STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS
Matthew 7.24-29

MT 7.24-29 “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. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his 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.” 28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Intro

Illus- Hurricane Florence

As of last night, Florence has killed at least 43 people (32 people in NC), and dumped up to 3 feet of rain in parts of NC. At least 16 rivers are at major flood stage, with 3 others cresting or about to crest in the coming days.

Gov. Roy Cooper said "Major flooding is still occurring across many rivers, and more than 4,700 people have been saved, twice as many as Matthew."

About 750 roads remain closed (down from 2,200), including sections of I-40 & I-95.
  - Duke Energy reported thousands without power
  - On Wednesday, 7,800 residents were in shelters across NC
  - And 16 tornadoes have been confirmed.

All of us are affected by what’s going on right now
  - Some remain outside the area
  - Others staying with neighbors
  - And the rest of us, with our power generators, are waiting patiently while FEMA, Duke, and others are doing what they can

Illus- New Bern Thursday

I was having a conversation with one family Wednesday. We were reminiscing about the loss of property and damage from the past hurricane

Ques- Maybe you remember Matthew?

In NC alone, 680,000 people lost power
  - 100,000 buildings and other structures were flooded
  - Damage estimates were as high as $1.5 billion
  - 25 people were killed- 24 of them by flooding

Talking to close friends of mine a few days ago, they said what scared them most about storms was wind
  - Wind can be scary
  - But flooding- especially storm surge- causes the most damage

Illus- Parents

I was talking to another friend on the phone
  - She said here power never went out
  - If you remember, it jogged a little to the left
  - And while we were on the right side of the hurricane- it still hit us hard
It got as high as category 4, hit land at category 2- with sustained winds up to 130 mph

Ques- So I asked her, Didn’t your power go out?
  • And she said, Nope, I am sitting here with my feet propped up, watching TV... How’s it going down there?
  • I told here, Why don’t you come down here and help us out?
  • And she said, I would but I can’t get there

I was driving down highway 70 on Thursday- the day President Trump made a visit to New Bern
  • Cars were bumper to bumper on Hwy 70
  • At Clarke’s Road exit no cars were moving
  • The roads were full of contractors, cars, trucks trying to get in

Ques- Have you ever noticed how storms never bothered Jesus?
  • And here he is, talking about one in scripture
  • Jesus, the supreme realist
  • Not that storms aren’t serious- Jesus knows that they are…

1. Storms Entail Risk- But Also Opportunity

We live in a time of great risk in our day…
  • The jobs we have
  • The schools we attend
  • The houses we live in
  • The churches we attend
  • The technology that is rapidly impacting our values

And we make certain assumptions about them…
  • That the institutions will always be there to meet our needs
  • That the values we grow up with will never change
  • That our beliefs will never be challenged

But then some disaster comes along, such as a hurricane
  • Watching our neighbors respond, we can be grateful for FBBC
  • It was through the helping hand of some that others were not so inconvenienced
  • And that’s the mark of a disciple

2. For As Jesus Points Out, The Measure Of A Disciple Is Not Determined By What Happens To Him- But What He Does When Life Throws Its Worst At Him

Illus- Evidences Of Faith Are All Around You

Consider our recent storm…
  • The Red Cross
  • The Baptist Men
  • BSC of NC
  • The volunteer agencies and individuals- like Samaritan’s Purse- making a difference

That is when Christians really get to shine

I. FOR OUR CALLING IS NOT JUST THAT WE WOULD BE SAVED- BUT THAT OTHERS MIGHT BE SAVED TOO (vs. 24-25)
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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Note how Jesus develops this story - building a house
  • Maybe you have done that
  • But this story’s not about building a house

And that is where we need to step back and think about what Jesus is saying. It’s not a story about the construction trades. It is a story about faith and trust.

And so Jesus tells it in only the way he can - so that the wisdom of one - and the foolishness of the other - eventually become apparent
  • Not to be better builders
  • But better disciples

**Illus - Bill’s Rules**

I have this friend who has done well in business
  • And I asked how that came about
  • Since that time we have had numerous occasions where we talked about his success

And I got some good advice…

*One thing they told me was* - *you don’t want to just buy cheap*
  • Usually you get what you pay for, and buying cheap is a poor strategy
  • And it reorients you to the abundance Jesus teaches

*Another one was always tithe*
  • No matter how much it hurts
  • It defeats greed, and chases poverty away

*And another was* - *do your homework by considering long term costs*
  • Not just the short run
  • It defeats the propensity to gamble
  • And it too impacts your mind

These are just a few rules. And as a businessman, my friend was really good
  • And he wanted me to be wise - to succeed - like he did too

Jesus does the same thing. As he says,

**MT 7.24** :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.

1. **In Other Words, God’s Goal Is That We Would Be Wise - As He Is, So We Ought To Be**

It’s a reorientation of values - not our interpretation of them - but God’s
  • What it is that God values

As Jesus says,

**JN 3.16** : For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
This is the foundation stone–building one’s life on Christ–him doing what we can’t do
  • But there is more to Christian life

2. Storms Are Opportunities–And They Allow Us To Reveal The Courage, Composure, And Compassion Of Jesus

Illus– Florence

As the storm passed through I walked out on the back porch–for a few minutes–and watched it
  • Florence just didn’t seem so powerful
  • I did the same thing with Hurricane Matthew
  • But the true assessment of storm damage wasn’t to show up until later

If you want to see real power in a storm, just join the Navy
  • There is nothing like going through a storm at sea to get you thinking about your safety

But after gaining some wisdom and experience you know just what to do
  • You batten down the hatches
  • You stow your gear away
  • You ride with the waves
  • Or navigate yourself to safety

After some time and experience, you learn composure

Note how the wise builder and the foolish builder both had to take a few knocks or two
  • And that’s want it takes to reorient one’s values
  • The apostles were fishermen, they knew the seas are strong
  • They knew about wind and waves

But note what Jesus is driving at…
  • To unlearn bad habits and learn new ones
  • To be “wise” in Christ’s estimation, and not our own
  • And share what we know–to help others in their storms too

II. BUT THE CHOICE IS OURS–FOR WE ALL STAND AT THE INTERSECTION OF OPPORTUNITY AND CHOICE (vs. 26–27)

26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his 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.”

