Good morning, Moon Valley!

I am neither a social scientist nor a psychologist, but I think it is safe to say that, in our contemporary culture, there is a growing sense of uncertainty and instability. And such uncertainty and instability can drive anxiety and stress.

In one of my counseling classes in seminary, my professor conceptualized anxiety as having a goal or desired outcome and being worried about whether it will ever be realized.

- Will I ever feel good again?
- Will I be able to provide for my family?
- Will I ever be healthy again?
- Will my kids turn out right?
- Will I ever get a good job?
- Will my marriage get better?
- Will I ever find a spouse?
- Will anyone love me?

Anxiety disorders are the single most common mental illness in America today. More than half of all American college students report anxiety, characterized by a constant state of worry and fear. Such anxiety is now 800% more prevalent than all forms of cancer.[1]

Some researchers are convinced that the anxiety rate is higher today than it has ever been.[2] Modern cultural conditions feed the uncertainty that can, in turn, fuel stress.

- Social change is so rapid we can no longer keep up, and we are cognitively overloaded.

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[1] Moreland, J.P., *Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 49.
[2] Ibid, 50.

- Increased cultural polarization and hostility contribute to mistrust and emotional fatigue.
- Through social media, we are overloaded with information about other people and seemingly good stuff we don't have, inviting a never-ending cycle of comparison and competition.
- We are also overloaded with information about crises around the world that invite a constant state of heightened vigilance.
- We are also losing trust in traditional anchors that were once stabilizing influences, including government, media, and religious institutions.
- Seems like there used to be a greater shared base of what is virtuous, what is real, and what is true. If there ever was such a base, it has eroded. Truth and reality are now up in the air.

All these factors can contribute to a feeling of being adrift without an anchor, out of control, tossed, and barely afloat.

Today we continue a sermon series titled, "So You Can Know For Sure." It is a study through the Gospel of Luke.

Specifically, we are going to be studying ▶ Luke 6:46-49. In this text, Jesus is going to explain a rock-solid source of stability and security that is available to us all, even when everything around us seems unstable and uncertain.

You may recall that, in the immediately preceding context, Jesus speaks to his disciples of loving enemies and avoiding various forms of repulsive unlove, including the hypocrisy of using a double standard to judge ourselves and others.

In ▶ Luke 6:46, the first verse of our text, Jesus warns of another kind of hypocrisy, saying,

> ESV Luke 6:46 “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

It is a rhetorical question. Jesus is not seeking information; he is making a statement.

Calling Jesus “Lord” is a sign of honor and respect. The repetition of the term, “Lord” conveys emphasis and emotion.[3] Strong devotion is implied.[4] The idea is that the disciples of Jesus are saying enthusiastically and respectfully that he is the Lord.

Nevertheless, these same disciples are not doing what Jesus says. They are not obedient. Therein lies the hypocrisy. They pay respect to Jesus with their lips but not with their actions. Their talk does not match their walk.

The statement Jesus is making is that it is hypocritical and foolish to honor him with words of devotion while ignoring his teaching.

Right about now, you may be wondering: “Bob, what does this have to do with the stability you talked about earlier? I was hoping for something that would quiet my soul, not stir up my guilt.”

Jesus is not done. Be patient.

In ▶ verse 47, Jesus introduces a word picture, saying,

> ESV Luke 6:47 “Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:”

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[3] Bock, Darrell L., *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 618.
[4] Swindoll, Charles R., *Luke*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2017), 177.

Jesus has a certain kind of person in mind. He describes him three ways.

First, Jesus says it is a person who ▶ "comes to me." Elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus uses the expression, "comes to me" to mean "believes in me."[5] For example, in ▶ John 6:35, Jesus makes two parallel statements.

> ESV John 6:35 ". . . whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Notice the shared phrase, "comes to me."

In John 6:35, Jesus is not describing two different means for two different results; he's describing the very same process in two different ways. The metaphorical results, "shall not hunger" and "shall never thirst" both describe the very same idea. They describe the security and everlasting satisfaction of the one who has received eternal life.

Likewise, ▶ "comes to me" means the same thing as "believes in me." One receives eternal life through coming to Jesus, which, in this case, means the same thing as believing in him.

Back in ▶ Luke 6:47, the same applies. The one who comes to Jesus is one who believes in him. The importance of this will come into play later.

Second, Jesus says the person he has in mind is a believer who ▶ "hears my words." The original Greek word for "hears" describes more than just a physical auditory function. It describes listening, paying attention, learning, and understanding.

