life that we are building.

Relationships, our knowledge, our achievements, our possessions, our religious activities. But we all build a hope, build our lives with a hope that it will last, that it will be enduring, that it will stand in the storms.

But what foundation are we building on? This is the question that Jesus is going to bring an answer to this morning as He finishes His great sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. If you're visiting today, we've been preaching through the Sermon on the Mount since September. So, it's been a long, slow series of examining this great sermon from our Lord Jesus. And today we come to the end of it. And the end of the Sermon on the Mount will ask us the question, how do we lay a good foundation for our life?

And if you've been here for the last couple of weeks, you know that the end of the Sermon on the Mount is actually a series of contrasts. And this is the last one. If you remember back in verses 7 through 11, there are two ways and two gates that we can choose from. Then there are two trees picturing spiritual leaders, two trees, a good one and a bad one, a very good and bad fruit.

[4 : 42] There were two protestations last week. Lord, Lord, did we not do these things? Lord, Lord, did we not? And today we have now two buildings, two foundations, two results.

So, if you want to turn with me, Matthew chapter 7, verses 762 in your Pew Bible, we're going to be reading verses 24 through 29 of Matthew chapter 7. And we'll read it, and then we'll pray, and then we'll take a look at it together. So, let's read.

Jesus says this, 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 rains 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. And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes. Let's pray together.

Oh, Lord, we thank You for Your Word. Lord, for You have in it made Yourself known to us, and through it, Lord, we know You and know how You call us to live in light of who You are.

Lord, I pray this morning, will You soften our hearts to receive Your Word, enlighten our minds so we might understand Your Word, move our hands so that we might obey Your Word. And Lord, I pray for Your help this morning, that I would speak as I ought.

[6 : 57] Lord, that I would speak the words that You would want me to, so that together we may sit under Your Word for Your glory and for our good. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. How do we lay a good foundation for the building of our life? Jesus in verses 24 through 27 gives us a picture of two different kinds of people. And if you're an outline kind of person, here's your outline. We're going to look at the ways that these people are similar. We're going to look at the ways that these people are different. And then we're going to look at the one true and sure foundation at the end. So, that's your outline for today. So, be starting with ways they are similar. If you're a grammar nerd, like I am sometimes, if you put this together like I did, I copy and paste it into my Word document, and then I break it down into phrases, the parallelism, even in the English, as well as in the ESV at least, as well as in the original language, it is remarkable. There are similar ways that these two people are described. So, everyone who hears these words of mine, everyone who hears these words of mine, both people hear the Word. A man who is... He is like a man who built a house, like a man who built his house, and the rains fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat that house. These are repeated things that Jesus wants us to see there's a commonality or a similarity between these two kinds of people. Who are they? Well, first of all, they're people who hear Jesus' words, right? Now, if you remember the context of the Sermon on the

Mount, if you go back to chapter 5 at the beginning, Jesus called His disciples to come and listen to Him. But then, interestingly, when we get to verses 28 and 29 of chapter 7, it's the crowds that are responding to His teaching. So, everyone has understood that Jesus intended primarily or initially for His teaching to be for His disciples, but then there was a crowd that gathered around Him, and He was preaching this sermon to them, but there were many, many who were hearing and listening to His words. And so, Jesus is picturing people who were hearing His words, and these people were building houses, and they looked similar from the outside. If you walked by Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, they had each built a house, and they might have their own particular peculiarities, but from the surface, you wouldn't have known the difference. You wouldn't have seen what was underneath on the foundation.

And so, they would have looked very similar. The differences would not be readily apparent. And then, the third similarity of these people is that one day, their houses will face storms.

The rains will fall. The floods will rise. The winds will blow. And this is a common thing in human life. Everyone builds houses. Everyone faces storms.

[10 : 14] So, as we look at these similarities, and as we think about how do we apply it for us today, what do people look like? Well, I think they look like you and me. Because this is the thing.

People who are hearing Jesus' word, this isn't someone who has no concern for God at all, who is far from ever darkening the door of a church, who's never read the Bible. They're not concerned about hearing Jesus' words or not. But that's not who Jesus is talking about. He's talking about people like us, people who show up at church, people who are here wanting something spiritual in our lives, right? We're building a life of significance, and we think maybe the church has something to offer something to add, something to bring to this life-building endeavor.

And Jesus reminds us it's not always evident on the surface whether people are really following Jesus or not. Remember what Pastor Nick preached on last week. People came to Jesus saying, Lord, Lord, did we not do great things, spiritual things in your name? Did we not?

Didn't we look good spiritually? So, we need to recognize that Jesus' warning was for people who were in the sort of religious spheres that we travel in today. Now, He was likely talking mainly to Jewish people who were in the covenant community to some degree. But He's challenging us, by pointing out this similarity, for us to look deeper into our hearts as we look at that.