Illus– Crossroads

Maybe you have seen the movie “Crossroads”

It stars Ralph Macchio as a guitar player at the Julliard School of music
  • But he really doesn’t care for classical music
  • He wants to play the blues
  • And on his off time he goes on a quest for a blues song written by a guitarist who is in a NYC nursing home

When he finds the man who wrote it, the guitarist promises to “give” the song to the youngster if he can figure out a way to get back to his Mississippi home
Macchio agrees- but on the way he has to learn a series of life lessons

- About racial discrimination
- About crime and prison
- About the loneliness of a nursing home
- About sadness
- All the things that go into making a true blues guitarist

The climax of the film is legendary; arriving home, the blues guitarist- who had 'sold his soul' to the Devil at the 'Crossroads' as a young man- attempts to get the devil to tear up the contract

And the Devil informs him he will, but only if Ralph Maccio defeats him in a 'Guitar Duel'

- Macchio agrees- if he loses- he loses his soul
- If the devil loses- he sets the blues guitarist free

Crossroads is a great movie- and a familiar theme- for all of us stand at the intersection of opportunity and choice

1. **Opportunity And Choice Go Together Too- Without One You Really Don’t Have The Other**

In this parable two men sought to build a house

- One exercised wisdom
- And one did not

Both had opportunity

- But one was foolish
- And one was not

**Ques-** And what was it Jesus said made the difference?

- Remember, this is not a story about building
- Unless you mean faith and trust in what Jesus says to do

2. **You Can Have Great Enthusiasm, But Without Wisdom You Are Following A Failing Strategy**

Knowing the right thing- and doing it- are two different matters

- Enthusiasm without commensurate wisdom is like the proverbial saying, “...running around like a chicken with its head cut off...”
- And it is clear which one Jesus tells us what we ought to be like

Following Jesus is a discipline- you unlearn bad habits, you implement good habits

- You apply effort
- You learn new skills
- You invest in people
- You invest your time
- You work at it

**Illus-** Model Airplanes

**Ques-** Have you ever wanted to go into business- you had all this enthusiasm- only to find yourself failing?

**Ques-** Have you ever tried to build a model airplane and not follow the directions?

- If you are like me, you had all these spare pieces
Ques- Have you ever tried to cook a meal, and you left out the seasoning?
  - How well did that work out?
Ques- Did you ever try to fix your car, and not know what’s wrong with it?
  - I finally sold my Denali after several mechanics looked at it

III. AND SO WE COME TO THE QUESTION- WHAT IS OUR CHOICE GOING TO BE? (vs. 28)

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

The thing about Jesus is he leaves no wiggle room
  - He doesn’t make allowances for armchair quarterbacks
  - He gives no solace or comfort to those who are opinionated

1. Jesus Only Extends An Offer- He Doesn’t Force, Coerce, Insist On You To Do Anything

Ques- And maybe that’s the most amazing thing of all?
  - He could force salvation on anyone, but doesn’t
  - Many people walked right by him, and were never saved at all- many refuse to follow him
  - He could force his spirit if he chose, but instead, he gives you opportunity and choice

Illus- Builders

In the recovery operations currently going on around NC and SC, a lot of hard work is being done in Jesus’ name
  - Lots of outside contractors and employees from around NC and other states
  - Financial support
  - Nationwide attention- such as the president
  - Maybe you see it on TV

Ques- But do you see the prayer circles?
  - And the recovery teams?
  - And the Baptist Men Disaster Relief units?
  - The yellow shirts and hats- they don’t get paid to do that work

That is not to take away from the National Guard
  - Or the President
  - Or the Red Cross
  - Or FEMA
  - And all of the other secular agencies and operations out there

But I see God moving in our midst in what we do too
  - And never was there a time when we have been more in need
  - And best of all, we are giving them Jesus too

Conclusion

The parable of the two builders reminds us to temper enthusiasm with wisdom, and that we all stand at the crossroads of opportunity and choice
  - The foolish man suffers from his self-created disaster
  - And the wise man- rises above it- because he learned properly before he ever started

And that is where the authority of Jesus speaks today
For the measure of a Christian is not determined by what happens to them
But by what they do when life throws its worst at them
They are the wise ones
And they know what to do when they come to their own crossroads—of opportunity and choice.

And this is what the world needs to see
The wisdom of Jesus
Through you and me
And especially in the storms of life

End of Sermon Prayer

September 23, 2018
Fort Barnwell Baptist Church
Fort Barnwell, NC 28526

Reese Blanchett 2018
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Disclaimer: I wish to express my gratitude to all the saints before me who are traveling the Narrow Way. Their love and generosity is reflected in my own humble efforts to prepare sermons for the body of Christ. Grace and Peace.