When Jesus says, "my words," it includes the words he spoke directly while on earth. And for us, it also includes the words the Lord spoke

[5] Kerrey, Robert J., *How Does God Draw People to Believe in Jesus* (The Woodlands, TX: Grace Theology Press, 2019), 134.

indirectly through the writers of Scripture. It is the word of God in the Bible, including information about who we are and how we should think and what we should do.

Which brings us to the third descriptor. Jesus says this person is a believer who not only hears his words, but also ▶ "does them." This believer actively seeks the words of the Lord and applies them to his life,

- taking as his own identity who the Lord says he is,
- embracing as his own ethic how the Lord says he should think,
- and carrying out as his own mission what the Lord says he should do.

That is the person Jesus has in mind: one who comes to him, hears his words, and does them.

Then, Jesus says, ▶ "I will show you what he is like:" Now comes the word picture of stability. It begins in ▶ verse 48.

> ESV Luke 6:48 "he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. . . ."

As a carpenter, Jesus may have had experience building houses.[6] The foundation of a house is critical to its stability. Where Jesus lived, limestone was often a few feet below the surface.[7] A wise builder would take pains to dig down deep to the rock, and then to build the foundation upon the rock. The result is a well-built, strong, stable house that can stand the test of forces that come against it.

Jesus completes the picture in the last part of ▶ verse 48.

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[6] DelHousaye, John, *The Fourfold Gospel, Vol. 2: From Summons to Signs* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021), 309.
[7] Ibid.

> ESV Luke 6:48 “. . . And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.”

The point is: The believer who hears God’s word and obeys it is wisely building a life that can stand the test and will not be shaken.

In ▶ verse 49, Jesus presents the contrasting picture.

> ESV Luke 6:49 “But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. . . .”

This foolish builder is also a believer who hears the words of Jesus. But he does not do them. He does not apply the word of God to his life. He does not put into practice Jesus’ teachings.

Metaphorically, this foolish builder builds his house on the surface of the ground with no foundation. He does not make the effort to dig down deep to build upon the rock.

The results are predictable. In the last part of ▶ verse 49, Jesus explains,

> ESV Luke 6:49 “. . . When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

The difference between the wise builder and the foolish one is not believing. Both believe in Jesus.

The difference between the wise builder and the foolish one is not hearing. Both hear the words of Jesus.

The difference between the wise builder and the foolish one is in the doing. The wise builder does what Jesus says; the foolish one does not.

Doing makes all the difference. And that is the big idea of this sermon: ▶ Doing makes all the difference.

Doing makes all the difference in the stability and security of your life. The house of the wise builder stands unshaken against the flood. The house of the foolish builder falls immediately and is ruined.

A question may have occurred to you. What does the flood represent and what is the nature of the ruin experienced by the foolish builder?

One common interpretation is that the flood represents God's coming judgment, and the nature of the ruin relates to eternal damnation. In this view, the wise builder will be saved from the judgment and will go to heaven. The foolish builder will not be saved; he will be destroyed and will go to hell.[8]

But this interpretation does not pass muster. Remember, Jesus is speaking to his disciples who are believers, and both builders in his illustration are believers. Scripture is crystal clear that we are eternally saved through faith alone in Christ alone, not by works. To suggest that the wise builder is eternally saved from hell by works of obedience is incorrect.

Well, if the flood is not God's judgment for heaven or hell, then what is it?

Remember, in the immediately preceding context, Jesus has called us as his disciples to love our enemies—the ones who hate us, the ones who curse us, the ones who abuse us, the ones who exclude us, the ones who revile us—all because we are living for Jesus. Therefore, it makes perfect sense to take the flood to represent all these forms of abuse and hardship that come against us as we fulfill the mission Jesus gave us.

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[8] Butler, Trent C., *Luke*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 96; Stein, Robert H., *Luke*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 215.

The wise builder hears Jesus say, “Love your enemies.” And by the grace and power of God, he does it. In doing so, his life stands as an unshakable testimony to the shocking love of Jesus. The wise builder overcomes evil with good, and his house stands.

The foolish builder also hears Jesus say, “Love your enemies.” But he does not do it. He rationalizes that digging deep to build on the rock of God’s word is just not worth it. Instead, he responds to enemies the way the world does: with repulsive unlove. In doing so, his life does not reflect the shocking love of Jesus. His testimony is invalidated; it is ruined. His house falls.

In this way of thinking, the house represents one’s life as a testimony to the shocking love of Jesus. The testimony of the wise builder stands; that of the foolish builder falls.