He's warning us that though we all look similar, we may not be the same. And what are the differences? Well, let's look at it again. This is my second point. What are the differences? And they're striking. And again, if you lay it out grammatically, it just pops out at you where it's different, right? There are those who hear these words of mine and does them, or who hears these words of mine does not do them. They will be like a wise man who builds his house upon a rock is the one who does what he hears. And on the other hand, will be a foolish man who built his house on the sand when he hears, but he does not do. There is no try. Jesus is describing this response to the hearing of His teaching. And it's important to recognize, again, just focusing in, He doesn't say, hey, you should listen to what God says broadly, or... He's not giving general wisdom, but He's specifically saying, who listen to my words. It's a striking claim. Jesus inserts Himself into this. He's saying, many people may want to build their lives on general wisdom, wise adages, good principles, but Jesus says, I want you to listen to Me.

[13 : 42] The one that hears and does not do may be someone who's familiar with Jesus' words.

Maybe they've been exposed to Jesus' words. Maybe they even give some intellectual assent or agrees that it has validity and relevance. They might even think that Jesus is giving a good ethic or wisdom to live by. But if it doesn't change our hearts to make us do what He says, this is the distinction. And on the other hand, the one who hears and does, hears Jesus' words, not as something to consider, but as something to receive. They're not words of advice, but words of life. They're not something to consider, but something to submit to.

Jesus is giving us words that say, I want to give you direction on how to live, what to believe, how to behave, what you value and care about, the way that your heart moves in relationship to the world. What do you care about? What are your... In Jonathan Enns' words, what are your religious affections set upon? And that Jesus' words are meant to shape those things, and as they shape those things, they shape how we live and what we do.

I think the picture here is similar to what happens in John 6. You may remember Jesus feeds the 5,000. There's a great upswell of people who are so amazed at His works, and then He teaches them about being the bread of life. And He says, if you don't eat this bread and drink this blood, you cannot be My disciples. And they're scandalized by it. And many of them leave and stop following Him because they don't understand that He is in the center of God's saving work in the world. So many leave Him. And He turns to His disciples. He says, what about you? Are you going to leave too? And Peter replies, Lord, where else can we go? You alone have the words of life.

This is the one who hears the words of Jesus and does them. And friends, we need to acknowledge that this is not common in our world today. We live in a desperately individualistic and anti-authoritarian culture. We live in a world with all the information we could want, right? All the teachers, all the words, all the podcasts, all the news outlets, all the things that could teach us. And we love to sit and judge them and pick them apart and evaluate.

[16 : 57] And we take the things we think are good and we throw out the things we don't. And we are not used to receiving words of life from someone who speaks with authority.

And that makes us like the person who hears Jesus' words and does not do them. Friends, we've got to see as well that there is a difference in results, is there not?

Because there is one house built on a solid foundation of a rock and it did not fall. And there's another house that was built on a weak foundation of sand.

And it fell and great was its falling. When storms come and batter, this is what happens to our houses. And what are these storms? I want to spend a minute to just think about what are the storms? I actually think Jesus has two things in mind here. Commentators like to try to make us choose between them. I don't think we need to choose.

Here are the two things. The first one is the storms of life in a fallen world. We all know this. Right? There are trials and difficulties that come along. Unexpected losses. Crushing disappointments.

[18 : 25] Ongoing stresses. And they test us. They push us. They're like the winds that howling just press and press and press against us. And we think, are we going to be able to stand? And the floods come up and we think, are we ever going to be able to survive? And the rains fall down and we feel overwhelmed and overcome by these things. I know many of you are facing these kinds of real storms, and they test us, do they not? They test the foundation that we are on. They test who we're listening to and how we respond to it.

But there's a second kind of storm that I think Jesus had in mind. I think that Jesus was thinking about the Old Testament when He said that... when He used this picture. So, for instance, from Isaiah 28, the prophet says this, the prophet says this, behold, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty overflowing waters. He cast down the earth with His hand.

It's a picture of judgment. Later on in the same, he says this, therefore, thus says the Lord God, behold, I am one who has laid as a foundation in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation, and whoever believes in Me will not be in haste. And I will make justice the line and righteousness the plumb line, and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter." And when you look at Isaiah, Isaiah 28, you will notice that this is a passage, this is an oracle of judgment against God's own people. It's at the end of this long section in Isaiah where he's actually talking about God's judgment against the people outside of Israel and outside, but this is actually for the people of Israel. And he's saying a storm will come, and it will be a storm of judgment that will test what foundation you have laid. This is not an unfamiliar idea in the Sermon on the Mount earlier. If you've been listening carefully for the last couple of sermons, verse 13 says, remember, enter by the narrow gate because the way is wide that leads to destruction. Or when we talked about false teachers, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. And I declare to them in verse 23, those who protested that they were doing great things, Jesus says,

I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness. Friends, we must realize that there is an eternal cost to laying a bad foundation, foundation to laying the wrong foundation in our life. If we are those who hear and do not do Jesus' words, there is a judgment coming, and it will lay bare the reality of our hearts. It is a warning to us.

