

"Life On The Firm Foundation"

Pentecost 2

1)

Matthew 7:15-29

2)

June 14, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Do you remember the storms from this past Tuesday? The remnants of tropical storm Cristobal made its way up the Mississippi River Valley and into Wisconsin. I'm what many consider a heavy sleeper. However, I was told by several in my family who were kept up that night – the winds howled and the rain came down, several inches. And when I woke up the next morning, there were two large tree branches down in our yard to prove it.

We've seen the damage that wind and rain can do. We've experienced flooding here in Green Bay. We've experienced bad storms and we've seen the deadly damage that hurricanes and tornadoes can do. So when Jesus paints a picture in our gospel lesson of winds and rain beating and pouring on a house, we completely understand what he's talking about. Jesus talks about two different people with two completely different outcomes. And the point Jesus wants us to learn well this morning is that he wants us to be the wise man who builds his spiritual house on the rock. And he encourages us to envision what that life looks like – **Life On The Firm Foundation.**

Jesus spoke the words of our lesson as he closed his sermon on the mount. Jesus had spoken this sermon to his disciples and talked about a lot of different topics –

- The "blessed are they" statements that we commonly know as the beatitudes
- Encouraged them to be "Salt of the Earth" and the "Light of the World"
- Murder
- Divorce
- Adultery
- Matt 7 – **"Do not judge lest you be judged."**

Jesus said –

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

In order to be the wise man, we need to hear Jesus words.

At the beginning of our lesson in vs 15, Jesus gives us a warning that could prevent us from being a wise builder.

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Jesus said, “**Watch out...**” The first question we want to ask is who/what are false prophets and why are they dangerous? False prophets are those who teach contrary to Jesus’ teaching – contrary to the Bible. It would be easy for us to identify non-Christians – like atheists b/c they don’t believe in God or Muslims as they teach the Koran, not the Bible.

Jesus said they’re deceptive – they look like sheep but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. (Kind of like the devil – the roaring lion on the prowl to devour us). False prophets teach false things – things contrary to the teachings of the Bible. Many times they claim to be Christian, but they teach something other than the gospel.

- Prosperity gospel – made famous by Joel Osteen – claims that you can receive blessings from God if you just try harder
- Social gospel – makes the claim that the main thing of why we should exist as a church is to make our community and the world a better place

How do you recognize them?

Do you have any fruit trees in your yard? Perhaps you had them when you were growing up? There is a lot of care that goes in to taking care of them. Take an apple tree for example. You might spray it with chemicals or thin it out to get the best crop possible. One side of the apple might look good, but it might be deformed or rotten on

the opposite side. And who knows, you might bite into it and find a worm. Gross, I know.

Jesus said – **“By their fruit you will recognize them.”** Jesus wants us to do our due diligence and thoroughly look at what they say and compare it to the Bible.

The apostle Paul went to Thessalonica and was driven out. He stayed safe at Jason’s house and left in the darkness of night. The people there did not like that he taught about Jesus – they wanted to drag Paul into the city square to stone him. So, he went to the next city – to Berea. And we’re told, **“they examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.** (Acts 16 and 17)

Jesus wants us to be like the Berean Christians – searching and examining Scripture daily, regularly. B/c as Jesus said in v 27 – building your spiritual house and the words of false prophets would be like building your house on sand.

²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

What is the firm foundation? Paul said in Romans 3, in our second lesson today, the heart of the gospel – **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace.”** We are all sinners in need of a Savior. And that’s what God did – he sent us his Son Jesus – to live, die and rise again – to take away all our sins and to give us the promise of eternal life. We have been declared not guilty and have our relationship with God restored.

How do we get it? Jesus said –

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

We can’t earn God’s favor, rather **Christ’s love compels us** (2 Cor 5) – to do good work and put Jesus’ words into practice. Jesus tells us a summary of the law – Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind – and love your neighbor as yourself.

Over the last few months we’ve heard many examples of acts of kindness and paying it forward to neighbors and sometimes complete strangers. My encouragement to you is to continue to do everything you can to love our neighbors – and our community – to be a witness to the world.

When the calendar turned to 2020, did you imagine that we would go through –

- A global pandemic
- Shutdown and crash of the economy
- Enormous loss of jobs
- Perhaps you or loved ones have health issues
- Breakdown in relationships – “cabin fever”

All of these are the rains and storms we can and do go through in life. We know the effects of the past few months have had on all of us. We see what life is like on the firm foundation b/c we have our faith firmly founded in Jesus. We know that Jesus died to take away our every worry or anxious thoughts. We know that Jesus provides for us and takes care of our every need. Jesus is the one who paid our every sin and has given the promise to restore and make all things new when we reach our eternal home in heaven.

Growing up we had friends of the family who went through a great deal of storms and personal tragedy. As a farmer, they had two floods, three droughts, a fire and tornado damage their house. But throughout it all they never complained. They were great witnesses of their faith and the strength they had b/c spiritually, their house was planted firmly on the Rock – on Jesus.

We know what storms are like – whether they’re like the ones we went through on Tuesday, or what we’ve gone through in the last few months. Life on the firm foundation – makes you and I wise people. And don’t ever underestimate the testimony and witness you give to the world. Build on the Rock. Build on Jesus.

Let’s pray – Dear Jesus, you give us a beautiful picture of what life is like on the firm and solid foundation of Jesus. When the storms of life come, help us to stay connected to you. In Jesus’ name.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)