

Matthew 7:24-27

Sameer Mishra, a thirteen-year-old boy from West Lafayette, Indiana was the winner of this year's National Spelling Bee. He won by correctly spelling the word "guerdon." Although he came out on top, there were tense moments for him throughout the competition. There were words which he spelled with confidence, and there were words where he had to guess correctly. Now it would be completely and utterly ridiculous to say that Sameer won purely because of good luck. He worked hard. Day after day, for months and years he worked at studying words and the way words are constructed. No one will advance very far in the spelling bee competition unless he or she is dedicated to the task of studying words.

Jesus says the same thing about winning a place in heaven. No one gets into heaven because they "got lucky." It's all about the task of studying words—not spelling words—God's living words. "Everyone who hears these words of Mine," Jesus says, "And does them, will be like a wise man who built his house 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."

Someone once said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. "I intended on becoming baptized." "I intended on becoming regular in my church attendance." "I intended on reading my Bible more." "I intended on building my house on the rock." Would Sameer be basking in the light of victory if he had only intended on studying his spelling words? No! He got to work. He got busy and did what needed to be done. That's why he was victorious.

If we think that our good intentions will impress God, then we are greatly mistaken. Our noble plans count for nothing unless we follow through. Our vow and promise to God made the day of our confirmation is worthless unless we keep that vow. If you're a spiritually lazy Christian, even if that is not your intention, then you will see what happens when a man builds his house on the sand.

Now we need to be clear about something which Jesus says in our text. He says, "Everyone who hears these words of Mine." Those who do not hear His words are not even in the picture. Those who are not in the habit of hearing Jesus' words, either because they are not Christians who believe in Him, or because they have better things to do than listen to the words of Christ, are not even building a house at all—and for them there is no hope. No Christ, no hope. But you are here today. Jesus' words are in your ears this morning. You are building a house, and the question is: Are you building on the rock, or on sand?

You cannot tell by looking at the house. The houses all look the same. Jesus doesn't say that one house is made of bricks and another is made of wood. He doesn't say that one house is clean and spotless and another is dirty and cluttered. The truth is that our houses, yours and mine, are rotten to their very core. Every brick is cracked. Every wooden beam is weak. All the windows are broken. The furnace hardly works. The toilets are all plugged up. The roof leaks. Our houses are filthy and despicable.

And that's because we are sinful to our very core. Every thought, word, and deed of ours is tainted with sin. There is nothing good within our flesh. Our hearts are evil. Our minds are wicked. Our houses are places of lust and adultery, covetousness and selfishness,

idolatry and deceit. And this is true no matter where our house is built because that's how we are born, and that's how we live—we're born in sin and we live sinfully.

But do not despair. All is not lost. Jesus is putting His living words into your ears today so that, as wretched as your life is, it is in Him a life that is forgiven; a life that is washed clean in His blood; a life that is given the hope of heaven; a life sanctified by His Word.

"Everyone who hears My words," Jesus says; and what are His words? Not to do this and that. Not to fix your roof and windows. Not to clean up your messy house and life. Jesus' words to you are pure invitation. "Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." His words are gracious and merciful. "I do not condemn you... Go your way, your faith has saved you... Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you."

When Jesus went to the house of Zaccheus, He did not first tell Zaccheus to fix his house. No! Jesus went to fix it for him. He went there to cleanse it. Jesus did not tell Zaccheus, "I will love you if you clean up your life." No! Jesus received Zaccheus first. Jesus forgave him first.

Friend, Jesus has loved you in the same way. Although His house was perfect and spotless—no lie ever came from His lips; no sinful thought ever entered His mind; He never acted in disobedience—though His house was holy, it came to ruin and destruction on a hill called Calvary. Jesus allowed ruthless murderers to pillage His house, to strip Him, and beat Him, and to pierce Him with nails. Jesus' house, although He is the Rock itself, fell into the quicksand of hell. For you, friend, He did all this for you! He suffered the destruction of God's Judgment in your place. His house was swallowed up by the mouth of Satan. He died in agony. But now He lives. On the third day He rose from the dead and He is, for you, the solid Foundation. His words to you are life itself. His words give you what they declare—forgiveness and salvation. You are forgiven. Heaven is yours in Christ Jesus.

Even though your house is falling apart; even though your life is a complete sinful mess, Jesus looks at you in love. He pardons your wrongs. He is, for you, the place of refuge. God's Judgment against you cannot touch you, for you are built upon Jesus. His blood covers you. The storms of hell cannot have you, for Jesus gives you a place in heaven with Him. Whether you have been building, in the past, upon the rock, or on sand; whether you have been in the habit of taking Jesus' words to heart or mostly ignoring them—friend, His words are for you now. Do not walk away from His House today and live in the sandbox. Take His words with you. Meditate on them. Open them in your home with your family. Pray His words back to Him. Come again next week to, again, hear His living words.

This is for no spelling bee championship—this is the path to heaven! Jesus' words are that path. We sang it earlier... say now these words with me and then go and live them: "On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand." Amen.