Bound up with one’s testimony is the concept of reward. When the wise builder applies the word of God to his life, he is not only building his earthly testimony, he is also building his heavenly reward. Jesus explains this in the preceding context. For example, in ▶ Luke 6:35, Jesus says to his disciples,

> ESV Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Jesus says when we obediently love our enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, we build our testimony. That is, we show ourselves to be ▶ “sons of the Most High” because God himself “is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.”

And when we build such a testimony, we build our reward right along with it. Jesus says, ▶ "your reward will be great." Jesus is referring to reward given to certain believers in heaven for obediently living for him, including loving enemies. The great heavenly reward includes things like commendation, honor, a greater capacity for joy, and a greater participation in the glorious reign of Christ in the kingdom to come.

The apostle Paul uses a similar construction metaphor in describing reward for building wisely upon the foundation of Jesus Christ in ▶ 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Let me summarize it, then we'll read it.

Paul's metaphor also includes a wise builder and a foolish one. The wise builder uses gold, silver, and precious stones, symbolizing works that are valuable and enduring—works done in faithful obedience to the word of God.

The foolish builder uses wood, hay, and straw, representing works that will not stand the test—works done according to one's own selfish blueprint, not in obedience to the Lord.

In Paul's metaphor, the test is not a flood, but a fire. The fire represents the evaluation of Jesus on "the Day"—the day all Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. At stake is not the gain or loss of eternal salvation, but the gain or loss of reward in heaven. Beginning in ▶ 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul explains it this way.

> ESV 1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ▶ 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ▶ 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—▶ 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire,

> and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ▶ 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Notice that the loss the foolish builder experiences is not the loss of eternal salvation. Paul says, "he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." He suffers the loss of reward.

In both construction metaphors—that of Jesus and that of Paul—the big idea is much the same: Believing in Jesus and hearing his words are necessary, but ▶ doing makes all the difference.

Actively hearing and applying the word of God to our lives brings a stability that is available nowhere else. In the craziness of this life on earth, there is no greater sense of groundedness and fulfillment than obediently doing what God wants you to do, knowing that it counts both today and forever.

But, as represented by digging deep to build upon the rock, the doing of God's word can be challenging. Just about everything in our culture discourages it.

First off, there is nothing instant about it. It is a long, steady, slow process. One shovel full at a time, over and over again.

And it requires effort that no one will see but God. No one else is going to applaud you for it. In good circumstances, the houses built by the wise builder and the foolish builder can look the same from the outside. The firm foundation of the wise builder is below the surface, unseen.

The work is revealed only when the flood comes.

There is nothing glamorous or showy about digging deep. One shovel full of dirt can seem so insignificant that it doesn't seem to matter.

For example, on Tuesday morning, during my devotional time, my shovel found ▶ Jeremiah 15:16. In the quiet darkness of the wee hours, with nobody watching but God, I wrote it down in my journal. It's where Jeremiah says to God,

> CSB17 Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart, for I bear your name, LORD God of Armies.

Sometimes applying God's word simply involves taking as my own identity who the Lord says I am. Here in Jeremiah 15:16, I take the Lord's words through Jeremiah as my own: "I bear your name." That is to say, "I am your representative, Lord. I am your emissary. My life is to be a testimony to your shocking love. That is who I am. That is your role for me on earth."

Because of who I am, the words of the Lord are my food. I eat them. Metabolized by the Holy Spirit, they nourish and empower me to carry out God's mission for me. And to stand against the flood.

I am not suggesting that the doing of God's word is a panacea that will eliminate all the stress and anxiety in your life. Many of you know that I am vulnerable to anxiety. And it can still be a struggle for me.

But I can say that the application of God's word to my life has been indispensable to my own stability and wellbeing. Quite apart from my study for sermons, I have my nose in the word with my heart open to apply. Not perfectly, but regularly. One shovel at a time. Digging so I can build my life on the rock.

You would think that, having spent so much time during the week sifting and applying the Lord's words for years and years, I would get tired of them.

The truth is quite the opposite. I join Jeremiah is saying to the Lord, "Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart." And the delightfulness and joy come not just in the hearing, but especially in the doing.

So, both from my understanding of Scripture and my experience of life, I am here to testify to the veracity of the big idea: ▶ Doing makes all the difference.

Let's pray. Lord, help us to experience the sense of groundedness and fulfillment that comes from obediently doing what you want us to do, knowing that it counts both today and forever. Amen.