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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 20, 2014
6th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 19:15-26; Acts 9:1-19
Hymns: 234; 231; 20; 45:1,2 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 7:24-29

24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: A good foundation is key to any building.

That is not a lesson that is always understood by children building their first fort in the back wooded lot where they might play.

Because of the builders' lack of experience and wisdom the end product is not likely to be deemed a fitting lodging for a family. The footings are likely to be as uneven as the natural ground. There may be gaps and bumps that make the first course of construction uneven, and the walls that are erected will not be plum and will only show an increasing lean in or out as the walls grow taller. The building is made for fun, but the first big wind, or the first heavy snow will very likely cause a collapse in the structure. More than likely it will all end with no real harm done. Perhaps little disappointment and a lesson learned that will make these youthful builders better builders in the adult life that follows. Serious building is not child's play.

The Lord Jesus uses the picture of constructing a home to teach a lesson about building a life, specifically a spiritual life. It is not to be undertaken carelessly. It is not child's play. He would encourage some careful consideration in --

THEME: Securing A Foundation for Faith and Life.

The words of our text are presented as the Lord's conclusion, then also the people's conclusion to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' conclusion points out the way to secure a --

I. A Rock Solid Foundation.

Matthew 7:24-25 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

We take note of how Jesus emphasized that hearing and doing need to go together. It is right and good for us to listen to the Word of the Lord. While Jesus is saying this in conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount this assertion of our Savior applies to all that Jesus' taught. Jesus spoke words of wisdom that gave true direction to the lives of the people of the Jews. Many people came to hear Jesus, and He taught them things concerning the kingdom of God. He pointed out to them the need for repentance. This is not merely a recognition of sin in one's life, but also understanding the way to

turn one's life around. Already one comprehends that this then must include more than simply hearing the words of Jesus. It has to include living according to that word.

What that means for us is much more than calling upon our will power to stop doing bad things in our lives, and start doing good to others. It includes the only real resolution for sin in our lives. We hear Jesus speak to us of God's love. We hear Jesus speak of being the one God sent into the world to save sinners, not to condemn them, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17). We hear Jesus speak of giving His life for us. We hear of Jesus' love, and the forgiveness He alone can bring. Believing that word of the Lord we trust Him for forgiveness and life. That is the first step in not only hearing but also doing the Word, for Jesus said: **"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent"** (John 6:29).

The Apostle James speaks to us of this need for fruitful hearing also in his epistle.

James 1:21-22 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

It is so easy to be a hearer. It is a much greater challenge to be a doer of that Word. It is not an easy thing for us to "lay aside all filthiness and the overflow of wickedness that abounds in all our hearts and lives. This only happens in our hearts and lives by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit. When we are so blessed with the Spirit's presence in our lives then we are blessed with a solid foundation for faith and life, for then we are doers of the Word and not hearers only who disregard the warnings of the Lord regarding sin.

One thing we can be sure of is that storms will come in our lives. Rainy days will come. Adverse winds will blow and beat against our spiritual house. Indeed there will be days, days like my own family is enduring now in our lives, when it seems that adversity and trials seem to come as a flood and truly beat against our

spiritual house. That is when one needs that solid foundation.
Christ is that foundation.

However, it is not only when the child of God facing the tribulations that are common to man that a solid foundation of faith is so vital. It is equally important when we are facing temptations, and when we are assaulted for holding to the truth of God's Word in the face of the false ideas and false wisdom of the world. Then one needs that solid foundation which is set by holding to and keeping the Word.

The alternative is building upon --

II. A Shifting Uncertain Foundation.

Jesus makes it clear that hearing without a following obedience of faith is folly.

Matthew 7:26-27 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Don't you sometimes wonder about all those homes that are built up on the coastal shores of the United States. For so many years nobody built so close to shore. Maybe they knew better. They looked for signs of how high the water would come in adverse weather, and built on higher ground. They could always go down and take a walk on the beach, and watch the sunset. And then go back home to safer ground. Now days it seems that people only think about the moment and how wonderfully lucky they are to be able to buy beachfront property for their homes. They build their homes on shifting sands, and when the storms and the hurricanes come then they are devastated, and can't seem to figure out how this could have happened to them.

