

**Matthew 7:24-27**

This text reminds me, in a strange sort of way, of the story about the three little pigs. You remember the pigs. Two turned out to be foolish, for they built their houses out of sticks and straw. The third pig was wise. He built his house out of bricks. One thing those pigs knew for certain—the wolf would come to each house. But only one understood how to prepare for his coming.

Jesus tells us about building houses in our text. Not the houses we live in, but the house that lives in us—our spiritual and eternal soul. And one thing we know for certain—not the wolf, but the rains, and the flood, and the winds will come to each house. The storms of life are all around us. We don't have many clear days. We face trouble and tragedy, sickness and despair, loneliness and heartache. We are tempted to follow after every wind of doctrine; to abandon the faith into which we are baptized. We are pressured to compromise our principles as Christians; to justify our sins.

To live is to face one spiritual storm after another. And to live also means that we will face the final storm. As death approaches, you can be sure that the devil will not leave you alone. He will come to your spiritual house and try to “blow you down.” “Why should God let you into heaven?!”—he will remind you of your worthless life, wanting you to despair in your final hour. Or he will puff you up causing you to believe that God owes heaven to you because you lived better than most. Whatever temptation he brings, it is a storm of intense fury, craftily designed to cause our eternal ruin. We need to hear what Jesus has to say about building our spiritual house.

Jesus speaks about two men in our text for today...not three, not one, but two—the wise man and the foolish man. Either one is wise toward God or one is foolish toward Him. There is no middle ground. In World War II, Switzerland was a neutral country. It did not actively side with the Axis or the Allied nations. It let Hitler and Mussolini do their thing, and let England and America do their thing—but it stayed out of the battle. There is no “neutrality” with God. There is no middle ground with Him. Our very existence on this earth places us into the battle. We cannot say: Jesus, you do Your thing; Satan, you do yours, and I'll do mine—just leave me out of it. There can be no burying our head in the sand with God. Either you are wise toward Him, or you are foolish.

Now what we see in our text is that both the wise man and the foolish man hear the words of Jesus. The difference is not in the hearing of them, but in what happens after one hears. The wise man acts upon what he hears, the foolish man does not. But they both hear the same thing—the Word of Christ—the same Word that we hear today. The Word that call us to faith in Him as the Messiah and Savior. “Come unto Me,” He says, “all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “I am the Resurrection and the Life, he who believes in Me will live even though he dies.” “I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.”

Through His Word Jesus call us to faith. Faith, not in ourselves, but in Him. Faith not in our works, but in His works. And His works are the work of baptizing us into His death and resurrection; the work of keeping us in Him through His Word and Sacrament. If we have faith in our works, it is not even faith, but sand. For faith is not seeing, but believing.

We live not by seeing our works, but “by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself up for us.”

Jesus is calling you to faith in Him. He wants, not mere hearers, but followers. He wants disciples who build their lives upon Him—the one true Foundation; who build their lives, therefore, upon the promises He makes to us in our Baptism; upon the certain hope we have in Him because at His Table He nourishes us in faith by forgiving our sins through the gift of His body and blood.

I think it’s a little odd that Jesus uses such an extreme illustration in our text. You show me a man who builds his house on the sand, and I’ll show you a complete idiot! Really! What fool would do such a thing? In fact, I’ll bet you couldn’t find a person who has literally built his house—a structure made of wood or brick—upon the shifting sands. Nobody does that. Everyone has sense enough to stay off the sand when building a house. Why would Jesus use such an extreme illustration?

Perhaps because the contrast is so striking. No one is a fool when it comes to earthly matters, but every one of us is a fool when it comes to God. Really! We’re theological idiots! For each and every one of us would only...can only...build our spiritual lives upon sand.

On our own we would not act upon the Words of Christ. We would do nothing with them! He may as well be preaching to swine. We don’t have the ability within us to act on Jesus’ words, let alone believe them and build our lives upon them. If it was up to us, we would build on sand. The Word of Christ would go in one ear and out the other.

But it’s not up to us! We have a gracious God, for Christ’s sake, who takes action on our behalf. So when Christ preaches His Word to us at the font, at His Table, through the mouth of His pastor—and through that Word calls us to faith...along with that very Word He sends His Spirit to create that faith in our heart. We’re busy playing in the sandbox, but Christ Himself moves us to the Rock, and upon that Rock He builds for us a spiritual house.

Will you survive the storms of life? Will you survive the storm of the final Judgment? Friend, in whom do you trust? If you are proud of your achievements, and works, and goodness before God, then you’re living your life in sand. But do you know in whom you believe? Do you trust in Jesus into whom you have been baptized? Do you plead His blood shed for you and given to you in Holy Communion for the forgiveness of your sins? Then you are living on the Rock, Jesus Christ—and nothing, not even the gates of hell can cause your fall. For Christ is the solid Rock, and He fell for us. He was tempted and He overcame, He suffered, He died and He rose again. He let the storms of hell do their very worst to Him. He fell headfirst into hell and then came out victorious, so that He can be, for us, the Foundation of eternal life.

Living on Christ, in Christ, with Christ—there can be no doubt that nothing can tear us away from Him. In Baptism He claimed you. Through His Word and Holy Supper He keeps you. And yes, I know that many of you are thinking right now, with concern, about loved ones who are not building their lives upon Jesus Christ. They may not be baptized. Or they may be neglecting their salvation. They are showing all the marks, not of a wise builder, but of a foolish one.

Your concern is a healthy thing. For how true it is that a mother who raises her children with love and sacrifice; sees to it that they are well-fed and clothed; goes to many school activities with them; stands by them in tough times—but does not tell them about Jesus—that mother with one hand, gives them all things, but with the other hand she deprives her children of eternal life.

And you may have someone like that in your family...a daughter, a son, a parent, a spouse, a brother or sister. Pray that the God of all grace would be merciful to your loved one and move them from the sand to the Rock. Exhort, rebuke as necessary—speak to them about the one thing needful...tell them of Christ and His love for them.

And be a solid Christian example for them. Do they see you in the Word? Do they hear you speak of Christ? Do they know how important Sunday morning in God's House is for you?

And know this for certain—God forgives you for being a poor example in the past. He forgives you for living your life in the sand. He forgives you for teaching your loved ones to play in the sand.

What a merciful God we have, that for Jesus' sake, He forgives sinful wretches like us. And through His Word He keeps calling us back to faith, and keeps bringing us back to the Rock, Jesus Christ. And He will, through that Word, keep you steadfast in Jesus so that no storm, in life or in death, can move you away from your Savior.

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand. When He shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in Him be found, clothed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.” (TLH 370 vss. 1, 4)  
Amen.