So, friends, this then brings us to our third point, which is where can we find the sure and true foundation? Well, it's not hard to see, but I think this is partly why Matthew gave his little narrative at the end. In verses 28 and 29, Jesus finished these sayings, and the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as the scribes.

[22 : 31] Now, the crowds were amazed because Jesus' teaching was different. It was different possibly in content and in delivery in the way he did it. Now, you have to understand a little bit about the context of the first century. If you are a rabbinical teacher or a rabbi or the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the teachers of the law that you see referred to throughout the Gospels, right, they each had particular roles in the Jewish hierarchy. But one of the things that was common was their discussion about religious activities would all be derivative. As Rabbi Hillel says, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, and this is how they would have argumentation. They go back and forth, quoting different sources.

But rarely, if ever, would they speak from themselves. And Jesus is so striking as being different from this. Remember in chapter 5 when we looked at those series, you have heard it said, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, do not murder, but I say to you. He's not referring to another authority. He's not quoting someone else. He's saying, I say to you. Jesus comes with his own authority to teach.

And it is a rebuke in many ways of the Pharisees and the way that they taught. And remember too, the bigger context of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God is at hand. He says that in chapter 4, verse 17. Jesus is not just proclaiming a new wisdom, a new ethical or moral system, or an upgrade to the Jewish religious system. He's not just giving a new community rule to live by, though He is giving all of those things. He's actually saying, there's a new kingdom coming, and at the center of that is the King. And Jesus says, that's me.

So He comes unlike any other teacher to us. He comes with authority and rulership.

He comes and calls us not to consider Him, but to receive Him and to submit to Him, to follow Him, to love Him, to obey Him, for He is the path of life itself.

[25 : 03] And friends, when Jesus' words have authority in our lives, we are transformed. When Jesus' words have authority, they become the rule for how we live.

When His words have authority, they bring us joy, and we worship Him as the King and the one who has authority to tell us how we ought to live.

But friends, it's even more than that, is it not? Because Jesus says, this is how we ought to live, to hear my words and to obey them, to do what they say. He's like a man who built his house on a rock.

But we know from the broader Scripture that this is not a rock that we need to find, but it is a rock that God has provided. We read it already in that Isaiah passage. The prediction that God would lay a cornerstone, a stone upon which His people could stand in the midst of the storms of not only of life, but of judgment, and find security, and find steadfastness, and find a life that will stand forever.

And so we see throughout the Scriptures, Jesus is the rock upon which this kingdom is built. Jesus is the rock upon which our lives can be built. And when we stand on Him in faith, He is the one true foundation that gives us life. Because He comes not only with the authority to teach the way He did, but He came with the authority to lay down His life and to raise it up again. Jesus' kingship, His authority, is ultimately based on His death and resurrection. He came and sacrificed Himself to defeat sin and death.

[27 : 10] And in so doing took up rulership over our salvation. In His resurrection, He established a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

And with His indestructible life, He offers shelters in the storms of life and in the judgment day of God. God. Because when we believe in Him, when we entrust our lives to Him, when we give Him the role of defining and ruling and leading our lives in everything, when we are those who hear His words and obey them, we have life.

A life that can never be taken away. An eternal life that stands like a house with a deep foundation built on the rock in the midst of storms.

I want to end by quoting one of the commentators, D.A. Carson, because I think it sums up not only this sermon, but also the Sermon on the Mount as a whole.

He writes this, The sermon ends with what has been implicit throughout it, the demand for radical submission to the exclusive lordship of Jesus, who fulfills the law and the prophets and warns the disobedient that the alternative to total obedience, true righteousness, and life in the kingdom is rebellion, self-centeredness, and eternal damnation.

[28 : 52] Do you see, my friends? There are only two ways to live. And Jesus, the King, who is bringing His kingdom, invites us to, by faith, humble ourselves, receive Him, allow Him to take the place that He rightly deserves in our lives.

and then we will be like those who hear His words and obey and who will stand. Let's pray together.

Oh, Lord, we pray You would search our hearts. Amen. Lord, are we those who hear Your words and do not obey?

Lord, we know that we stand in grace because there is never a righteousness or obedience that could ever earn Your favor or make us acceptable to You, for we are incapable of that.

Lord, you have given us the strength to obey. Lord, you have given us to know Jesus and to trust in Him, to have new life in Him.

[30 : 19] Lord, you have also given us the strength to obey. Oh, Lord, may You search our hearts, see if there be thoughts of rebellion, ways of wickedness, hardened places, of resistance to Your Lordship, to Your words transforming us.

Lord, we thank You for Jesus. Thank You that He is the rock on which we can stand for all our eternal salvation, Lord, and a very present help in the day of trouble.

Lord, You are our rock and our Redeemer. We praise You. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.