But what about the spiritual foundations that people lay? Are they doing any better? So much of what the world thinks is right changes from year to year, even from day to day. What they think of as "truth" may be different from one individual to another. Yes,

we live in the day of **relative morality** and **personal truth**. People often reject the idea of a clear standard of right and wrong, and claim that their sense of truth is as legitimate as something found in “an old musty book.” We live in the time when people are building their spiritual homes on the shifting sands of personal opinion and moral convenience. Let us again return to the epistle of James and recall those familiar words regarding hearing and then forgetting the Word of God.

James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Do we desire to conveniently forget what we see in the mirror of the law, of the **holy** law of God? Do we want to forget the trouble we are in because of **our** sin? Do we forget that “**the soul that sins is the one that shall die**” (Ezekiel 18:20)? Do we pretend that we are not guilty, or at least want to see ourselves as being **less guilty** of sin than others, so then not so culpable, not so deserving of death and damnation? Don’t hear the Word and then walk away and forget how much you need Jesus! Take the Word to heart and turn to Jesus, and seek from Him the salve that calms the storm within, that heals the sin-sick soul.

Today we are once again invited to come to the Lord’s Table and receive the very body and true blood which He offered for us, for our salvation. Here again this morning you will receive a very personal assurance from the Lord Himself, delivered directly to you that your sins have been forgiven. Take it to heart. Take that message of God’s love and forgiveness **with you as you leave here this morning, and embrace its power**. It has the power to change hearts and **lives**. So it has changed your heart, and continues to empower you in life to do and say that which glorifies Jesus before the world.

Don't build on the shifting sands of work righteousness or personal wisdom, or relative morality, or personal truth. Build your faith and life on --

III. The Reliable Word of the Lord.

The people who were present on that mountain side that day when Jesus preached to them, they perceived that Jesus was different. He was not just another rabbi showing them how smart He was. What they heard from Jesus was different, and so our text concludes:

Matthew 7:28-29 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

They were astonished at Jesus' teaching. It was different. It was different in its content. It was not the legal mumbo-jumbo of the scribes and Pharisees. It was the truth of the God. They perceived another difference. Jesus taught them as one having authority. Some of that would have been in form. Jesus wouldn't cite one rabbinical writing after another in an attempt to look intelligent, and in the end confuse the people with a lot of Opinion, "*I think this, or I think that.*" Jesus **did** quote the **prophets**, and opened people's understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Jesus also spoke to them the truth He received from God His heavenly Father. He spoke with divine authority, not only because He was indeed the Son of God, but also because all that He presented to the people He received from His Father in heaven. He spoke the **Word of God** when He taught the people about the coming of the kingdom of God.

This is an important lesson for us to take to heart. As we read the Scriptures we are reading **the Word**, the **Word** which presents Christ to us, the **Word** that **is** Jesus, for He is the **Word Incarnate!** It is important for us to grasp the implication of this truth. You see there are many theologians within the visible church that would make a distinction in the authority of Scripture, giving greater weight and authority to the actual words attributed to Jesus in the gospels. That would be saying that the words we may find in red in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have greater authenticity as the

Word of God, and so greater authority than other passages of Holy Scripture.

This is a false distinction. **Jesus is the Word made flesh!** Jesus and the Word are synonymous, and the authority of Jesus in the Word extends beyond the gospels. It includes all the Old Testament Scriptures that foretold His coming, and incorporates all the epistles and the book of Revelation! **God's Word is truth,** As Jesus Himself declared! And so if you are looking for that endorsement of the Word we have it!

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

Let us also be astonished at Jesus' teaching. Let us recognize the authority of His Word as we find it throughout the Scriptures. Let us know and believe that when the Lord speaks to us in His Word we can rely upon that Word without doubt, without question. It doesn't matter if it is historical fact, or earth science, or declaration of forgiveness of our sins and our salvation, it carries the authority of Jesus Christ. Be assured that when Jesus speaks to you of His peace, that peace is yours for time and eternity.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.